

24 Facebook curbs livestreaming amid pressure over massacre



24 Saudi: Oil facility attacks targeting global supplies




28 Curry powers Warriors over Blazers in the series opener




Ramadan KAREEM

| | |
|--------|-------|
| IMSAK | 03:16 |
| Fajr | 03:26 |
| Dhur | 11:44 |
| Asr | 15:20 |
| Magrib | 18:33 |
| Isha | 20:01 |



US orders ‘non-emergency’ embassy staff to leave Iraq

German, Dutch armies halt Iraq training amid Iran tensions



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited the Ministry of Interior's Headquarters and Kuwait Fire Service Directorate on Tuesday with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Deputy Chairman of National Guard Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. — Amiri Diwan (See Page 3)

WASHINGTON: The US yesterday ordered all non-emergency staff to leave its embassy in Baghdad and consulate in Arbil, as tensions mount between the United States and Iraq's neighbor Iran, prompting Kremlin concern. Washington has ramped up pressure on Tehran in recent days, accusing Iran of planning unspecified "imminent" attacks in the region, and bolstering the American military presence in the Gulf.

A State Department advisory announcing the partial embassy closures warned of numerous "terrorist and insurgent groups" active in Iraq, including "anti-US sectarian militias" who could "threaten US citizens and Western companies throughout Iraq." The US last year shut its consulate in the protest-hit southern Iraqi city of Basra, blaming "indirect fire" by Iran-backed forces.

Tensions have sharply escalated between arch-rivals Washington and Tehran since US President Donald Trump withdrew last May from the 2015 international Iran nuclear deal which removed sanctions in exchange for curbs on Iran's nuclear program. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo—who has made rolling back Iranian influence in the region a top priority—last week paid a surprise trip to Baghdad in a move to bolster ties with Iraq.

He has declined to go into further detail on the alleged plot, which has been met with skepticism in numerous quarters, including from Democratic lawmakers who fear Trump's administration is seeking to spark a war with Iran. A State Department spokesman yesterday said the departure of non-emergency personnel came in response to "the increased threat stream we are seeing in Iraq."

The Pentagon has said its deployments were "in response to indications of heightened Iranian readiness to conduct offensive operations against US forces and our interests". But Russia, a major backer of Tehran which has blamed the current crisis on Washington's decision to pull out of the Iran nuclear deal, expressed concern yesterday that tensions keep escalating despite assurances from Pompeo.

"So far we notice the continued escalation of tensions around this subject," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, a day after Pompeo met with President Vladimir Putin. "We are saddened to see the decisions taken by the Iranian side," Peskov said, while arguing that Washington has been provoking Iran. Ruled by Shiite clerics, Iran has a strong influence in Iraq, especially in the country's Shiite-majority south. Pompeo told reporters he had made his trip because Iranian forces are "escalating their activity" and said the threat of attacks was "very specific."

The top US envoy met with Iraqi President Barham Saleh and Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi, and spoke to them "about the importance of Iraq ensuring that it's able to adequately protect Americans in their country." Diplomatic security is a key priority for the United States. Blasts involving improvised explosive devices (IEDs) occur in many areas of Iraq, including the capital Baghdad, the advisory warned, adding that normal visa services would be suspended. Arbil is the Iraqi Kurdish regional capital, in northern Iraq.

Continued on Page 24

Trump hosts iftar dinner at White House

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump hosted an iftar dinner at the White House for Ambassadors and members of diplomatic corps "representing countries with significant Muslim populations," the White House said in a statement Tuesday. In remarks at the iftar, Trump said he was "delighted" to share the "special meal" with so many esteemed dignitaries and friends, saying "I have so many friends in this room and cherished partners from around the world."

He added "we have resolved to defeat the evils of terrorism and religious persecution so that all people can worship without fear," as he referred to the "many trials and hardships" that have been endured in recent weeks. Among the iftar guests were Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah, Jordanian Ambassador Dina Kawa and Tunisian Ambassador Faycal Gouia. — KUNA



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump hosts iftar dinner at the White House attended by Kuwait Ambassador to US Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Attacks expose weaknesses in Gulf security

RIYADH: Attacks on Saudi tankers and other vessels off the coast of the United Arab Emirates this week expose vulnerabilities in the security of a key oil-shipping route amid rising tensions between the United States, Iran and Gulf Arab states. The operation near the Strait of Hormuz appeared designed to test the resolve of the United States and its Sunni Muslim allies without triggering a war, after Washington tightened sanctions on Iran and beefed up its military presence nearby.

The UAE has not characterized the

sabotage or blamed anyone, but US national security agencies believe proxies sympathetic to or working for Iran may have been behind it, a US official has said. Tehran has distanced itself from the incident, which no one has claimed. "This is a pin-prick event, a little needle-like jab at the maritime trade going into the Strait of Hormuz," said Gerry Northwood, chairman of risk management and security firm MAST.

The attack took place off Fujairah emirate, just outside the Strait, a narrow waterway separating Iran from the Arabian Peninsula where a fifth of global oil consumption passes from Middle East producers. Two days later, Saudi Arabia said armed drones had hit two oil pumping stations in the kingdom, an attack claimed by the Iran-aligned Houthis in neighboring Yemen.

Continued on Page 24

Ramadan Kareem

Decisions: Time to reflect

By Ali Abubacker

Life is a journey of decisions. But what is a decision? The Oxford dictionary states that it is the conclusion or resolution after consideration. Since pre-teens we start taking responsibility for our decisions because we understand the consequences. Innocent children of tender age are not responsible for their decisions because they do not yet have that understanding.

In our lives we must have taken millions of decisions from "which socks to wear" to "which multi-million-dollar expenditure option do I approve from my staff." "Do I agree to marry this girl?"; "Do I study engineering at university or not?"; "Do I join company A or B?"; "Do I buy this house or that?"; Many mundane or complex issues require decisions... but how to consider before deciding? Do I go left or right?

Throughout our lives we have taken decisions which have material or worldly gain. But when we look back do we regret some of them? Did we decide to do things which caused heartache or pain to ourselves or others? Did we end up losing as a result of the decision? As Muslims we are told to seek help from Allah in all our affairs.

Decision-making is a critical aspect that requires Allah's guidance as He knows what we do not. Moreover, we may have made decisions where our intentions were not pure or where we had hidden agendas or were being selfish. Reflecting back we feel regret and know that Islam is about ethics-based decisions bound by the lawful and unlawful.

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KHAN YUNIS: An injured Palestinian demonstrator is seen on the ground during clashes with Israeli forces following a protest marking the 71st anniversary of Nakba yesterday. — AFP (See Page 7)

MPs approve insurance and tenders laws

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly yesterday approved a new insurance law and amendments to the tenders law in the first reading amid calls by MPs that the insurance sector must come under the Central Bank or continue under the Commerce Ministry. Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said the Assembly will hold a secret session today to debate regional developments amid heightened Iran-US tensions and the escalation following drone attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels

against Saudi oil targets.

Commerce and Industry Minister Khaled Al-Roudhan said that Kuwait badly needs a new insurance law especially that the existing legislation was issued some 60 years ago and it was amended for the last time in 1981. He said the existing law does not include supervisory tools and the new one has tackled all the negative aspects in the insurance sector, adding that Kuwait was the first Gulf state to regulate its insurance sector but is the last to implement latest developments.

The minister said that 39 insurance companies are operating in the country, 28 of them are Kuwaiti and the rest are foreign. Together, the insurance companies are dealing with around KD 13 billion. MP Saleh Ashour called for the insurance sector to be under the

Continued on Page 24

Palestinians mark 'Nakba'; 47 injured

GAZA: Israeli troops wounded nearly 50 Palestinians at the Gaza border yesterday during protests to mark the 71st anniversary of the "Nakba", or catastrophe, when many Palestinians lost their homes in the fighting around Israel's creation, Gaza officials said. Thousands had gathered at the coastal enclave's frontier with Israel, the scene of bloodshed over the past year that has raised international

al concern.

Groups approached the border fence, planting Palestinian flags and throwing stones towards Israeli soldiers on the other side despite the efforts of marshalls in orange vests to keep protesters away from the barrier, witnesses said. Israeli troops fired tear gas and rubber bullets to repel them, but also live ammunition, the witnesses said. The Gaza Health Ministry said at least 47 people were wounded, though it was not clear how many of those were hit by live ammunition or were hurt by rubber bullets or by inhaling tear gas.

The Israeli military said about 10,000 rioters and demonstrators gathered in

Continued on Page 24



KUWAIT: A bus driver was killed in an accident with a truck on Fourth Ring Road. Seven others were injured. The body was recovered by the coroner. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun

Local

Amir receives top state officials, outgoing ambassador at Bayan Palace



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Giuseppe Scognamiglio. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a book from Abdullah Yacoub Bishara.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Giuseppe Scognamiglio on the occasion of ending his tenure. His Highness later received Abdullah Yacoub Bishara where he presented to His Highness a book titled "Invasion in the invading time .. Kuwait before and after the invasion."

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Speaker Ghanem, His Highness the PM Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince then received Abdullah Yacoub Bishara who presented to His Highness a book on the invasion of Kuwait. In the meantime, His Highness the Prime Minister received the outgoing Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Giuseppe Scognamiglio, as well as Abdullah Yacoub Bishara, who handed His Highness a book about the invasion of Kuwait.

In other news, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of condolences to Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck over the death of his grandfather. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar cables to King Wangchuck. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a book from Abdullah Yacoub Bishara.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Giuseppe Scognamiglio.

Defense Minister visits Kuwaiti troops in Saudi Arabia



RIYADH: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and other officials pose for a group photo with Kuwaiti troops in Saudi Arabia. — Defense Ministry photo

RIYADH: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Tuesday visited Kuwaiti troops participating in the 'Operation Restoring Hope' in Saudi Arabia, on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. He was accompanied by

Kuwait's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff Lt Gen Mohammad Khaled Al-Khodhr and a high-level military delegation, the Defense Ministry's Moral Guidance Department said in a statement yesterday.

KD 500,000 to support indebted citizens

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and State Minister for Municipality Affairs Fahd Al-Shulaa said the Awqaf Secretariat General has donated KD 500,000 to support the "gharimeen" (those in debt and unable to pay back) campaign during the holy month of Ramadan. Shulaa said the secretariat general seeks to remove arrest warrants against 400 Kuwaitis - 300 women and 100 men - in coordination with the

Takaful society for care of prisoners, which studies deserving cases and guarantees that they meet the conditions to benefit from this support. He said the campaign aims at keeping families together and prevent them from breaking apart.

Expat engineers

Deputy Director General for Planning and Administrative Development at the Manpower Public Authority Mubarak Al-Azmi said the authority held a

meeting on Tuesday with representatives of Kuwait Engineers Society, Union of Engineering Offices and Consultation Houses and Kuwait Industries Union to discuss the latest developments with regards to the mechanism of approving technical skills of expat engineers in Kuwait and the tests held by the Kuwait Engineers Society.

Azmi said the authority works within a framework of coordination with concerned authorities to achieve the national policy to approve professional skills' levels in many professions, including registering engineering professions in all specialties, as this cooperation succeeded in achieving the goals the tests were made

for. He said engineering and consultation offices as well as Kuwait Industries Union demanded further activation of procedures related to engineers' tests and hastening of the test process through a totally automated link between concerned parties to ease the procedures and shorten the documentation cycle.

Chairman of Kuwait Engineering Society said the society welcomes all those with ideas to improve the current mechanism to inform the society about any obstacles any engineer faces while seeking approval. He said the society carried out a deep-rooted overhaul of the computer network and software used by the society.

Anjeri urges KCCI, concerned bodies to attract more tourists

KUWAIT: The General Manager of Leaders Group Company for Consulting and Development, representative of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in Kuwait and the head of HORECA Kuwait's organizing committee Nabila Al-Anjeri stressed the need to 'revive' the private sector in terms of promoting the growing number of hospitality projects abroad in order to attract more tourists and increase these projects' investment revenues.

Commenting on official statistics about Kuwaitis' high spending on travel and tourism abroad last year, Anjeri said that it is the private sector's fate to endure the government's blunders and mismanagement. "Kuwait does not have official bodies to promote the country abroad tourism-wise," she underlined.

"It is high time to coordinate efforts led by the private sector without waiting for any help from the government," Anjeri added, noting that, for the first time in 17 years, the ministry concerned with this task was even absent at the Arab Travel Market Fair recently held in Dubai.

Further, Anjeri elaborated that the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), the Kuwait Hotel Owners Union, national airlines, travel agents and companies and representatives of mega hotel investment companies should combine efforts in order to help achieve His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's vision of turning Kuwait into a financial and commercial hub. Anjeri, stressed that innovative unconventional economic policies could add new resources to countries such as Kuwait only if governments utilize various sectors, resources and potentials wisely.



Nabila Al-Anjeri

PAAET to accept 18,000 students

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Dean of admittance and registration at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr Rabah Al-Najada said the higher admittance committee approved the admittance policy for 2019-2020 by designating 18,000 seats for the new academic year in various specialties in colleges, institutes and training centers. She said the higher acceptance committee agreed to announce the date of receiving applications online to study at PAAET - June 12.

Najada said the minimum GPA for high school graduates for admittance was reduced from 80 percent to 75 percent for those desiring to join the commercial studies college, as it used to be previously, to give better opportunity for previous secondary school certificate holders who were not accepted in past years. She said the deanship will open the applications for English secondary graduates for two days after their results are announced.

Health Ministry employees

Health Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Administrative Affairs Marzouq Al-Rashidi said the total number of workers at the health ministry is 63,752 employees

in various sectors medical, technical, nursing and administrative sectors based on the latest statistics. He said there are 61,814 employees in general jobs, and second contract, and 1,938 employees who are on the rewards item.

Rashidi said the number of doctors at the ministry is 11,009, including 10,818 in general jobs and 191 on the reward system. He said the number of pharmacists in the health ministry is 1,704 including 1,590 in general jobs and second contract and 114 on the reward system. The number of nurses at the ministry is 23,172 including 22,377 in general jobs and second contract and 795 on the reward system. He said the number of technicians at the ministry is 10,515, 10,150 of whom are in public jobs and second contract, and 365 in the reward system. He said the number of administrative employees at the ministry is 17,352, 16,879 in general jobs and second contract, and 473 employees on the reward system.

Farmers' products

Head of the cooperatives union Khalid Al-Hudaiban said the union is ready to follow and resolve issues of farmers and coordinate with concerned authorities to resolve this problem. He said a meeting was held with co-ops and farmers' representatives to discuss their demands. He said that among the suggestions to resolve this problem is to widen areas designated for farmers in co-ops to display their products and sell them. He said national products must have priority at co-ops and markets due to their true value and quality.

A CAREER OPPORTUNITY WITH THE WORLD'S FAVOURITE JEWELLER

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SALES EXECUTIVE (Job Ref: 3025)

- Indian (Candidates speaking Arabic, Telugu, Kannada, Bengali, Tamil)
- Candidates must speak English
- Candidates with Retail Sales experience are preferred
- Transferable Visa
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Your application must reach the below address on or before 25/05/2019.

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Local

Amir commends Kuwait police's role in restoring security, enforcing law

Sheikh Sabah applauds firefighters for saving lives, properties



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and other senior state officials pose for a group photo with Kuwait Fire Service Directorate personnel.— Amiri Diwan photos



(From left) Deputy Chairman of National Guard Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah at the Ministry of Interior's Headquarters.



(From left) His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs at the Kuwait Fire Service Directorate.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Tuesday praised the honorable role and efforts by police personnel to restore security and enforce laws as well as serve citizens. This came during a speech by His Highness the Amir while visiting the Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's building at the Ministry of Interior's Headquarters. His Highness the Amir expressed his pleasure to meet alongside His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Deputy Chairman of National Guard Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as well as accompanying brothers to exchange greetings on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. He told the police personnel that they have repeatedly proven that the police institution is able to preserve the safety of citizens, and protect both private and public properties during the heavy rains that hit the country last year. He said such efforts, made in collaboration with other concerned bodies, were highly appreciated by both nationals and residents.

"The security system is the main pillar of the potentials of every society. Through making success by your personnel, tranquility prevails amongst the society's individuals. This contributes to the building of a righteous society through which the home is developed," His Highness the Amir said. His Highness the Amir has reiterated that the state is continuing support the Ministry of Interior to upgrade all its sectors and raise the efficiency of all personnel as well as provide the most modern equipment and devices needed by the Ministry to help it play its vital role. His Highness the Amir also extolled direct and indirect communications by police personnel with nationals and residents, via social media, to disseminate security culture and laws so as to curb crimes and deter those who try to destabilize the country.

Repugnant phenomena

Highness the Amir referred to the spread of some repugnant phenomena like drugs and violation of law by some careless drivers, saying such phenomena are rejected by "our conservative and peaceful society." "Such acts are not related to our identity and cul-

ture, and distort the civilized image of our dear homeland. This requires you (addressing police personnel) to intensify your efforts so as to reduce the spread of these phenomena through enforcing laws and using the most effective legal means to eliminate these phenomena," His Highness the Amir noted. Finally, His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah Almighty to help all people make success to serve their dear homeland, and to bless the souls of martyrs with mercy in Paradise.

Ministry of Interior Undersecretary Lieutenant General Essam Al-Nahham said the police forces would always remain committed to application of the law and deter every attempt against the country's security, but with a guarantee on freedom. Nahham said the police personnel worked relentlessly during last year's floods and carried out rescue operations and secured smooth traffic throughout the heavy rain, in collaboration with the army, national guard, firefighters and other state institutions. He said the rate of crime, theft and possession of arms and ammunition has declined, and the Ministry of Interior adopted a strategy aimed at cracking down on human trafficking, improve

human rights and rights of the child. The Interior Ministry, said Nahham, intensified its campaign against drugs, and installed 3,000 monitoring cameras in 300 mosques nationwide.

Saving lives

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah praised firefighters for saving lives and properties, and their bravery in dealing with dangerous incidents. His Highness the Amir made the remarks during a visit to Kuwait Fire Service Directorate's (KFSD) headquarters, commending firefighters for their efforts during last year's floods. His Highness the Amir expressed his pleasure to meet alongside His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Deputy Chairman of National Guard Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah with the firefighters to exchange greetings on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan.

He urged firefighters to make sure buildings were complying with safety standards,

and told them they should intensify their inspection of properties and not exclude any violator in order to protect people and properties. His Highness the Amir urged firefighters to raise public awareness on best practices to deal with accidents, especially fires.

KFSD Director General Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Mekrad said the Directorate realized many achievements and succeeded in protecting people and properties, as well as preserving national economy citing last year's floods. He said the annual Shamel exercise, held this year under patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister, brought together 30 government institutions to show the collective efforts of state department to deal with emergencies. Mekrad said KFSD succeeded in reducing fire accidents by eight percent compared to last year despite growing population and facilities. KFSD, he added, has been contributing to completion of mega development projects to make sure they meet safety standards, citing Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway, Kuwait International Airport, Sabah Al-Salem University City and Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital.— KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah greets officers at the Ministry of Interior's Headquarters.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah addresses officers at the Ministry of Interior's Headquarters.



Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah presents a memento to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



KFSD Director General Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Mekrad presents a memento to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



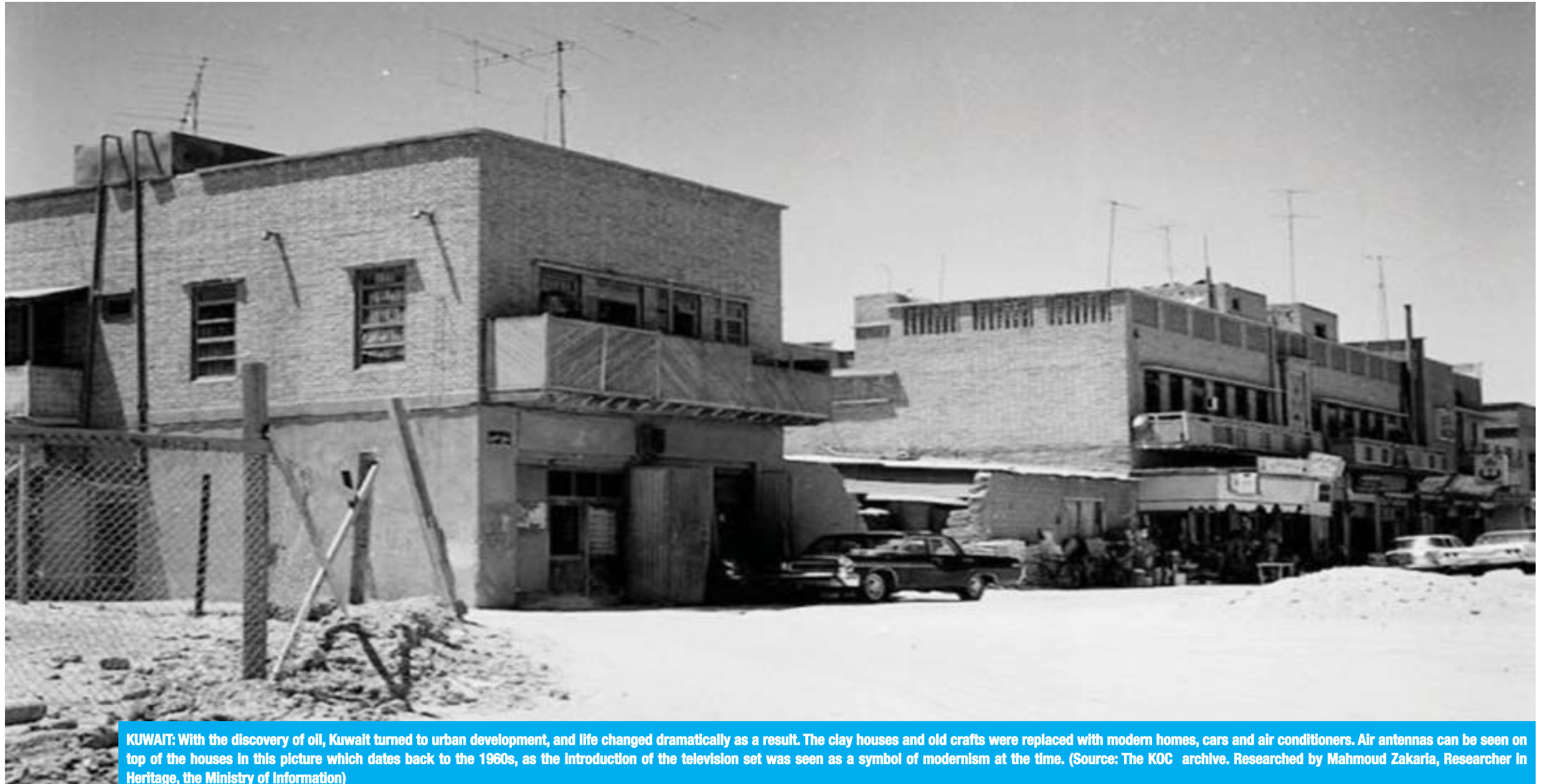
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah addresses firefighters at Kuwait Fire Service Directorate.



Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah presents a memento to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



History of Kuwait



KUWAIT: With the discovery of oil, Kuwait turned to urban development, and life changed dramatically as a result. The clay houses and old crafts were replaced with modern homes, cars and air conditioners. Air antennas can be seen on top of the houses in this picture which dates back to the 1960s, as the introduction of the television set was seen as a symbol of modernism at the time. (Source: The KOC archive. Researched by Mahmoud Zakaria, Researcher in Heritage, the Ministry of Information)

US Press Attache bids farewell to colleagues, friends

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The US Embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission Larry Memmott hosted a ghabqa recently to bid farewell to departing press attache Heather Ward. The event was held at Memmott's residence in Salam and attended by local

reporters and invited guests. Ward served as press attache for four years. "It's been wonderful to be here for the last four years; I served three years as press attache and one year as ranking attache. Very few are given this long to serve in one post. I am grateful and truly blessed to be here and able to see the beauty of this country and people," she said.

Ward said the relationship with local media people was a great experience that she will treasure for the rest of her life. "It's really great knowing all you people and actually working with you guys to make sure that our message is sent to all people concerned. I will be sad leaving you guys here, but this is not the end - I will keep you posted and will keep coming to

say hello and meet friends," she said. "Kuwaitis are hospitable people - they invite us in their houses to dine with them. I am also part of a book club, where I enjoyed much," she mentioned. Ward's next posting is in Cairo, but in the meantime, she'll head back to the US for a short break. "Thank you Kuwait and until then, I am grateful to everyone," she said.



KUWAIT: The US Embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission Larry Memmott (left) and US press attache Heather Ward.
— Photos by Joseph Shagra



Ramadan is a great time for family gatherings

By Faten Omar

Ramadan is a joyful time of year in the Muslim world as fasters gather at sundown to break their fast with family and friends. In Kuwait, there are many traditions and activities that take place every year. To commemorate Ramadan and the experiences of our readers, this year the Kuwait Times is asking readers what they love about Ramadan. What is your favorite food, activity, memory, event, or thing that you absolutely adore and look forward to each year? We want to know. Email local@kuwaittimes.com with your answer and it might end up in the newspaper.

Mohamed Ayman, 22, a Mechanical Engineer Student in Australian College of Kuwait, told Kuwait Times that he likes family gatherings and having all members of the family breaking their fast together. "I like the vibe and atmosphere of Ramadan in all places, which motivates you even more and is a joy to the eye. Going home to your family and visiting friends is a great thing that helps unite everyone and strengthen our bonds," he said. Ayman added that there are too many opportunities for people to per-



form good deeds and volunteer to help the poor and those who are in need, mainly by donating food or money to them.



AUB distributes 'Maachla' boxes to families in need

KUWAIT: Within its social program for the holy month of Ramadan, Ahli United Bank (AUB) launched its initiative to distribute 'Maachla' foodstuff boxes to Families in Need. A number of AUB volunteers participated in this initiative. They arranged the boxes that include the food items needed in this blessed month to the families in need around Kuwait.

On this occasion, Sahar Dashti, General Manager of Customer Protection Department, and who is in charge of the bank's Social Responsibility Program, said: following the position impact touched of our initiative we started last year to distribute Maachla boxes, we are pleased to distribute these foodstuff boxes for the second consecutive year to the most needy families during Ramadan to pro-

vide them with the supplies of Ramadan according to the best food specifications, reducing the waste of food in the distribution of ready meals. In addition, the distribution of supplies provides the needy a better opportunity to prepare their food in their own home themselves, preserving their dignity.

Dashti added: We are proud of the efforts exerted by AUB team of volunteers who have exhibited great enthusiasm to participate in the arranging and packaging of Maachla boxes and distributing them before breakfast in different parts of Kuwait, including Sabhan and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and other places. Dashti explained that AUB has also participated in supporting and assisting charitable societies such as the Kuwait Food Bank and Kuwait Red Crescent Society in distributing Maachla boxes to the needy. Dashti added: This initiative, which lasts from the 3rd to the 20th of Ramadan, is an extension of AUB contributions to supporting and encouraging social initiatives aimed at developing and building our society and improving the living conditions of disadvantaged families. Through this initiative, AUB has been able to motivate all its employees to play their part towards the society and to consolidate their social work concept.

Local



Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa hosts media ghabqa event



KUWAIT: Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa recently hosted its annual media ghabqa event at the exquisite Layali Al-Messilah Tent. The event was organized in celebration of the holy month of Ramadan and in recognition of the ongoing support and efforts made by the media sector.

Upon arrival, the guests were welcomed by General Manager at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa, Savino Leone, along with the hotel man-

agement team. In his speech, Leone expressed his sincere appreciation to the media for their continued support and invited them to enjoy the distinctive true Ramadan hospitality of the special evening. He also extended his gratitude to Lincoln Alghanim, the diamond sponsors of Layali Al-Messilah Ramadan Tent for the entire period of Ramadan.

The evening was held in the family-friendly Layali Al-Messilah Ramadan Tent with its sophisticated

and elegant design and decor, offering a rich cultural and authentic experience along with a fantastic opportunity to engage and network in a unique surrounding. The evening was complemented by enlivening sounds of traditional live Arabic music and a sumptuous Ramadan buffet featuring a wide variety of Middle Eastern favorites as well as international delicacies.

The ghabqa lasted till after midnight and Jumeirah

Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa ensured that each guest had a truly memorable evening filled with warm hospitality and exceptional delights. The Layali Al-Messilah Tent is designed in perfect Arabian style and can accommodate private iftars and ghabqas for families and corporate bookings. Create unforgettable memories by celebrating traditional Ramadan festivities with loved ones at the Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa.



Gulf Bank Ramadan campaign garners 8.5 million+ views

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank's Ramadan campaign acquired a record number of viewers in the first week of the holy month, garnering over 8.5 million views across various social media channels. The campaign makes use of a unique advertising move - the first of its kind in Kuwait and the region - in which viewers were given the chance to determine the ending of the story by voting for one of the two main characters, resulting in widespread engagement with the videos.

This year, Gulf Bank's Ramadan campaign revolves around the story of Lulwa, who as a young girl captures the hearts of two neighborhood boys, Aziz and Nasser. During the course of the story, both Aziz and Nasser end up vying for Lulwa's affections, with both eventually requesting her hand in marriage. The story of Lulwa's engagement highlights

authentic Kuwaiti customs and values, including girgean, close-knit neighbors, caring families, and the humility and simplicity of the Kuwaiti people. At the end of the main video, both Aziz and Nasser are shown attending Lulwa's engagement, but is unclear which of the suitors Lulwa will choose. That decision was left up to the viewers, an advertising decision that marked its debut this year on Gulf Bank's social media channels. After watching a series of short videos featuring Lulwa's mother interviewing the two candidates, viewers voted for the candidate they believed would make the best match. After a round of voting, Aziz emerged as the best suitor. The campaign's conclusion showing the end of Lulwa's story is scheduled to be released on Gulf Bank's social media channels today.



Commenting on the announcement, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "We were very pleased with the response to our Ramadan campaign this year, a story which reflects the values of the people of Kuwait. Our goal was to engage our viewers in a way unlike anything that has been done before and, by partnering with Joy



Productions to help bring this creative concept to life, we were able to garner more than 8.5 million views across multiple channels in just one week. We would like to also take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to the production and presentation of this work, including: the narrator, Mama Anisa; our guest of honor, Hoda Khatib; music and

soundtrack producer, Bashar Al-Shatti; and writer Heba Hamada who did such a beautiful job in delivering the message we had wanted to convey."

To watch Gulf Bank's Ramadan ad, visit the Gulf Bank YouTube channel. To find out more about Gulf Bank, customers can visit one of the Gulf Bank's 58 branches or log on to www.e-gulfbank.com.

NBK launches Ramadan road safety awareness initiative

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) launched an awareness campaign aimed at reducing traffic accidents during the holy month of Ramadan, especially around iftar time as some drivers attempt to reach their destinations by speeding and committing traffic violations. The campaign includes the distribution of small snacks for drivers to break their fasting around iftar time, at strategic intersections and traffic lights, as well as bus stops. NBK is committed to adopting value-added social initiatives, especially those related to the holy month of Ramadan. This awareness campaign aimed at increasing social responsibility regarding safe driving and adhering to traffic laws, even if it was at the expense of arriving late, as it makes human safety and averting traffic accidents a priority.

The initiative is an awareness campaign that involves a large number of volunteers and places emphasis on road safety. NBK is proud to be an integral part of



awareness campaigns, like this initiative, which combines giving and sharing spirit in offering snacks to drivers to break their fasting and raising road safety awareness to reduce traffic accidents, especially around iftar time.

For over 20 years, NBK has carried out 'Do Good Deeds in Ramadan' program, which includes many

events, contributions, social welfare activities and voluntary activities. This initiative is in line with NBK's keenness to reach out to various social institutions and all sectors of the society, maintaining its leading position as a dedicated private institution towards CSR responsibility and transforming it into real actions with substantive social dimension.

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Sudan generals and protesters in crunch talks on ruling body

In India election, a \$14 tool helps overcome WhatsApp controls

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WASHINGTON: National Security Advisor John Bolton listens while US President Donald Trump speaks to the press before a meeting with Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban in the Oval Office of the White House on May 13, 2019. —AFP

Bolton beats war drums in US-Iran standoff

When it comes to Iran, White House seems to be bristling for conflict

WASHINGTON: War drums are beating louder in Washington's long-festering standoff with Iran and National Security Advisor John Bolton, a veteran champion of regime change, is the bandmaster. With his bushy mustache and beloved yellow legal pad, Bolton cuts a colorful figure at the White House. He's also something of an oddity. President Donald Trump ran on the promise to pull the United States out of unwinnable post-9/11 wars - from Afghanistan to Syria - that have consumed American lives and military budgets. That retreat remains one of Trump's strongest points in his pitch to be the outsider president.

But Bolton, in the most powerful government position he has ever held, is working in exactly the opposite direction. Iran is only the latest country in his crosshairs. At 70 and with a resume listing federal jobs back to the Ronald Reagan era, Bolton could easily have sidestepped into academia by now or continued taking paychecks from any number of think tanks. He's worked with a bunch of them.

Instead, he's in the heart of government and looking like he's having the time of his life. In Cuba, Venezuela and North Korea, there's no shortage of battlegrounds for Bolton's crusade against leaders he sees as tyrannical enemies. Communists and their ilk are one thing. But it's the

Middle East that really stirs Bolton's geopolitical adrenaline.

'Unrelenting force'

In the run-up to what is now widely acknowledged to have been the disastrous 2003 Iraq invasion, Bolton - then the under-secretary of state for arms control and international security affairs - was one of Washington's most energetic pro-war cheerleaders. Now, analysts say, he's showing similar enthusiasm for action with respect to longtime US, Israeli and Saudi foe Iran. The Pentagon's dispatch to the region over the last few days of an aircraft carrier group and nuclear-capable B-52 bombers was not meant to be subtle.

Bolton warned of "unrelenting force" in response to any attack by Iran. But sending planes and ships would pale in comparison to Bolton's latest demand, reported by The New York Times - the possible deployment of 120,000 troops to the Middle East. Whether Trump would accept that, ditching his mantra of no more "stupid wars", is far from clear. On Tuesday, Trump branded the Times' report "fake news" - but went on to add that he wouldn't rule out sending "a hell of a lot more" troops one day. What's certain is that Bolton, at a minimum, is getting heard. "Bolton is in ascendancy at

White House. He appears tough and strong - two things Trump values," said Robert Guttman, at the Johns Hopkins University's Center for Advanced Governmental Studies.

Slide to war?

No one would appear more unlikely than Trump to target another Middle Eastern quagmire. He's talked repeatedly, in remarkably undiplomatic tones, about the tragedy of sending US forces to die in places that Americans could barely find on a map. But when it comes to Iran, the White House seems to be bristling for conflict. Trump pulled out of an international agreement regulating Iran's nuclear activities, ramped up sanctions crippling the country's economy, and now has added the threat of firepower to increase the pressure.

Having backed Iran into a corner, the Trump administration is warning of severe consequences should Tehran harm US interests. On Sunday, mysterious attacks by unknown assailants against four ships, including two from Saudi Arabia, sent war talk up another notch. Paul Fritz, a foreign policy expert at Hofstra University, said the outside world will be "extraordinarily skeptical" about the White House narrative on Iran as a growing menace. After all, the US-led

invasion of Iraq was based on false accusations - supported by Bolton - against Saddam Hussein. "It does ring awfully similar to the Iraq war. There's good reason to be skeptical," Fritz said.

Trump decides?

Some fear that Bolton and his fellow hawks are out of control. "Sixteen years after the US invasion of Iraq, we are again barreling toward another unnecessary conflict in the Middle East based on faulty and misleading logic," senators Tom Udall and Dick Durbin, both Democrats, wrote Sunday in The Washington Post. But the unpredictable president may never graduate from bluster to bombs, analysts say. Trump himself said last week that he's used to reigning in Bolton's "strong views". "I actually temper John," Trump said. Barbara Slavin, an Iran specialist at the Atlantic Council, said there have been discrepancies between Trump and Bolton on "numerous occasions". Even if Bolton "has been advocating bombing Iran for as long as I can remember," she said Trump probably doesn't want a new war. "On the other hand, I don't think the president minds this idea of looking tough and of putting more pressure on Iran," she said. —AFP

Israeli accused of spitting at Polish ambassador

JERUSALEM: A 65-year-old Israeli man has been arrested for allegedly spitting at the Polish ambassador, police said yesterday, adding to tensions between the two countries. Israel's envoy to Poland Anna Azari was summoned to the Polish foreign ministry in Warsaw over the incident, Polish foreign ministry spokeswoman Ewa Suwara said. Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki called it a "xenophobic act of aggression".

Polish ambassador Marek Magierowski was sitting in his car on Tuesday when a man approached and "spat at him", police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said. Police arrested a 65-year-old from Herzliya, a city north of Tel Aviv, on Tuesday, Rosenfeld said. The suspect appeared before the Tel Aviv magistrates' court yesterday, where he was ordered to remain under house arrest for another day, Rosenfeld said. He was also banned from approaching the Polish embassy in Tel Aviv for 30 days.

The alleged incident came a day after Poland cancelled a visit by Israeli officials over their intention to raise the issue of the restitution of Jewish properties seized during the Holocaust, a matter Warsaw insists is closed. The Polish premier condemned the "racist attack". "Violence against diplomats or any other citizens should never be tolerated," Morawiecki tweeted yesterday. Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon expressed "our fullest sympathy to the ambassador and our shock at the attack."

According to Israel's Yediot Aharonot daily, Magierowski was also verbally accosted by the suspect in Hebrew, but did not understand anything except for the word "Pole" directed at him. Anti-Semitic concerns regarding Poland have recently resurfaced. Last year, Warsaw passed a law that made it illegal to accuse the Polish nation or state of complicity in Nazi German war crimes. The move sparked an outcry from Israel, which saw it as an attempt to ban testimonials on Polish crimes against Jews.—AFP

San Francisco bans facial recognition use by police, govt

SAN FRANCISCO: San Francisco has banned the use of facial recognition by police and government agencies, the first US city to take such a step as privacy fears mount in the country's technology capital. Backers of the legislation argued that using software and cameras to positively identify people is, as city councillor Aaron Peskin put it, "not ready for prime time". All but one of the nine members of San Francisco's board of supervisors endorsed the legislation, which will be voted on again next week in a procedural step not expected to change the outcome.

"The propensity for facial recognition technology to endanger civil rights and civil liberties substantially outweighs its purported benefits," read the legislation passed Tuesday. Facial recognition could "exacerbate racial injustice and threaten our ability to live free of continuous government monitoring," it added. The ban was part of broader legislation setting use and auditing policy for surveillance systems, creating high hurdles and requiring board approval for any city agencies.

"It shall be unlawful for any department to obtain, retain, access, or use any Face Recognition Technology or any information obtained from Face Recognition Technology," read a paragraph tucked into the lengthy document. The ban did not include airports or other federally regulated facilities. San Francisco is known as "the tech epicenter of the world," and its Bay Area is home to giants such as Facebook, Twitter, Uber and Google parent Alphabet. A similar ban is being considered across the bay in the city of Oakland. Worries about the technology include dangers of innocent people being misidentified as wrongdoers and that systems can infringe on privacy in everyday life.

'Keep the door open'

But supporters of the technology argue that facial recognition systems can help police fight crime and keep streets safer. Stop Crime SF, a local group, said facial recognition "can help locate missing children, people with dementia and fight sex trafficking". "Technology will



SAN FRANCISCO: Pedestrians walk along Powell Street on Tuesday. — AFP

improve and it could be a useful tool for public safety when used responsibly and with greater accuracy. We should keep the door open for that possibility," it said in a statement.

The technology has been credited with helping police capture dangerous criminals, but also criticized for mistaken identifications. Facial recognition "can be used in a passive way that doesn't require the knowledge, consent, or participation of the subject," the American Civil Liberties Union warned. "The biggest danger is that this technology will be used for general, suspicionless surveillance systems." Chinese authorities are using a vast system of facial recognition technology to track its Uighur Muslim minority across the country, according to a recent story in the New York Times. Beijing has already attracted widespread criticism for its treatment of Uighurs in the northwest region of Xinjiang, where up to one million members of mostly Muslim Turkic-speaking minority groups are held in internment camps, according to estimates cited by a UN panel.

But according to the Times article, facial recognition technology - integrated into China's huge networks of surveillance cameras - has been programmed to look exclusively for Uighurs based on their appearance and keep records of their movements across China. It is thought to be the first known example of a government intentionally using AI for racial profiling. —AFP

Alabama senate passes toughest abortion bill in US

MIAMI: The Alabama senate has passed the most restrictive abortion bill in the United States, which places a near-total ban on the termination of pregnancy - even in cases of rape and incest - and could punish doctors who perform the procedure with life in prison. The text passed by the Republican-led senate Tuesday has been sent to Governor Kay Ivey's desk for signature into law and, if approved, is expected to trigger a legal battle which its supporters hope will reach the Supreme Court.

Under the bill, performing an abortion is a crime that could land doctors who perform it in prison for 10 to 99 years. Abortions would only be legal if the life of the mother is in danger or the fetus has a fatal condition. The largest human rights defense organization in the United States, the ACLU, promised to file a lawsuit to block its implementation, saying the vote showed "how little they (conservative lawmakers) regard bodily autonomy". "This bill punishes victims of rape and incest by further taking away control over their own bodies and forcing them to give birth," it added.

The National Organization for Women called the bill "unconstitutional" and said its passage would "send women in the state back to the dark days of policymakers having control over their bodies, health, and lives". The Republican-led senate approved the measure by 25 votes to six on Tuesday. Governor Ivey has not yet said whether she will sign the bill. Unlike the doctors carrying out the procedures, women who undergo abortions would not be prosecuted.

Attempts to introduce an amendment providing exceptions for pregnancies conceived due to rape or incest were shut down by the state senate. "You just raped the state of Alabama yourself," state senate Democratic leader Bobby Singleton said after senators eliminated the amendment. "You're saying to my daughter you don't matter in the state of Alabama... It's ok for men to rape you and you're gonna have his baby if you get pregnant," he added, his voice sometimes breaking with emotion.—AFP

International

Thousands of Palestinians demonstrate to mark Nakba



A Palestinian demonstrator holds an anti-US placard during a rally marking the 71st anniversary of the Nakba in Ramallah.



Palestinians hold up paper cutouts of keys as they take part in a rally marking the 71st anniversary of the 'Nakba', or Catastrophe, yesterday in Ramallah in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. — AFP photos

GAZA CITY: Palestinians protested yesterday for the annual commemoration of what they call the Nakba, or catastrophe, when hundreds of thousands were expelled or fled during the 1948 war surrounding the creation of Israel. Thousands gathered at various locations along the volatile border fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip, while crowds also demonstrated in the occupied West Bank. Clashes erupted along parts of the border fence, with the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza reporting 47 people wounded, but the protests were smaller and calmer than anticipated, an AFP journalist said.

The AFP journalist on the border saw a number of kites being floated across the bor-

der and a fire breaking out inside Israeli territory. Palestinians in Gaza have regularly used kites with firebombs attached to them to set fires on the Israeli side of the fence. Israel's military said around 10,000 "rioters and demonstrators" were along the Gaza fence. "The rioters are setting tyres on fire and hurling rocks," it said in a statement. "A number of explosive devices have been hurled within the Gaza Strip as well, and a number of attempts have been made to approach the security fence." It said "troops are responding with riot dispersal means." In the West Bank city of Ramallah, protesters held up giant paper keys to symbolize their will to return to the lands and homes they were expelled from or were

forced to abandon, now located inside Israel.

Palestinians commemorate the Nakba every year. More than 700,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their land during the 1948 war surrounding the creation of Israel. Separately, there have also been regular protests and clashes along the Gaza border for more than a year. At least 293 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in Gaza since the protests began in March 2018. The majority died during the often-violent weekly protests, though others were killed in Israeli airstrikes or by tank fire in response to violence from Gaza. Six Israelis have been killed in Gaza-related violence over the same time period. — AFP



A wounded Palestinian demonstrator is carried away from the border fence during clashes with Israeli forces east of Gaza City in the Gaza Strip yesterday, following a protest marking the 71st anniversary of Nakba.

In Israel, Arab minority embraces Palestinian identity

KHUBBAYZA, Israel: Loudspeakers blared nationalist Arabic music across hillsides in northern Israel last Thursday as children ran across a field waving Palestinian flags. The scene was a rally for members of Israel's 21 percent Arab minority. The Israeli term for them is Israeli-Arabs, but many now reject that label, identifying instead as "Palestinian with Israeli citizenship," or simply "Palestinian". Each year they hold a gathering to mark the "Nakba" - or "Catastrophe" - when Palestinians lament the loss of their homeland in the 1948-49 war that surrounded the creation of the modern Jewish state.

The event is a celebration of Palestinian identity that, Arab politicians and academics say, reflects a change in thinking over the decades. On Thursday, coachloads arrived at a roped-off field near the Khubbayza, a ruined Palestinian village that lay 30 km south of Haifa and was destroyed in the fighting between Arab and Jewish forces in 1948. It and hundreds of others are now marked on paper and digital maps by groups such as "Palestine Remembered".

The Nakba rally is timed each year to coincide with the day that Israelis in the rest of the country celebrate Independence Day. On



Palestinian demonstrators gather east of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday during a protest marking the Nakba. — AFP

Thursday, Palestinian flags flew in the roped-off field where Israeli authorities gave permission for the gathering. Across a country lane, Israeli banners were draped across the hillside from which Israeli police watched, a drone hovering nearby.

Shouting over the music, Rula Nasr-Mazzawi, 42, a psychologist, said many of the first two generations of Arabs in post-1948

Israel were too scared to discuss matters of identity openly. "But now we are seeing the younger generation, the third generation, more and more identifying very frankly and very loudly as Palestinians," she said.

In an interview earlier this year Ahmad Tibi, an Arab member of Israel's parliament, said: "The term Israeli-Arabs is mistaken, it's not accurate. We are Palestinians by nationali-

ty, and we are Israeli citizens." He added: "They are saying Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Arabs in order to say that we are not Palestinians. We bypassed that. We are part of the Palestinian people, and we are struggling in order to be equal citizens."

Identity and citizenship

Israel's population recently passed the 9 million mark, according to the country's Central Bureau of Statistics. This includes 1.89 million Arab citizens - mostly Muslim, Druze and Christians - living alongside the 6.68 million Jews who make up the 74.2 percent majority. Professor As'ad Ghanem, 53, a Haifa University political scientist and co-author of the book "Palestinians in Israel" drew a distinction with Druze and Bedouin Arabs, many of whom serve in the Israeli military, taken by many as an indicator of integration. In contrast, most Muslims and Christian Arabs do not serve.

He said Israel's Arabs had undergone a slow transformation from their initial status as marginalized within both Israel, and the Arab world. A new generation of intellectuals and politicians were "much more strong than those in the 50s and 60s", and voiced their community's complaints about discrimination in the job market, and lack of services, he said. "The majority think that they want to be identified as Palestinian," he said. Nonetheless, he said most Israeli Arabs still valued their Israeli citizenship and would oppose attempts to transfer them to Gaza or the West Bank, where the Palestinian Authority exercises limited self-rule, because "they see all the troubles on the other side".

'Best conditions'

Recently, Arabs were angered after Israel's parliament last year passed the nation-state law, which declared that only Jews have the right of self-determination in the country. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reasserted that principle just before his victory in the election a month ago, saying on Instagram: "Israel is not a state of all its citizens. According to the basic nationality law we passed, Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people - and only it."

He sought to placate non-Jewish citizens (and critics at home and abroad) by adding "there is no problem with the Arab citizens of Israel. They have equal rights like all of us and the Likud government has invested more in the Arab sector than any other government." Some of the Arab minority disagree with the sentiments expressed at Thursday's rally, saying Israel protects them from threats in the Middle East. "I am very proud to be an Israeli-Arab," said Yoseph Haddad, 33, a Greek Catholic speaking in the mixed Jewish and Arab city of Haifa. "The fact is that if you take a look around all or most of the Arab nations, the Israeli-Arabs here in Israel are in the best conditions."

But Eyad Barghuthy, 39, a novelist and former head of the Arab Cultural Association, said there had been an evolution in identity. His generation had to struggle to find their roots within a country that emphasized the majority's narrative, he said, while a younger generation took their Palestinian-ness for granted. — Reuters

Gaza fisherman clings to dream of return to Jaffa

GAZA: Looking out across the Mediterranean, the elderly Gaza fisherman sits on a bench adorned with just one word - Jaffa. Mahmoud Al-Assi comes often to this blue bench. It is one of more than 120 such brightly-colored concrete seats that line the Gaza seafloor, each marked with the name of a town or village in Palestine, before Israel's creation in 1948. They bear the Arabic names for Beersheba (Bir as-Saba'), Acre (Akka), and Tel Aviv (Tal ar-Rabeca) - all towns that now lie in Israel.

Like many of Gaza's 1.3 million refugees, Assi, 73, visits the coastal benches regularly, as an emotional link to the towns their families left behind or were forced to leave. He comes espe-

cially around May 15, when Palestinians lament what they call the "Nakba" or "Catastrophe" - their defeat in the war of 1948-1949 that surrounded the birth of the modern state of Israel. It is traditionally marked the day after Israel declared independence in 1948. Although Assi left Jaffa nearly seven decades ago as a child, he still regards it as "home".

Like many Palestinian refugees, he seeks the right of return to his former homeland. But successive Israeli governments have rejected any such right, fearing the country would lose its Jewish majority. "I have never lost hope, and never will, even when I am dead and buried," he told Reuters as he looked out on the waters that bore him to safety when his father, a citrus merchant and fisherman, put him and his seven siblings on a boat to sail south from Jaffa to Gaza in 1950.

In his new life as a refugee in Gaza, those same waters provided a livelihood for him as he brought up his 18 children. Two of Assi's brothers fled to Lebanon, where they lived and died as refugees. In Jaffa, another fisherman and an Arab citizen of Israel, Atta Assi, 86, recalled how Israeli forces had

taken control of the town in 1948, imposing a curfew and a year-long "open detention" by erecting a fence around his neighborhood.

"I remember in 1948, when people were displaced, my father told my uncles: 'Don't leave here'", said Assi, who belongs to the same clan as Mahmoud Al-Assi in Gaza. "He told them not to leave because the best place to stay is here. But they didn't listen and left to Lebanon," said Assi, who began his life as a fisherman on the day the fence came down.

In the early 1970s, when times were more peaceful and Gaza wasn't sealed off from Israel by checkpoints, blast walls and razor wire, Gaza fisherman Assi was able to travel the 60 km up the Mediterranean coast to visit Jaffa and see his birthplace. He saw his family's unfinished home had since been completed, and was inhabited, but couldn't bring himself to knock at the door and see who was living there.

"Our house in Jaffa was just by the sea, nothing and no building separated us from the sea ... I remember the small mosque and I remember the seaport," Assi said. — Reuters



A Palestinian demonstrator attends a rally marking the Nakba in Ramallah.



An Israeli border guard keeps watch as Palestinian demonstrators shout slogans during a rally marking the 'Nakba' yesterday in Bethlehem in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

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International

Sudan generals, protesters in crunch talks on ruling body

Army and protesters agree on three-year transition period

KHARTOUM: Army generals and protest leaders are yesterday expected to finalize the make-up of a new body to govern Sudan for three years, the thorniest issue in installing civilian rule. The protest movement that brought down president Omar Al-Bashir after 30 years of iron-fisted rule is demanding a civilian-led transition, which the generals have steadfastly resisted since bowing to their demands and toppling the autocrat. The latest breakthrough came despite the overall talks being marred by violence that left six people dead late on Monday in and around a sit-in held by protesters outside the army headquarters in Khartoum.

Yesterday's crucial negotiations are due to start at 9:00 pm (1900 GMT), said Khalid Omar Yousef, a leader from the protest movement the Alliance for Freedom and Change. "The announcement is expected after midnight," he told AFP. The current talks began on Monday and the two sides have since agreed on an overall civilian structure, including a three-year transitional period for the full transfer of power to a civilian administration.

They have also agreed that parliament be composed of 300 members for the transition, with 67 percent from the Alliance for Freedom and Change and the rest drawn from other political groups. The first six months of the transition would be devoted to reaching peace accords with rebels in war zones including Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan. But the composition of the new sovereign council has been the toughest part of the negotiations, with the two sides so far offering different make-ups of the body which is expected to take all key decisions concerning national issues.

The generals want it to be military-led, while the protesters insist on a majority civilian body. "We vow to our people that the agreement will be completed fully within 24 hours in a way that it meets the people's aspirations,"

General Yasser Al-Atta, one of the members of the current ruling military council, told reporters yesterday.

'All powers with cabinet'

The new council is expected to form a transitional civilian government, which in turn would prepare for the first post-Bashir election after the three-year changeover period ends. The protest leader Yousef downplayed the role of the proposed ruling council, insisting the country would have a powerful cabinet. "All powers will be in the cabinet's hand, which will be formed by the Alliance for Freedom and Change," he said. "Only the ministers of defense and interior are going to be with the military."

He also reiterated the protesters' demand that the "majority of the (sovereign) council members must be civilians". Tensions have soared this week as deadly violence erupted at the site of the long-running sit-in protest outside the army complex in Khartoum. The shootings that killed five protesters and an army major on Monday came a day after protesters blocked Nile Street, a key avenue in the capital, which the generals said was "totally unacceptable".

The United States blamed the army for the deaths. They "were clearly the result of the Transitional Military Council trying to impose its will on the protesters by attempting to remove roadblocks", the US embassy in Khartoum said in a statement on Facebook. "The decision for security forces to escalate the use of force, including the unnecessary use of tear gas, led directly to the unacceptable violence later in the day that the TMC was unable to control," it added.

'We are optimistic'

The United States has consistently called on the military council to transfer power to civilians, while Sudan's Arab allies Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and



KHARTOUM: Sudanese protestors celebrate after an agreement was reached with the military council to form a three-year transition period for transferring power to a full civilian administration yesterday. — AFP

Egypt have thrown their weight behind the generals. The protest movement, after initially blaming the militias of the former regime for the bloodshed, later accused the military council. "We put the whole responsibility on the military council for what happened yesterday because it's their direct responsibility to guard and protect the citizens," Mohamed Naji Al-Assam, a prominent figure in the movement, told reporters on Tuesday.

Thousands of protesters meanwhile remain camped outside the military complex in central Khartoum awaiting the outcome of the ongoing talks. The sit-in has become the focal point for the protest movement, overtaking the near daily protests that had been held across Sudan while Bashir remained in power. One of the protesters, Mohamed Adam, said he was happy about the way the negotiations have turned out so far. — AFP

News in brief

US suspends Nigeria waivers

LAGOS: The United States has suspended interview waivers for Nigerians wishing to renew their travel documents in an effort to "promote legitimate travel", its embassy said here. The US embassy said in a statement late Tuesday that Nigerian applicants seeking to renew a non-immigrant visa must apply online and would be required to appear in person to be interviewed like first-timers. The measure took effect on Tuesday. The embassy said it was "taking this step to provide more efficient customer service and promote legitimate travel, and will continue to facilitate applications of established travelers to the best of its ability." The suspension comes a month after reports that Washington was considering new visa restrictions on countries whose citizens have a track record of overstaying their visas - with Nigerians making up the third highest number of overstays last year. — AFP

McDonald's to help US citizens

VIENNA: Lost and hungry for help? American citizens who find themselves in distress in Austria can now seek support at an unusual address - McDonald's. Under a new partnership, outlets of the US fast food chain throughout Austria will help American citizens from yesterday to get in touch with their embassy, it said on Facebook. "Staff (at any McDonald's in Austria) will assist them in making contact with the US Embassy for consular services," the embassy wrote. Consular services include reporting a lost or stolen passport or seeking travel assistance, the post said. Facebook users commenting on the post wasted no time in coining terms such as "McVisa" and "McPassport". While some hailed the move as "awesome", others seemed less impressed. "Because apparently we are too incompetent to look up the us embassy online??" one user wrote. — AFP

Sellner admits emails with killer

VIENNA: The leader of an Austrian far-right group has confirmed a media report that he had more extensive contact with the suspect behind deadly mosque attacks in New Zealand than previously admitted. Austrian investigators have been probing the Identitarian Movement Austria (IBOe) after it emerged that its figurehead Martin Sellner received a donation from alleged Christchurch gunman Brenton Tarrant. So far, Sellner - whose group is known for its anti-immigration stunts - had publicly denied having had contact with Tarrant other than sending him a "thank you" email for the A1,500 donation received in Jan 2018. In reply to Sellner's "thank you" message, Tarrant said it had only been a small contribution in comparison to the work that Sellner was doing. In a further exchange, Sellner invited Tarrant for a beer or coffee if he was ever in Vienna. — AFP

Shut accounts, Airbnb users urged

RAMALLAH: Campaigners called on supporters of the Palestinian cause to at least temporarily deactivate their Airbnb accounts yesterday to protest its listings in settlements in the occupied West Bank. After Israeli pressure, the company last month reversed course and scrapped plans to ban homes in settlements from listing on the site. A range of organizations including Jewish Voice for Peace and the Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy have backed a call for an at least temporary deactivation, with organizers saying thousands had pledged to do so. "Ultimately we would like Airbnb to reverse its decision but we know that won't be easy," Salem Barahmeh, executive director of PIPD, told AFP. "But I think what we ultimately want to do is end this culture of impunity where international companies are allowed to be complicit in supporting war crimes and Israeli settlements that have been responsible for displacing Palestinians." — AFP

Ghana cracks down on 'West Togoland' separatist dream

ACCRA: With his white hair and walking stick, Charles Kormi Kudzordzi does not look like the leader of a revolutionary separatist movement seeking to forge a new West African nation. Even his supporters call the frail 85-year-old "Papavi", or grandfather. But Ghana's security forces are not taking any chances. A joint police and military operation cracked down this month on a group that said it was preparing to declare its own nation in the eastern Volta region bordering Togo. Soldiers blocked roads and stormed houses, arresting 89 people across the region, most of them around the town of Ho, 150 km northeast of Ghana's capital Accra.

The separatists, members of the innocuous-sounding "Homeland Study Group Foundation", or HSGF, call their dream country "Western Togoland". "We are not leaving anything to chance," said Prince Dogbatse, Volta region police spokesman. "We're on high alert... to protect the territorial boundaries of Ghana." Police say the group not only has an anthem, constitution and flag, but is also training a militia force. The Volta region is also a stronghold of Ghana's main opposition party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC).

'Storm in a tea cup'

A video taken by a local journalist of the arrests shows Kudzordzi leaning heavily on a carved wooden stick, flanked by men in combat helmets and automatic rifles

Don't 'politicize' electricity, Iraq minister urges

BAGHDAD: With temperatures rising on both the weather and security fronts across the region, Iraq's freshman electricity minister is warning that politicizing his country's power sector could have ripple effects around the world. "Electricity is a national security issue," Luay Al-Khateeb told AFP in a wide-ranging interview at the ministry's headquarters in Baghdad. "In the end, any political, economic or security crisis in Iraq will affect the whole region - and the global economy will be open to threat. We're urging for this file not to be politicized."

Khateeb, a 51-year-old energy expert, was appointed minister in October with a mandate to revamp Iraq's grid, which was already ailing before it was further crippled by the Islamic State (IS) group. But he faces a pair of formidable political challenges to a typically dry, technical portfolio: the threat of renewed protests and escalating US pressure on energy-supplier Iran. Demonstrations erupted in 2018 across Iraq against poor services, including the measly few hours of state-provided electricity per day. This summer will be a de facto referendum on the government's progress.

Khateeb, optimistic, said his ministry had revived out-of-service stations, fixed transmission lines, and brought temporary generators to battered areas including Mosul

Sisi opens huge suspension bridge over the Nile

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi yesterday opened a suspension bridge over the Nile touted as the world's widest, one of a series of military-led, mega-projects designed to improve infrastructure and provide jobs. The bridge, which crosses the Nile just north of central Cairo, is a key link in a highway stretching from the Red Sea in the east to Egypt's northwestern Mediterranean coast, and is meant to help reduce congestion in the capital.

Traffic ground to a halt in parts of central Cairo yesterday morning as Sisi travelled to open the bridge with ministers and military generals. At its widest, the bridge has

leading him towards a military helicopter. The retired teacher pauses, as if out of breath, before getting in. Kudzordzi was flown to the confines of the high-security walls of Ghana's Bureau of National Investigations in Accra, accused, with seven other men, of being the group's leaders, and charged with treason. They risk the death penalty if found guilty.

Kudzordzi - who was granted bail but could not meet the conditions - will next appear in court on May 22 with his co-accused. A further 81 supporters have been released on bail on illegal gathering charges. Separatists say the Volta area has a unique history and culture and warrants being its own country, but reject accusations of planning violence to achieve their goal. "Our activities have always been in the open," the fugitive secretary of HSGF, George Nyakpo, told AFP. Local lawmaker Rockson-Nelson Dafeamekpor accused police of heavy-handedness. "We are in a democratic state, and you don't just arrest people because you think they have an intention to demonstrate," said Dafeamekpor. "It's a storm in a tea cup."

'Craftiness of Britain'

The region's problems are deeply rooted in divisions created by its colonial past. During the so-called "Scramble for Africa", Britain seized much of what is today Ghana, while Germany grabbed areas to the east, then Togoland. After Germany's defeat in World War One, Togoland was split west-east between Britain and France. When Britain abandoned its empire in 1956, Ghana was among the first African colonies to gain freedom. The people of British Togoland were given a choice between Ghana and Togo, and Britain said nearly two-thirds opted to incorporate their area into Ghana.

Separatists say that vote was rigged. "It was the craftiness of Britain... that deprived us of our self-rule and sovereignty," the HSGF said in a statement last year.

that IS held in the north. "On October 25, the week I took office, electricity generation sat at between 9.5 to 10 GW. It is now at 15 GW," Khateeb said. Most Iraqi provinces, he said, "will receive no less than 20 hours of electricity per day. This, to be honest, is a level of production the country hasn't seen in years."

In the medium term, the ministry is developing solar power, gas-capturing capabilities, and energy deals with neighbors. It signed contracts worth A700 million (\$785 million) with Germany's Siemens last month, amid expectations of similar deals with American rival General Electric. Around a third of Iraq's electricity relies on Iran, through 28 million cu m of gas piped in to feed stations or the direct import of up to 1,300 megawatts of Iranian-produced electricity.

When Washington reimposed sanctions on Iran last year, it granted Iraq temporary exemptions until late June. Khateeb declined to say what would happen if the waiver was not again extended. "I'm not in the business of making predictions, but what I ask for from world powers is a little reasonableness so we can live in peace on this planet," he said.

Tensions have ramped up between Washington and Tehran, with Baghdad often caught in the middle. Iraqi government sources say the US is pressuring Baghdad to partner with American companies including General Electric, ExxonMobil and Honeywell as it weans off Iranian energy. Khateeb acknowledged foreign embassies were pushing for their interests in Iraq's power sector, but said Baghdad would try to steer clear of the politics. "The truth is we don't want to be a scapegoat in conflicts that will negatively affect regional security, and in turn the global economy," he said. — AFP

six traffic lanes in each direction and measures 67.3 m across. A regional director for the Guinness Book of World Records present at the opening said that makes it the world's widest suspension bridge.

Around one million cubic metres of concrete as well as 1,400 km of steel wire for 160 suspension cables were used in its construction, according to a presentation given at the formal opening. The bridge crosses the Nile's Warraq Island, which has an estimated 100,000 residents, some of whom have protested against planned demolitions on the island and plans to develop it into a "modern residential community".

On an inspection visit to the suspension bridge last month, Sisi denied reports the island could be sold to investors and said the state could not forcefully evict residents. Other prestige projects launched under Sisi include an expansion of the Suez Canal, completed in 2015, and the building of a new capital in the desert east of Cairo that is currently under construction. — Reuters

Bigger than Belgium

If Western Togoland were a country, it would be home to millions of people and possibly rich in oil and gold reserves. Multiple ethnic groups live in the area: Christians, Muslims, and followers of voodoo. Separatists say the territory is a strip 550 kilometres (340 miles) long and 60 km wide - stretching from the border with Burkina Faso in the north to the Gulf of Guinea, sandwiched between Ghana and Togo.

UN documents from 1955 estimate then-British Togoland at 33,776 sq km - slightly bigger than Belgium. But while the colonial-era area was landlocked, separatists today claim access to the sea. Historians reject a claim by separatists that in 1956 the people of Togoland were promised another referendum after 50 years. "It is not true," said Professor Wilson Yayoh, from Ghana's University of Cape Coast.

Long history

Backers of Western Togoland claim widespread support, but many in Volta seem suspicious. "Their mission is impossible," said trader Doris Mawusi. "Ghana is our homeland and we are here to stay." "We don't trust these HSGF people," said Joseph Doe, a 57-year-old fisherman. "They are pursuing their parochial interests. What track record do they have to rule over us?" The separatists began campaigning in 1972 as the "National Liberation Movement of Togoland", dominated by the Ewe tribal group. Their calls to renegotiate borders sparked tensions between Ghana and Togo, and in 1976, Accra banned the group. Back then, US diplomatic cables said the government was "unusually sensitive to Ewe separatist challenges, which may be real or imaginary". Today, the issue seems to cause no less twitchiness in the Ghanaian capital. — AFP

'Our role model': Palestinians mock Abbas booklet

RAMALLAH: A booklet promoted by the Palestinian education ministry hailing president Mahmud Abbas has received criticism and mockery online, prompting the government to stress it is not an official text. The booklet, titled "Our role model, Our president," has a picture of Abbas on its cover and was said to contain quotes and thoughts of the 84-year-old leader. A number of top Palestinian officials attended an event for its launch last week, and the education ministry had initially said it planned to distribute it to schools.

Critics mocked it and expressed fear it would become part of the Palestinian school curriculum. Officials have since insisted it was the work of pupils at a school in the occupied West Bank and would not be added to the curriculum. AFP was not able to obtain a copy of the booklet, despite requests to both the education ministry and the school where it was launched. The booklet gained prominence when pictures were widely circulated of Saeb Erekat, secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organization and a longtime Abbas ally, presenting it.

Its cover includes a picture of Abbas giving a speech at the United Nations. In response Khaled al-Hroub, a Palestinian writer based in London, lined up a list of Palestinian literary figures and journalists opposed to the wider dissemination of the book. "The publication of a book with a title like this implies paternalism regardless of the content," he said on his Facebook page. "We want to build a society and a civil state based on freedom and the critical mind, not on paternalism."

Erekat said the criticism was unnecessary. "I ask all those who consider that the efforts made by 10th and 11th graders at Al-Bireh Girls School to issue a booklet deserved mockery that they read it before condemning it," he said in a statement. The education ministry said in a statement it was part of a wider project and would not be included in the curriculum. One social media comment sarcastically said the phrase "security coordination is sacred" would be taught in schools.

The Palestinian Authority's security services coordinate with their Israeli counterparts, despite it being highly unpopular among Palestinians. — AFP

International

In India election, a \$14 software tool helps overcome WhatsApp controls

Political workers using these tools to boost campaigning

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI: WhatsApp clones and software tools that cost as little as \$14 are helping Indian digital marketers and political activists bypass anti-spam restrictions set up by the world's most popular messaging app, Reuters has found. The activities highlight the challenges WhatsApp, which is owned by Facebook Inc, faces in preventing abuse in India, its biggest market with more than 200 million users.

With fervent campaigning in India's staggered general election, which concludes on May 19, the demand for such tools has surged, according to digital companies and sources in the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its main rival, the Congress party. After false messages on WhatsApp last year sparked mob lynchings in India, the company restricted forwarding of a message to only five users. The software tools appear to overcome those restrictions, allowing users to reach thousands of people at once.

Rohitash Repswal, who owns a digital marketing business in a cramped, residential neighborhood of New Delhi, said he ran a 1,000 rupee (\$14) piece of software round-the-clock in recent months to send up to 100,000 WhatsApp messages a day for two BJP members. "Whatever WhatsApp does, there's a workaround," Repswal said during an interview at his small, two-bedroom house.

Reuters found WhatsApp was misused in at least three ways in India for political campaigning: Free clone apps available online were used by some BJP and Congress workers to manually forward messages on a mass basis;

software tools which allow users to automate delivery of WhatsApp messages; and some firms offering political workers the chance to go onto a website and send bulk WhatsApp messages from anonymous numbers.

At least three software tools were available on Amazon.com's India website. When purchased by a Reuters reporter, they arrived as compact discs tucked inside thin cardboard casings, with no company branding. WhatsApp declined a Reuters request to allow testing such tools for reporting this story. "We are continuing to step up our enforcement against imposter WhatsApp services and take legal action by sending cease and desist letters to hundreds of bulk messaging service providers to help curb abuse," a spokeswoman said. "We do not want them to operate on our platform and we work to ban them".

WhatsApp Clones

Modified versions of popular apps have become common as technically-savvy hobbyists have long reverse-engineered them. Tools purporting to bypass WhatsApp restrictions are advertised in videos and online forums aimed at users in Indonesia and Nigeria, both of which held major elections this year. For Indian politicians, WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter are key campaigning tools to target the country's near 900 million voters.

Two Congress sources and one BJP source told Reuters their workers used clone apps such as "GBWhatsApp" and "JTWhatsApp", which allowed

them to cut through WhatsApp's restrictions. Both apps have a green-color interface that closely resembles WhatsApp and can be downloaded for free from dozens of technology blogs. They are not available on Google's official app store but work on Android phones.

WhatsApp describes such apps as "unofficial" and says its users can face bans, which means the company can block the account associated with a particular mobile number if it detects unusual activity. Some Congress workers said they did not care. "WhatsApp occasionally bans some of these numbers, but the volunteers would use new (mobile) SIM cards to sign up," said a Congress member with direct knowledge of the activities.

In Mumbai, a person in the social media team of a senior BJP candidate said no restrictions on JTWhatsApp meant his team could easily send forwards to up to 6,000 people a day, as well as video files containing political content which would be far bigger in size than allowed on the official WhatsApp service. Reuters was not able to ascertain the overall scale of such activities and found no evidence that BJP and Congress leaders officially ordered workers to campaign this way.

'Business sender'

In New Delhi, digital marketer Repswal said he would typically charge 150,000 rupees (\$2,161) for a month's service for creating digital content, providing a database of mobile numbers and then sending 300,000 WhatsApp messages. He uses a piece of software named "Business Sender" which he said he also sells for 1,000

rupees (\$14). A person can add many mobile numbers in a field and compose messages with pictures. Using a so-called "Group Contacts Grabber" feature, the user can also extract a list of mobile numbers from a particular WhatsApp group with a click of a button.

Repswal didn't name the two BJP members he worked for, but in a demonstration for Reuters, added dozens of mobile numbers in the software, typed a test message saying "your vote is your right" and hit "send". Then, his WhatsApp web version started delivering the messages almost robotically, one after the other.

Business Sender was "not supported or endorsed" by WhatsApp and was developed by "Tiger Vikram Mysore INDIA", its system properties said. A member of the software support team at Business Sender, Rajesh K, declined to identify the developer by his real name, but said the tool was designed in Lebanon about four months ago and takes advantage of what he called a "loophole" in WhatsApp's system. "This is not rocket science or fabricated software," said Rajesh. "There are hundreds of such software available."

In April, when a Reuters reporter responded to a text message with an "Election Special" offer of sending 100,000 "bulk WhatsApp" messages for 7,999 rupees (\$115), he was invited to an office in a dusty industrial area of Noida in northern Uttar Pradesh state. "How many messages you want to send, tell us: 10,000, 1 million, 2 million," a representative asked, while showing a black-colored, password-protected website they use for sending bulk WhatsApp messages. — Reuters

As risks rise, too little is spent to avert disasters

GENEVA: Governments and businesses are still investing far too little to protect poor communities at rising risk from wild weather and other threats, the heads of the UN disaster prevention agency and the Red Cross said Tuesday. Countries are having to dig deep to bail out crisis-hit communities - as happened after Cyclone Idai killed hundreds and razed central areas of Mozambique's coast in mid-March, leaving large swathes of land flooded and property destroyed.

But lives could be saved and aid bills slashed by spending more upfront to avert the worst damage, as happened when India faced Cyclone Fani this month, the senior officials said ahead of an international conference on tackling disasters in Geneva this week. "Cyclone Idai was a reminder that the way we respond to disasters is out of balance," said Elhadj As Sy, secretary general of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

"Lack of investment to reduce and prevent disaster impacts results in more and more money needed to save lives and repair damages after the fact," Sy added in a statement. Ahead of the Mozambique disaster, which left an estimated 1.85 million people in need of aid, the Red Cross released 340,000 Swiss francs (\$337,000) in international funding to help evacuate and prepare communities in harm's way.

But the cost of Red Cross and UN relief operations after the disaster added up to nearly 1,000 times more, or about 315 million Swiss francs, the humanitarian network said. "Such a model doesn't work for people who are at risk of storms and flooding. It's also a model that doesn't make financial sense, especially as we anticipate increased weather-related disasters as a result of climate change," said Sy.

Measures aid agencies use to safeguard people include putting in place systems to warn them of danger - whether via mobile phone messages or megaphones - as well as designating robust public buildings as shelters, and positioning key supplies beforehand. Mami Mizutori, special representative of the UN secretary-general for disaster risk reduction, said that despite a target in the Sendai Framework, a 2015 global pact, to "substantially enhance" international aid to prevent disasters, "this is not happening".

Unlike climate change funding for developing nations, there is no numerical target or agreed percentage of aid for governments to spend on reducing disaster risk, she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Setting such a target could prove "tricky", she noted, as it could spark contention in a policy area around which governments are currently "very united". — Reuters

Kolkata on edge ahead of India vote climax

KOLKATA: Clashes between followers of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and an opposition leader heightened tensions in the key Indian city of Kolkata yesterday ahead of the final round of the country's hard-fought national election. Fifty-nine people were arrested in street battles late Tuesday that forced Amit Shah, president of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), to leave an election rally in the eastern metropolis under armed guard, police in West Bengal state said.

A statue of renowned Bengal reformer, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, was destroyed and a college named after him ransacked in the troubles, which the BJP and rival Trinamool Congress (TMC) angrily blamed on each other. The state has been hit by repeated violence between the two parties during the six-week-long election that ends Sunday. Results will be announced on May 23.

Modi's BJP hopes to capture many of the state's 42 parliament seats from the TMC to compensate for losses predicted in other regions. The BJP accused West Bengal's chief minister Mamata Banerjee of orchestrating attacks on Shah's roadshow. "Has Bengal acquired a government of gangsters? The attack on Amit Shah's peaceful rally by TMC is deplorable," Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said on Twitter.

Banerjee, who called a protest rally for yesterday, hit

Mahjong, parking: Aussie politicians court Chinese vote

MELBOURNE: Politicians courting Australia's 1.2 million ethnic-Chinese citizens ahead of Saturday's election are struggling to navigate a strikingly diverse community and fraught geopolitics. The click-clack of mahjong tiles barely registers amid the din of chatter at the Box Hill senior citizens club in suburban Melbourne. This band of elderly Australians gathered around the game tables are prime targets for politicians, who need to win every vote they can at the nail-biter May 18 election.

Chinese-Australians now make up almost six percent of the population, almost as many as Italian- and Greek-Australians combined. In the tightly contested Melbourne electorate of Chisholm, one in five households speak either Mandarin or Cantonese. Responding to these changing demographics, the ruling Liberal party and their Labor challengers have run Chinese-Australian candidates. They have also turned to Chinese platforms like WeChat to get their message across.

At the next parliament, Chisholm is all but certain to be represented by either Hong Kong-born Liberal Gladys Liu or the Taiwan-born Labor candidate Jennifer Yang. "Their policies consider Chinese immigrants as one group and do not distinguish between those from Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, et cetera," 78-year-old William Lam told AFP. He approves of the equal treatment, but any sense of a single community can also mask vastly different life experiences and political preferences among the ethnic Chinese diaspora.

Some in the community arrived as students from China in the 1980s and feel an allegiance to the opposition Labor party, whose then prime minister promised they could remain in the country after the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown. Other ethnic Chinese arrived as refugees from the war in Vietnam, or from Cambodia's genocidal Khmer Rouge regime, and want fairer treatment of asylum-seekers languishing on Manus Island and Nauru.

Many more affluent migrants who came in the past decade fear opposition plans to curb tax cuts for property investors could hurt the inheritance they leave their children. Some of the younger "ABCs", or Australian-born Chinese, see no contradiction between progressive environmental politics and conservative economic management.

'Collateral damage'

"Chinese-Australian voters are like every other Australian voter - interested in politics, interested to have their say - but with a slight Chinese cultural lens on some of the matters," Chinese-Australian commentator Jieh-Yung Lo told AFP. But there is one common thread in the community: Foreign relations matter. Turbulence in the relationship between Beijing and Canberra can be felt in households across Australia.

A recent series of scandals over growing Chinese political interference has had a chilling effect in the Chinese-



MELBOURNE: A photograph taken on May 7, 2019 shows placards outside a polling station for Labor Party candidate Jennifer Yang and Liberal Party candidate Gladys Liu. — AFP

Australian community. The decision to limit telecoms giant Huawei's role in developing Australia's 5G network has brought furious condemnations and coincided with some Australian coal exports to China being blocked at ports of entry. Amid simmering tensions, a Chinese billionaire who showered millions to both major parties was banned from the country by Canberra on suspicions he was part of a Communist Party influence campaign.

Many Australian-Chinese feel like "collateral damage" amid the escalating rhetoric, Lo said. "They are concerned about how they are being portrayed, in terms of their reputation and their branding, but also the trust and confidence that their fellow Australians have in them," he added.

Going negative

The first Chinese migrants arrived in Australia in the early 1800s amid a gold rush, and the community has since faced a long history of discrimination. The race-based "White Australia" policy, which favored European arrivals, was not fully dismantled until the 1970s. Many Chinese-Australians recall the 1996 maiden speech of right-wing firebrand Pauline Hanson, who said Australia was in trouble of being "swamped by Asians". Labor candidate for Chisholm Jennifer Yang told AFP elected leaders need to be "careful" with their language. "Once the community is divided it is very, very hard to heal," she said. "I don't want to see Australia going down that path again." Perhaps inevitably, both parties have found negative campaigning an easier way of connecting with Chinese-Australian voters. Mandarin-speaking former Labor prime minister Kevin Rudd has taken to WeChat to remind voters of the government's ties to Hanson's One Nation and her fellow populist Clive Palmer, who has rallied against Chinese influence.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has fired back with WeChat posts recalling comments from a former state Labor leader who said "Asians with PhDs" were taking the jobs of young Australians. The battle has intensified online, with the opposition writing to WeChat owner Tencent after suggesting the government was linked to "fake news" spread on the Chinese social media site. But for the senior citizens in Box Hill, a visit by solicitous politicians is an opportunity to tackle the really pressing issues - like the price of parking. — AFP

Sri Lanka situation 'under control' after anti-Muslim riots

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan authorities said yesterday they had the situation "under control" after mosques and Muslim-owned shops and businesses were targeted in a violent backlash after the Easter Sunday terror attacks. A second overnight curfew imposed nationwide ensured there was no repeat of Monday's violence against Muslims, who make up some 10 percent of Sri Lanka's population of 21 million. Many Muslims have been bracing for revenge attacks since three churches and three luxury hotels were bombed by local Islamist extremists on April 21, killing 258 people.

"The situation is now totally under control," said military spokesman Sumith Atapattu. "There were no incidents of violence overnight and we are arresting groups of people responsible for taking part in mob attacks." Ruwan Gunasekera, a police spokesman, said that more than 80 people were in custody as of Tuesday evening. Official sources said police deployed special teams to review CCTV camera footage to identify the perpetrators of the riots and many arrests were being made on this basis. More police and army units were seen deployed in the troubled area as the authorities lifted the nationwide curfew on Wednesday morning.

But Muslims in North-West Province remained nervous

News in brief

Teen kills self after Instagram poll

KUALA LUMPUR: A Malaysian teenager who posted an Instagram poll asking if she should live or die took her own life after a majority of respondents voted for the latter, sparking calls for an investigation. The unidentified 16-year-old from Kuching in eastern Sarawak state died after posting the poll Monday on the Facebook-owned picture-sharing platform. Police have classified the case as "sudden death". "Really Important, Help Me Choose D/L," she wrote, according to a report on the news portal Astro Awani, with the letters "D" and "L" apparently referring to "die" or "live" respectively. Sixty-nine percent of votes cast were in favor of her ending her life, with just 31 percent against, local media quoted police as saying. Ching Yee Wong, head of communications for Instagram APAC, said in a statement: "Our thoughts and prayers are with this young woman's family." — AFP

Tehreek-e-Labbaik leaders get bail

LAHORE: A Pakistani court on Tuesday granted bail to the leader of an ultra-right Islamist group arrested last year after his supporters shut down cities and threatened judges following the acquittal of a Christian woman accused of blasphemy. The leader of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik (TLP) party, Khadim Hussain Rizvi, and his deputy, Pir Afzal Qadri, were arrested last year and charged with inciting terrorism and sedition after protesting against the acquittal of Asia Bibi who had spent eight years on death row on blasphemy charges. TLP leaders had threatened the Supreme Court judges who acquitted Bibi, urging their cooks and servants to kill them, and called for the overthrow of the army chief. — Reuters

Alleged Rohingya traffickers shot

COX'S BAZAR: Bangladeshi police shot dead two suspected Rohingya human traffickers, officials said yesterday, after rescuing 103 refugees in two days about to make the perilous sea voyage to Malaysia. The two Rohingya men were killed outside a refugee camp in the southeast on Tuesday evening, said Prodig Kumar Das, police chief of Teknaf which borders Myanmar. "They opened fire at the police. We fired back in retaliation," he told AFP. This is the first time in four years suspected human traffickers were killed in a gunfight in Bangladesh's southeast. It follows a rise in attempted human smuggling of Rohingya in the last few months. — AFP



MINUWANGODA, Sri Lanka: Sri Lankan Catholic priests walk past a damaged shop after a mob attack yesterday. — AFP

and stayed indoors yesterday, after sword-wielding rioters killed one man late Monday while vandalizing scores of shops and mosques. In Bingiriya, where some 2,000 people went on the rampage, Muslim cleric M I M Siddeeqe said the community was worried. "Our people are still afraid to go out," he told AFP by telephone.

Military spokesman Atapattu said security forces were arresting small groups of suspected trouble-makers and handing them over to police. They were being held under emergency laws under which convicts can be jailed up to 10 years, police spokesman Gunasekera said. — AFP



KOLKATA: In this photo taken on Tuesday, Indian police stand next to burning debris on a street following clashes by rival groups during a campaign rally held by Amit Shah, president of the ruling BJP. — AFP

back by accusing Shah acting like a "god" who does not allow protests. Trouble erupted when Shah's convoy drove past the entrance to Calcutta University, where TMC student wing activists had gathered. "It became worse when TMC supporters started throwing stones at the tail-end of the rally. A group of people then set two motorbikes and a bicycle on fire," said witness Partha Sinha. The BJP held a silent protest in Delhi against the violence in West Bengal. The TMC and its allies held rival protests in Kolkata. Political observers say the aggressive campaign by Modi's party against the TMC in the eastern state has made it one of the most bitter contests in the election. — AFP

Analysis

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P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.

Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
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The clash with NRA proves therapeutic for trauma doctors

A recent clash with the National Rifle Association (NRA) has shown some doctors who treat gunshot victims a way to heal their own trauma: through activism against gun violence. With rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) on par with that of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans, trauma surgeons have found that speaking out helps them cope with the hopelessness and anger that come from seeing gunshot victims repeatedly wheeled into the trauma bay.

"Working in advocacy is a way to deal with burnout," said Dr Jessica Beard, a trauma surgeon at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia. The doctors' clash with the NRA began in November after the American College of Physicians published a paper about reducing firearm injuries and deaths in the United States. The NRA answered with a tweet admonishing "self-important anti-gun doctors to stay in their lane."

That set off a viral response. Trauma surgeons around the country posted pictures of their blood-soaked scrubs and operating rooms after treating gunshot victims, punctuated with a defiant #ThisIsOurLane hashtag. The movement has spread. In Pennsylvania, a group of doctors formed a coalition to urge policy changes to state legislators. North of the border, the Canadian Doctors for Protection from Guns staged demonstrations in April, shortly after forming.

Experts have likened the doctors' uproar to that of high school students from Parkland, Florida, who led nationwide protests after surviving a mass shooting that killed 17 people on campus in February 2018. "What you saw in the postings from #ThisIsOurLane directly showed the impact of gun violence on trauma surgeons. That was our way to demonstrate the trauma that we experience in dealing with the victims of gun violence," Beard said. For many it was a call to action, to work scientifically or politically to fight gun violence.

Beard chose research, treating gun violence as a public health issue to reduce death and suffering. Her study published in April found Philadelphia's three trauma hospitals receive the equivalent of a mass shooting every 2-1/2 months, when defined as four or more gunshot victims arriving in clusters. Other doctors are more overtly political. The American College of Physicians supported measures including "appropriate regulation of the purchase of legal firearms," such as requiring background checks for gun buyers and greater checks on domestic abusers.

Dr Zoe Maher, another Temple trauma surgeon, helped form the Coalition of Trauma Centers for Firearm Injury Prevention, which urges changes in public policy to Pennsylvania state legislators. The coalition's first campaign was to support a "red flag" bill that would enable authorities to take away guns from people legally deemed dangerous. Maher said she was motivated because so many of the nearly 40,000 US gun deaths each year were preventable.

"The empowerment that I am gleaming as an individual in trying to actually combat this preventable public health crisis is something that definitely helps to protect me from burnout," Maher said. The NRA has opposed research that it says is intended to restrict the right to keep and bear arms as guaranteed by the Second Amendment of the US Constitution. It did not respond to requests for comment for this article.

Moral injury

Medicine has long been affected by burnout, or what some doctors prefer to call "moral injury." This is defined by feelings of being disconnected from oneself, emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment. Other afflictions include vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue, which can affect any medical professional exposed to trauma, including nurses, other operating room personnel and first responders.

Some 40 percent of trauma surgeons showed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and 15 percent met the criteria for a PTSD diagnosis, according to a 2014 survey by the Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery. A similar 15.7 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans screen positive for PTSD, according to the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

Medical journals report that some 400 physicians of all types die by suicide each year, the equivalent of an entire medical school class. While soldiers, journalists and other medical professionals have dealt more openly in recent years with the mental health effects of witnessing horrible events, trauma surgeons have lagged behind. "They're going to be one of the last people to say, 'I can't handle this, I'm in emotional distress,'" said Nancy Beckerman, professor at Yeshiva University's Wurzelweil School of Social Work in New York. Dr Stephanie Bonne, an activist and trauma surgeon at Rutgers University Hospital in Newark, New Jersey, said trauma in the operating room adds to other daily stresses such as seeing the latest shootings on the news while the pager sounds, indicating another gunshot victim is arriving. — Reuters

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Supporters of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) take part in a silent protest rally in New Delhi yesterday, following clashes between BJP supporters and the opposition Trinamool Congress (TMC) in Kolkata. — AFP

Message undelivered: Weak election campaign hurts India Congress Party

In January, India's main opposition Congress party seemed poised for a strong fight back against Prime Minister Narendra Modi after victories in three heartland states late last year. But just over four months later, even Congress officials admit the attempt to unseat Modi in the ongoing general election has suffered from a weak campaign and fumbled communications. Political strategists say the mis-steps and an inability to sew up alliances with other opposition groups had hurt Congress.

Votes are to be counted on May 23 and it's still not clear if Modi will come back to power, although many political analysts and pollsters have said he has the edge. Two Congress officials told Reuters that their campaign, centered around a promise of a handout of 72,000 rupees (\$1,022) every year for India's poorest families, was rolled out late - only four days before the first phase of the polls began on April 11.

In contrast, the Modi campaign's communications has been a huge strength - no one can complain that the message didn't get out. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has dominated newspaper frontpages, TV screens, social media posts, roadside billboards and rallies through the election, backed by a war chest multiple times that controlled by Congress. On 11 Hindi TV news channels, for example, Modi has got nearly three times the air-time compared to Congress party chief Rahul Gandhi between March 30-April 26, according to Broadcast Audience Research Council India.

Congress has also been unable to forge alliances with other opposition parties in two important states and adequately overhaul its grassroots organization, political strategists said, making an already difficult contest even harder. The campaign slip-up was partly because the party's detailed manifesto came out late, followed by further delays in readying promotional materials, the two Congress officials said. Both requested anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media.

"The backroom work to push out the campaign hadn't been done," one of them said. "Basically, it was a big royal mess." A Congress candidate in eastern India said that his party's publicity campaign wasn't even noticed by rank-and-file workers, let alone voters. On multiple trips to northern Uttar Pradesh, which elects more lawmakers than any other state, Reuters found that many voters did not know about Congress's handout promise.

Difficult to predict

Elections in India are notoriously difficult to predict, and growing farm distress and a lack of jobs could still hurt the BJP, like it did last December when Congress wrested away three states from the ruling party. There are a whole series of regional and caste-based parties that could benefit from any such anti-Modi swing as much as Congress. If that happens, a coalition of parties might form the next government with Congress a powerful force in that though not necessarily calling all the shots.

A key problem in the campaign has been that instead of maximizing the impact of December's wins, Congress stumbled, particularly after a suicide bombing in Kashmir's Pulwama region, where a Pakistan-based militant group killed 40 Indian policemen in February, the second Congress official said. "After the state elections there was complacency, and after Pulwama happened, there was no coherent campaign to respond," he said. In response to Pulwama, Modi sent Indian warplanes into Pakistan in late February, dramatically escalating tensions with the nuclear-armed neighbor while projecting himself as a fearless leader, which the BJP deftly used to craft an election campaign focused on national security.

Huge losses

P Chidambaram, a top Congress strategist and a former finance minister, acknowledged that Modi had dominated the election so far, but declined to comment on his party's delayed publicity campaign. "I think if anybody has gained in this election campaign it is Mr Gandhi, if anybody has lost ground in the election campaign it is Mr Modi," he told Reuters. "I think BJP will suffer huge losses." Part of Congress's confidence stems from states like western Rajasthan, where it has set up good ground operations. On May 6, as India voted in the fifth phase of the election, over 100 young men and women employed by a private firm sat inside a basement in Rajasthan's capital city of Jaipur making and receiving calls on behalf of Congress. — Reuters



Valentino Dixon (right) attends a screening for inmates in a prison in Washington, DC during a visit. Dixon, who spent 28 years behind bars for a crime he didn't commit, was exonerated in September 2018. — AFP

Dixon, wrongfully convicted of killing a man, then saved by golf

Convicted for a crime he did not commit, Valentino Dixon spent 28 years behind bars. Then, less than a year after his release, he has returned to prison to tell inmates how golf saved his life. "I played twice (and) I am no good at it," said the 49-year-old during a visit to a penitentiary in Washington. Yet it was this sport that ultimately got him out of jail and which now allows him to lobby for reform in the US penal system before unexpected audiences.

Dixon, who grew up in a rough neighborhood of Buffalo in the northeastern United States, had never before set foot on a green when his life was upended one night in August 1991. That was when a fight broke out in front of a restaurant and shots were fired, leaving a man dead. Two days later, on the basis of an anonymous tip-off, police arrested Dixon, who was at the time the young father of a six-month-old baby girl.

Another man later told reporters that he was the one who actually pulled the trigger that night, but the authorities refused to speak to him. "Eight witnesses cleared me of the crime. When I went to trial, my lawyer did not call any of those witnesses. So, I was convicted and given a 39-year sentence," Dixon told AFP. For the first seven years in prison Dixon said he was simply bored, but then he began "drawing my butt off." He spent up to 10 hours per-day drawing,

refining his technique and impressing those around him.

No gunpowder

After being shown a photo by a prison guard, Dixon drew a picture of the 12th hole of the famous Augusta golf course in Georgia. That launched him on a journey to draw other clubs, and even to invent his own. One day, he wrote to a journalist penning a column called "Golf Saved Me" in the magazine Golf Digest. Recognizing his talent, the reporter did some research on Dixon and penned a long article about him. That article garnered attention at Georgetown University in Washington, which had a study program dedicated to clearing people who had been wrongly convicted. Three students started investigating Dixon's case and finally produced a documentary about him.

In front of their camera, the prosecutor in charge of the case admitted having sought traces of gunpowder on the suspect's clothes in 1991 and finding nothing, a vital piece of information he had always kept to himself. "Twenty-seven years later, without doing it on purpose, he confessed," Marc Howard, the professor in charge of the program at Georgetown, said of the prosecutor. "Valentino's lawyer was able to use that to get him out of jail." On September 19, 2018, Dixon, now in his late forties, walked out of prison a free man. — AFP

Altcoins: Rise of smaller rivals throws up fresh challenge to bitcoin

Bitcoin's weathered hacks, heists, booms and busts to reign as the king of cryptocurrencies through its first decade. But now there's a fresh challenge to its dominance of the fledgling market: some 2,000 smaller digital coins. Collectively, "altcoins" are gaining ground on their bigger cousin. Individually, they are gaining traction among users, gathering communities of developers and users often deeply devoted to their goals.

Bitcoin now accounts for around 60% of the \$240 billion crypto market, down from nearly 90% just over two years ago. That fading dominance reflects tough times for the original cryptocurrency since its late 2017 apex. Bitcoin has almost doubled in value this year, rallying nearly 30% in recent days to touch its highest level in ten months on Tuesday.

But last year it lost three-quarters of its value. That volatility has put off mainstream investors from pension funds to asset managers who are seen as crucial to bitcoin's growth from speculative token to established asset. Bitcoin has also struggled for traction as means of payment, its intended usage. Few but cryptocurrency diehards go shopping with the digital currency. Enter the altcoins.

Binance Coin and Bitcoin Cash, Tether, Monero and Dash: The diversity of their names reflects myriad protocols and groups of users, traders and developers behind them. They also suffer from high volatility and few are used for mainstream payments. But playing out in their growth is a slow-burn tussle that analysts and academics describe as a race to find the answers to bitcoin's flaws. It's one that could shape the evolution of cryptocurrencies and related technologies like blockchain.

Money of the internet?

The two biggest altcoins, Ethereum and XRP, together account for about a fifth of the coin market, with respective circulations of \$22 billion and \$17 billion. Others, with names like AnarchistCoin and CryptoPing, are illiquid and seldom used. "Their proliferation is driven by the need to spark new innovation - security innova-

tions, or a new algorithm that allows faster transaction to a new blockchain," said Paolo Tasca, who runs University College London's Centre for Blockchain Technologies.

The emergence of a de facto "money of the internet" - a digital coin that is recognized and accepted online - is widely seen as a prerequisite for cryptocurrencies to break through into the mainstream. Bitcoin, seen as the most likely to take that mantle, has mostly failed to live up to its billing. Without doubt, it's the most well-known of its kind. And to the extent they do look at cryptocurrencies, larger investors tend to gravitate towards bitcoin.

But its use in commerce is hamstrung by high transaction costs and low speed. And for all its proponents' claims that it is "digital gold," bitcoin's volatility means that it is highly impractical as a store of value. "Bitcoin was designed to be the money of the internet, but that was a very early idea," said Hugo Volz Oliveira, an analyst at trading platform London Block Exchange. "Other projects have tried to fill the gap that exists."

Some, like ethereum, power blockchain-based applications. Others, known as "stablecoins," look to overcome the problems associated with wild price fluctuations by being pegged to fiat currency. A bigger proportion still are essentially clones of bitcoin, offering little in the way of radically difficult uses. Some, such as Litecoin, are designed to tackle some of bitcoin's weaknesses, such as slow transactions.

Bitcoin proponents point to initiatives such as the Lightning network - code that can be added to the blockchain that's designed to make payments faster and cheaper - that could help it overcome its structural flaws. And even as altcoins spread, high-profile supporters such as Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey see bitcoin maintaining its dominance. In an podcast released in February, Dorsey said bitcoin will become the internet's native currency, given that it was born, developed and tested online. Altcoins outperformed bitcoin by four percent in the first quarter of this year, according to Cumberland, a major cryptocurrency trader based in Chicago. — Reuters

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BEIRUT: An employee of the Central Bank in the capital Beirut leaves her office. After decades of civil war and repeated political crises made it one of the world's most indebted countries, Lebanon is drafting its "most austere" budget to secure billions of dollars in international aid. —AFP

Lebanon mulls austerity budget as growth sinks

Fears of benefit cuts in public sector amid pressure from donors

BEIRUT: After decades of civil war and repeated political crises made it one of the world's most indebted countries, Lebanon is drafting its "most austere" budget to secure billions of dollars in international aid. The small Mediterranean country has promised donors to slash public spending as part of reforms to unlock \$11 billion in aid pledged at a conference in Paris last year.

Growth in Lebanon has plummeted in the wake of endless political deadlocks in recent years, compounded by the 2011 breakout of civil war in neighboring Syria. The country has been racking up public debt since the end of its 1975-1990 civil war, which now stands at 152 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), according to the finance ministry. Eighty percent of that debt is owed to Lebanon's central bank and local banks. Prime Minister Saad Hariri last month vowed to introduce "the most austere budget in Lebanon's history", sparking fears of benefit cuts in the public sector.

The cabinet has not yet released a full austerity package for 2019, but already it has faced a string of small protests. Lebanon's government is under pressure from all sides, said Nassib Ghobril, head of the economic research at Byblos Bank.

At home, "the pressure comes from the Lebanese cit-

izen who sees job opportunities and the economy are in decline", a private sector suffering from cost increases, and a banking sector weighed down by having to fund the public sector, he explained.

And the cabinet has to meet the expectations of "countries and institutions" who have promised billions in aid, he said.

'Social upheaval'

Despite previous promises of reform, Lebanese have continued to complain of unemployment, poor infrastructure, and dire public services including an ageing electricity grid plagued by frequent power cuts. More than a quarter of all Lebanese live in poverty, according to World Bank figures.

At the Paris conference, Lebanon committed to gradually reducing its public deficit over five years, but appears to have missed the mark for 2018. The World Bank estimates the public deficit reached 11.5 percent of GDP for that year, above the figures for previous years.

As the cabinet mulls how to cut expenses in 2019, Lebanese public employees are warning their benefits are a red line. For the first time in the country's history, a strike by central bank employees briefly crippled the

country's stock exchange earlier this month.

Also clamoring against austerity measures that would affect them are army pensioners, port workers, public university staff, and employees of the national electricity company. "We're against any measure that will affect disadvantaged sections of the population," Lebanon's labor union chief Beshara Asmar told AFP. "If the government does not take note of the remarks we have submitted to it... the budget will lead to social upheaval," he warned.

So far, to decrease the public deficit, the cabinet has announced it will increase taxes on interest income from bank deposits from seven to 10 percent. The government is also expected to slash salaries and freeze recruitment in the public sector.

Tax evasion

But Ghobril said measures like raising taxes showed "a lack of seriousness in finding sources of revenue". Instead, he suggested tackling rampant tax evasion, and chasing up unpaid utility bills.

The state should also fight smuggling to increase custom revenues, and make sure influential businessman who have built illegally on state-owned land along the coast

actually pay fines. "Around 50 percent of individuals and companies in Lebanon do not declare all taxes" they should pay, Ghobril said. "All these measures just require political will. They could easily bring in \$1 billion in 2019 without even increasing taxes," the economist said.

Many Lebanese are disillusioned with the ruling class, whom they accuse of nepotism and graft. After previous pledges of aid have failed to bring about structural reform in Lebanon, international creditors last year set conditions on handing out more cash. A government finally formed in January after an eight-month political deadlock is grappling to complete the requirements on time to receive these monies. In April, the cabinet approved a plan to reform a costly but underperforming electricity sector.

And as the cabinet now moves on to cutting budget expenses, members of the Lebanese public are making sure they are not trampled in the process.

"This is the last warning," said retired general Ali Amer at a recent protest in Beirut against feared pension cuts. If the budget does affect their retirement benefits, "we will be on the streets every day, all over the country, burning tires and blocking roads," he said. —AFP

Al-Tijari declares operating profit before provision KD 24.0m for Q1 2019

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced an operating profit before provision KD 24.0 million for the first quarter of 2019. The net profit after allocation of precautionary and other provisions is KD 1 million for this period. The Bank witnessed a healthy growth in all its key areas of business. Loans increased by 8.1 percent to reach KD 2,317.4 million and investment securities increased by 24.3 percent to reach KD 584.4 million.

Sheikh Ahmad Duaij Al-Sabah, the Bank's Chairman, commented on these results that the Bank continues to focus on asset quality, digitalization, operational efficiency and customer service. The operating profit for Q1 2019 was KD 24.0 million and the Bank prudently allocated a portion of it to strengthen its pool of available provision. The total provisions held with the Bank against its

credit portfolio as at the end of the 31st March 2019 were KD 157.9 million.

Sheikh Ahmad added that the Bank has provided funding to mega projects of national importance and will continue playing an active role in strengthening the local economy. Furthermore, the Bank will continue its prudent policy of conservative approach towards growth by maintaining and improving the quality of its assets during 2019 and beyond, in order to meet the challenges of the volatile economic and geopolitical situation in the region.

Sheikh Ahmad further added that Bank's capital adequacy ratio at the end of March 2019 was 18.5 percent, the leverage ratio at 11.8 percent, net stable funding ratio at 108.4 percent and liquidity coverage ratio at 166.4 percent, comfortably exceeded the regulatory requirement set by the Central Bank of Kuwait. He pointed that the Bank's strong financial indicators are due to its prudent policy of cleaning its loan portfolio by writing off irregular loans but taking all the necessary steps to protect the interests of the Bank. The NPL ratio at zero is a clear demonstration of this strategy.

Sheikh Ahmad went on to add that the digitalization of processes to enhance customer experience at various touch points and investment in technology and human capital to exceed customer

expectations is continuing at a rapid pace.

New initiatives were taken during first quarter of the year and new features like, but not limited to, electronic dividends payment through Internet Banking, document verification by using QR technology, T-Pay for QR payments within CBK, changing password through mobile banking, KYC update through mobile/online banking, transfers limit amendment through online banking, change security questions/answers through mobile banking and video tutorials about our products and services on Mobile banking for customers education and easy guidance were introduced to facilitate customers and ease their banking experience.

Sheikh Ahmad took the opportunity to thank the Bank's shareholders, valued customers, staff and regulatory authorities, emphasizing that the Bank's Management continues to implement all the required policies for safeguarding the interest of all stakeholders.



Sheikh Ahmad Duaij Al-Sabah

KIPCO announces 15% growth in net profit to KD 6.5m for Q1 2019

KUWAIT: KIPCO - the Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - has announced a net profit of KD 6.5 million (\$21.4 million) for the first three months of 2019, an increase of 15 per cent over the KD 5.64 million (\$18.5 million) reported in the same period last year. Earnings per share was up 41 per cent from 1.53 fils (\$0.50 cents) reported in the first quarter of 2018 to 2.16 fils (\$0.71 cents) for the first three months of 2019. The company's consolidated assets stood at KD10.1 billion (\$33 billion), compared to KD 10.4 billion (\$34 billion) reported at year-end 2018. Faisal Al-Ayyar, KIPCO's Vice Chairman (Executive), said: "We noted in our recent Shafafiyah Investors' Forum that the positive performance of our companies last year paves the way for an expected continuation of growth in 2019, and the results we have achieved in the first quarter of the year support this. While we remain guarded, we are optimistic that we are on track towards a more positive out-



Faisal Al-Ayyar

Business

NBK wins global best innovation for real time payment tracker

Global Finance Magazine’s annual survey

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) was awarded the excellence in banking innovation for payment services by Global Finance Magazine, during its annual survey with input from hundreds of industry analysts, senior advisors and corporate executives from around the world.

NBK was selected as the best bank in 2019 in Real Time End-To-End Payment Tracking on Customer Payment which allow customers to track their transfers every step of the way.

Global Finance announced the winner of the World's Best Digital Banking and the Most Innovative Digital Bank in its seventh annual awards recognizing the most innovative organizations in the following sectors: Cash Management, Payments and Trade Finance, Corporate Finance and Islamic finance.

Dimitrios Kokosioulis, Deputy CEO, Group Head of Operations & IT at NBK said “This prestigious award is

a testament to NBK’s ability to excel in innovative digital services, as it recognizes our successful digital transformation initiatives aimed at providing our customers with the best banking services.”. “Digital innovation is a main pillar of the Bank’s strategy to maintain our leadership in digital banking across regional and global markets through adopting and implementing the latest state-of-the-art banking technologies throughout all NBK’s operations,”he added.

NBK has always strived to offer the best services and products that meet customers’ needs, pioneering as the first Kuwaiti bank to introduce the latest technologies in electronic payments and direct transfers. NBK is the first bank in Kuwait to offer transfer tracking through its digital channels, including: NBK Online Banking, NBK Mobile Banking and NBK Corporate Online Banking, thus allowing customers to know their transfer status with NBK Swift Tracking in a fast and secure manner.



Global Finance Global Finance, founded in 1987, has a circulation of over 50,000 and readers in 188 countries. Global Finance’s audience includes senior corporate and financial officers responsible for making investment strategic decisions at multinational companies and financial institutions. Global Finance is headquartered in New York, with offices around the world.

NBK continues to enjoy collectively one of the highest ratings among all banks in the Middle East from the

three international rating agencies Moody’s, Fitch Ratings and Standard and Poor’s. The Bank’s ratings are supported by its high capitalization, prudent lending policies, and its disciplined approach to asset management, in addition to its highly recognized and very stable management team. NBK was also named among Global Finance’s list of the 50 safest banks in the world for thirteen consecutive times and was awarded as the Best Bank in Kuwait in 2018 by the Banker, Euromoney and Global Finance.



Dimitrios Kokosioulis

KAMCO Oil Market Monthly Report

Oil prices spike on geopolitical tensions in Gulf

KUWAIT: A threat of tightening oil supplies led by geopolitical issues in the Gulf pushed oil prices up this week after seeing consecutive declines over the past two weeks. In addition, the hunt for replacement crude by oil importers as a result of sanctions on Iran without waivers and on Venezuela also supported spot oil prices for some specific crude grades from producers in the Gulf and Africa. On the other hand, the trade war between the US and China was renewed after apparently failed talks between the two trading partners.

The US increased tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports from 10 percent to 25 percent and is said to be mulling tariffs on all imports from China. This was met by retaliatory tariffs from China on \$60 billion worth of goods imported from the US starting June-19, although China has excluded crude imports from the US from the higher tariffs while increasing it on LNG imports.

Recent developments have affected both demand and supply side factors for the oil market. Demand side factors largely highlight the downside risks to oil prices in the near term. The renewed trade war has only spooked the market that has seen weakening economic indicators from key oil importers.

These include the consecutive decline in vehicle sales in China and India in addition to expectations that the US market has peaked and is expected to scale back its growth numbers in the near term. The EIA as well as the IEA, in their latest monthly oil reports, marginally lowered world oil demand growth expectations. The IEA expects 2019 oil demand to grow by 1.3 mb/d. Also, oil prices, which has recently traded above the \$65/b mark, is said to have a negative impact on demand from Asian buyers.

On the supply side, the expected increase in oil supply from the US has already been factored in the prices. However, a number of other factors seems to have an offsetting impact on higher oil supplies from the US. These include, the imposition of sanctions on Iran and Venezuela, and the decline in oil supply from Russia to Europe due to an oil pipeline issue. Europe is also seeing some pockets with higher demand for physical crude due to higher refinery runs expected in the coming months coupled with lower supply from heavy oil exporters with the required crude grades. These include lower supplies from the North Sea due to production outage, along with Nigerian and Angolan crude grades.

In addition, production curbs from other OPEC+ members continues as a decision would be taken in June-19 on future production policy of the group. During May-19, OPEC oil production remained flat m-o-m at 30.3 mb/d, according to data from Bloomberg, as Saudi Arabia continued to produce at 4-year low levels.

On the other hand, production in Libya, although showing promising growth with new investments, remains fragile with a number of recent incidents that have affected oil facilities in the country. Russia’s oil

production is also said to be in compliance with the OPEC+ agreement that could also be as a result of the decline in supplies to Europe due to oil contamination.

Oil prices

Oil prices have trended downward over the last two weeks after reaching the highest level since November-18 touching \$75/b during the last week of April-19. The decline was seen across commodity markets due to the US China trade dispute that failed to reach any resolution. The surge in prices during April-19, which saw prices going up 6.3 percent as compared to March-19, came after statements from OPEC indicated a disciplined approach to raising crude output against a shortfall created by sanctions on Iran and Venezuela. However, reports of higher output from the US and rising inventories quickly dampened the price rise pushing it down more than 4 percent in the next trading sessions.

The increasing pressure from the US on OPEC producers to raise output and lower oil prices also added to the decline in prices. Meanwhile, oil inventory in the US continued to rise unabated, especially during April-19, increasing by more than 27 million barrels in the last seven weeks until 3-May-19.

However, a surprise draw of 3.96 million barrels in its latest weekly report supported prices. The most recent rig count data from Baker Hughes reflected the marginal slowdown in US oil production. According to the latest weekly report, US oil rig count declined by 2 rigs to reach 805 active oil rigs offsetting an equivalent increase in the previous week. The monthly rig count data published by Baker Hughes showed average US rigs at 1,012 (including gas rigs), a decline of 11 rigs as compared to March-19. On the other hand, international rig count was up by 23 during April-19 to reach 1,062 with the Middle East region adding the most number of rigs during the month.

Average crude prices for almost all the key crude grades were positive in April-19 as compared to March-19. Average OPEC crude prices gained 6.6 percent m-o-m during April-19 to regain the \$70/b mark for the first time in six months to average at \$70.8/b. This was also the fourth consecutive month of gain for oil prices. Kuwait crude average price gains were also recorded at 6.6 percent and averaged at \$71.2/b, while average Brent crude gained 7.7 percent to reach \$71.2/b.

World oil demand

World oil demand estimates for 2018 remained unchanged in OPEC’s latest monthly forecast and demand is estimated to have grown by 1.41 mb/d to reach 98.7 mb/d. Demand growth expectation for 2019 also remained unchanged at a growth of 1.21 mb/d resulting in a total demand of 99.94 mb/d. However, there were changes in the estimated production levels of individual countries. Demand from OECD countries were raised slightly by 0.1 mb/d primarily reflecting higher demand in the US that was partially offset by a marginal demand decline in Europe for the rest of the year.

The US continue to showcase strong demand trends as seen from monthly data until February-19 and preliminary data for March-19 and April-19. The main driver for higher demand was industrial and road transportation fuels, with higher usage of natural gas plant liquids, diesel fuel and gasoline. On the

other hand, after recording strong demand in January-19, demand trends in OECD Europe was sluggish during February-19 and March-19 primarily due to lower usage of diesel and gasoline in the road transportation sector while jet kerosene continues to remain strong led by economic growth and consumption by airlines.

The region recorded a decline in vehicle sales during Q1-19 and has seen a shift from diesel to gasoline usage for cars. For the non-OECD group, demand growth in 2019 is expected to be slightly lower as compared to last months’ estimates due to a downward revision in demand figures for Latin America and the Middle East led by weak Q1-19 demand data in addition to lowered economic growth expectations. Nevertheless, demand for China was revised slightly upwards highlighting better economic outlook. The country recorded higher demand during March-19 led by aviation driven growth in the transportation sector and positive development in the petrochemical sector. Demand for gasoline increased by 3 percent y-o-y during March-19 despite recording a decline in passenger car sales for the ninth consecutive month that reached around 2 million units, a drop of 7 percent y-o-y. Oil demand in India also grew during March-19 with consumption increasing by 1 percent y-o-y led primarily by higher demand for gasoline and LPG. The country reported a drop in passenger car sales but commercial vehicle sales were marginally higher. In the Middle East region, Saudi Arabia recorded a drop in oil usage in March-19 but Iraq recorded positive trend.

World oil supply

According to preliminary data, global oil supply declined for the fifth consecutive month during April-19. Supply went further below the 100 mb/d mark and was estimated at 98.82 mb/d in April-19, a m-o-m decline of 0.07 mb/d. During the month, non-OPEC supply dropped by 0.07 mb/d led by a decline in production from Kazakhstan, Canada, China and Russia. For the full year 2018, non-OPEC supply growth estimates for 2018 was revised up marginally by 8tb/d and is now expected to have grown by 2.91 mb/d during the year to average at 62.37 mb/d. The revision mainly reflected higher output from Canada in Q4-18. Non-OPEC supply growth forecasts for 2019 was revised marginally downwards by 33 tb/d to 2.14 mb/d and supply is now expected to average at 64.52 mb/d. The revision primarily reflected lower-than-expected Q1-19 production in the US, Brazil and the UK with a downward revision totaling 180 tb/d that was partially offset by an upward revision of 55 tb/d for Q1-19 output from China. Supply from OECD countries was revised downward by 44 tb/d. The latest EIA report for week ending 3-May-19 showed a slight drop in US oil production.

That said, the EIA expects US shale oil production to increase by almost 83 tb/d in June-19 to 8.46 mb/d with output from the Permian Basin expected to grow by 56 tb/d to reach 4.17 mb/d. The overall liquids supply for 2019 from the US was revised down by 0.02 mb/d due to revision to numbers for the first two months of this year. Supply from the OECD Europe region declined by 0.07 mb/d m-o-m during March-19 led by downward revision to supply figures from the UK.

Mutawa AlKazi launches its strongest ‘Pay the Cash Price in Installments’ offer

KUWAIT: Mutawa Alkazi Co, the exclusive and authorized distributor and dealership of GAC Motor in Kuwait, has launched its latest irresistible “Pay the Cash Price in Installments” offer. It makes available to its customers the opportunity to own a GAC car with zero-interest 5-year installments and without a down payment.

The offer covers a number of GAC 2019 models, including the multi-use vehicles GS8, GS7, GS4 and the luxurious sedan GA8. The “Pay the Cash Price in Installments” offer includes a distinctive and exclusive package guaranteeing the customer peace of mind. It features 11-year manufacturing guarantee, 3-year free maintenance (oil and filter), 3-year registration, third party insurance in addition to thermal tinting.

As an ideal opportunity, this offer enables customers to own a GAC car in cash-price installments and enjoy after-sale services. Equipped with latest instruments and advanced maintenance systems, the company’s service center provides a package of distinctive and high-quality services by a professional team.

GAC cars ensure peace of mind to the driver due to their attributes including elegant design, powerful performance and reliability in addition to safety and security features with 5-star classification from C-NCAP. GS8 shines with its rich specifications and road-imposing design, combining elegance, power and comfortable transport for 7 people in a spacious, luxurious cabin equipped with all means of comfort and entertainment that make long journeys an enjoyable experience.

The little sister, GS7, continues the success of GS8, with its smaller size and sporting performance which appeal to the younger generation. GS7 shares several features with GS8, from the exterior more sportive design to the luxurious more modern internal design with extra emphasis on driver and passengers.

The compact multi-use GS4 which gained great popularity in the Kuwait market is distinguished by its sporting and modern appearance as well as its



strong performance and spacious and comfortable cabin which suits small young families.

For lovers of luxury the Mutawa Alkazi presents the elegant GA8 sedan which suits those seeking at once comfortable and luxurious transport which meets the highest quality standards in the domain of luxury cars. Mutawa Alkazi invites its customers to seize this unique opportunity and visit one of its show rooms to take advantage of its “Pay the Cash Price in Installments” offer which continues until June.

EXCHANGE RATES

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|-------------------------------|--|----------------------|------------------------|---------|-------------------|--|---------|-------------------|------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Al-Muzaini Exchange Co. | | Yemen Riyal/for 1000 | | 1.223 | Turkish Lira | | 50.004 | Chinese Yuan | | 0.042800 | 0.046300 | |
| | | Tunisian Dinar | | 104.670 | Singapore dollars | | 223.485 | Hong Kong Dollar | | 0.036717 | 0.039467 | |
| EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES | | | | | | | | | Indian Rupee | | 0.003754 | 0.004526 |
| US Dollar Transfer | | 304.600 | Jordanian Dinar | | 430.290 | | | Indonesian Rupiah | | 0.000017 | 0.000023 | |
| Euro | | 343.130 | Lebanese Lira/for 1000 | | 0.203 | | | Japanese Yen | | 0.002691 | 0.002871 | |
| Sterling Pound | | 394.760 | Syrian Lira | | 0.0000 | | | Korean Won | | 0.000245 | 0.000260 | |
| Canadian dollar | | 226.970 | Morocco Dirham | | 32.301 | | | Malaysian Ringgit | | 0.069406 | 0.075406 | |
| Turkish Lira | | 50.680 | | | | | | Nepalese Rupee | | 0.002680 | 0.003020 | |
| Swiss Franc | | 303.990 | | | | | | Pakistan Rupee | | 0.001524 | 0.002294 | |
| US Dollar Buying | | 296.400 | | | | | | Philippine Peso | | 0.005772 | 0.006072 | |
| | | | | | | | | | Singapore Dollar | | 0.217044 | 0.227044 |
| | | | | | | | | | Sri Lankan Rupee | | 0.001376 | 0.001956 |
| | | | | | | | | | Taiwan | | 0.009317 | 0.009867 |
| | | | | | | | | | Thai Baht | | 0.009317 | 0.009867 |
| | | | | | | | | | Vietnamese Dong | | 0.00013 | 0.00013 |
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Business

NBK - Egypt reports KD 8.9 million net profits in Q1 2019 growing by 2.6 % YoY

Al-Sager: NBK-Egypt plays vital role in achieving group's income diversification strategy

KUWAIT: NBK-Egypt - a member of NBK Group - reported EGP 510 million (KD 8.9 million) net profits in IQ 2019 up 2.6 percent y-o-y, compared to EGP 497 million (KD 8.5 million) in the corresponding period of last year.

Total assets reached EGP 70.37 billion as of March 31, 2019, up 18.25 percent compared to EGP 59.51 billion at the end of IQ2018. Total customers deposits grew by 20.56 percent to reach EGP 53.07 billion, compared to EGP 44.02 billion in IQ2018. While customer loans and advances reached EGP 37.68 billion in IQ2019, growing by 5.34 percent compared to EGP 35.77 billion in IQ2018.

"NBK-Egypt is one of the most important branches for the Group as it plays a vital role in achieving our income diversification strategy through increasing the contribution of international operations to net profits. The branch provides almost third of the profits attributed to international branches, thus further validating our long-term visionary investment approach in the Egyptian market," Isam Jassim Al-Sager, NBK's Group Chief Executive Officer and NBK-Egypt Chairman said.

Al-Sager pointed out that NBK-Egypt's outstanding profits and the growth it managed to achieve across all its financial indicators reinforce the Group's confidence in the Egyptian market, especially that the banks' profits are mostly operational, reflecting the improved business environment and the stability of the economic scene in Egypt.

Al-Sager added that NBK-Egypt aims to further expand its market share in the fast-growing retail sector by focusing on providing outstanding banking services while marinating its leading position in the corporate sector through its focus on financing SMEs in order to diversify the bank's credit portfolio. NBK Group is also working on transferring its Fintech expertise to the Egyptian market through NBK-Egypt as part of the Group's "digital transformation" strategy.

Al-Sager highlighted that in light of the strong IQ2019 financial results, NBK-Egypt has continued its growth and solid performance across all financial indicators, supported by the Bank's success in overcoming unfavorable market conditions at the beginning of the year, thanks to the prudent policy adopted by the Bank as a member of NBK Group and its business model based on the diversification of its income and credit

portfolio while offering flexible financing solutions and providing innovative banking products at the same time to cater to its customers actual needs derived through detailed in-depth market studies.

This is in addition to the bank's solid financial position, strong balance sheets and the experienced and accomplished team that brings comprehensive banking knowledge and extensive experience. Al-Sager added that most of NBK-Egypt's profits are driven by corporate credit services, with a highly diversified portfolio drawing on the diversification of the Egyptian economy itself. He also highlighted that NBK strives to strengthen its position in retail banking as well over the coming period and that it has made huge strides in presenting innovative services and products to its retail clients to fulfill the needs and requirements of various segments.

He further added that NBK-Egypt has a wide network of 50 branches spread over premium locations in various Egyptian governorates and cities including: Cairo, Giza, Alexandria, Delta, Sinai, Red Sea and Upper Egypt, in addition to the industrial zones in 6th of October and 10th of Ramadan cities. The bank is also privileged to be among the elite banks within the Egyptian market that hold an Islamic banking license in addition to its conventional licensing.

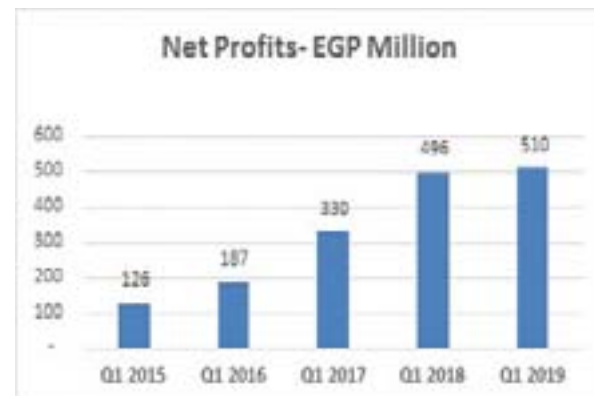
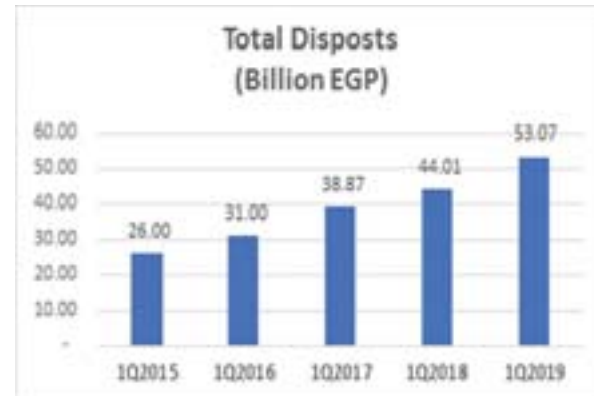
It has two Islamic branches, one in Cairo and the other in Alexandria, thus enabling the bank to offer a comprehensive selection of Sharia compliant products and services in addition to its traditional offerings, in addition to a wide network of ATMs spread across the country to service the bank's clients around the clock. Moreover, NBK-Egypt also provides a range of e-services and aims to heavily invest in such technologies to expand its footprint and provide its clients with unique banking experiences that allow them to execute many of their banking transactions anywhere anytime without having to visit the branch.



Isam Jassim Al-Sager

- Improved profit performance was attributable to increased operating banking revenues, reflecting Egypt's economic stability.
- We aim to increase our market share in the retail sector and transfer our Fintech knowledge and experience to the Egyptian market.
- NBK-Egypt continues its strong performance, achieving high growth rates across all its financial indicators.
- Total Assets grew by 18.25% to EGP 70.37 billion, Customers Deposits jumped by 20.56% to EGP 53.07 billion and Loans and Credit Facilities increased by 5.34% to EGP 37.68 billion.
- The bank's credit portfolio is highly diversified in the corporate sector, reflecting the strength of the Egyptian economy.

National Bank of Kuwait was incorporated in 1952 as the first local bank and the first shareholding company in Kuwait and the Gulf region. NBK continues to enjoy collectively one of the highest ratings among all banks in the Middle East from the three international rating agencies Moody's, Fitch Ratings and Standard and Poor's. The Bank's ratings are supported by its strong financial indicators, asset quality, high capitalization in addition to its highly recognized and very stable management team, as well as and its disciplined approach to risk management and prudent lending policies. NBK was also named among Global Finance's list of the 50 safest banks in the world for the thirteenth consecutive time. NBK enjoys the widest banking presence with a local and international network exceeding over 150 branches and subsidiaries reaching 4 continents. NBK's international presence spans many of the world's leading financial centers including the United States of America, Europe, GCC, the Middle East, China as well as Singapore.



Trump calls trade war with China 'a little squabble'

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump yesterday labeled the escalating trade war with China "a little squabble" and again accused Beijing of scuttling an agreement when it was near completion.

And although he said he has an "extraordinary" relationship with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, Trump insisted he will not sign onto any deal unless it is a good one. "We're having a little squabble with China because we've been treated very unfairly for many decades," Trump told reporters at the White House.

Last week, Trump moved to more than double the punitive duties on hundreds of billions of dollars in Chinese merchandise and the latest round of US-China trade negotiations ended without a deal.

On Monday, China hit back, announcing a sharp increase in duties on thousands of US agricultural and manufactured goods in retaliation. And the US has begun the process of carrying out the Republican president's threat to hit all imports from China, extending tariffs to another \$300 billion worth of Chinese merchandise.

"We're looking at that very strongly," Trump said.

He said the tough US stance is working and Beijing wants to make a deal, but he also blamed the Chinese leadership for the setback in the negotiations.

"We had a deal that was very close and then they broke it. More than renegotiate, they really broke it. We can't have that happen."

World's piggy bank

Trump launched the trade war last year to extract profound economic reforms from Beijing and reduce the US trade deficit. He accused China of seeking to dominate global industries through massive state subsidies and theft of American technology-in violation of commitments it made upon joining the World Trade Organization in 2001.

The United States and China have so far exchanged tariffs on more than \$360 billion in two-way trade.



QINGDAO: Customers browsing imported items at a store in the Qingdao free trade port area in Qingdao in China's eastern Shandong province. China's economy showed further signs of weakness in April as the slowest growth in retail sales for 16 years highlighted the task leaders have in ramping up domestic demand at the same time as fighting a painful trade war with the US. —AFP

Since last year, the trade war has gutted US farm exports to China and weighed on the manufacturing sectors in both countries. Earlier Tuesday, Trump pledged to help hard-hit American farmers caught in the middle of the escalating trade war.

The administration last year offered \$12 billion in compensation to American farmers and has vowed to do more, using the revenues from the new tariffs—which he incorrectly claims is paid by China rather than US importers—to buy crops and support prices.

"This money will come from the massive Tariffs being paid to the United States for allowing China, and others, to do business with us. The Farmers have been 'forgotten' for many years. Their time is now!" Trump tweeted. "We're the piggy bank everybody

likes to take advantage of or take from. We can't let that happen anymore," Trump then told reporters.

He has made the US trade deficit a key focus on his policies, taking the unusual view that Americans lose money by buying products from abroad.

Economists are nearly unanimous in saying trade benefits companies and consumers by providing products from countries that make them more efficiently and cheaply.

Trump said consumers can get around the tariffs by buying from other providers, or companies can move to the United States to manufacture their goods. "That's what I really want. You want to know something? We always win. We always win," he said. —AFP

Alibaba results beat analyst estimates

SHANGHAI: Chinese e-commerce leader Alibaba yesterday announced revenue for the latest quarter that beat analyst estimates, indicating that the Sino-US trade tiff and a slowing domestic economy were having little impact on the bottom line. Revenue for the January-March period rose 51 percent year on year to 93.5 billion yuan (\$13.6 billion), a company statement said, outpacing an average analyst estimate of 91.7 billion yuan compiled by Bloomberg News. Net profit was 25.8 billion yuan, up more than three-fold compared to the same period a year earlier.

Revenue in the Hangzhou-based company's core e-commerce segment, which accounts for the vast majority of its business, jumped 54 percent, while the smaller but fast-growing cloud computing unit surged 76 percent. "Our cloud and data

technology and tremendous traction in new retail have enabled us to continuously transform the way businesses operate in China and other emerging markets, which will contribute to our long-term growth," Chief Executive Officer Daniel Zhang said in the statement. Alibaba has been pouring money into what it calls "new retail", which optimizes in-store sales and service using data culled online. Alibaba dominates China's rapidly expanding consumer culture and its corporate results are typically closely watched for any signs that a Chinese economic deceleration and the US-China trade tensions were turning off shoppers. Earlier on Wednesday, Hong Kong-listed Chinese social media and gaming giant Tencent announced that its quarterly profit also beat expectations. Tencent said its commercial-payment services and digital content business lines helped offset a government crackdown on its cash-cow gaming segment.

Alibaba was on Tuesday named the world's most valuable retail brand outside the US, according to rankings by global marketing and communications group WPP and research and consulting firm Kantar. Their report put Alibaba ahead of McDonald's, Home Depot, Nike and Louis Vuitton, and it was the only Asian brand in the top 10. It



BEIJING: A courier from Tmall, one of the online shopping platforms owned by Alibaba, drives his delivery vehicle along a street in the central business district in Beijing. —AFP

put Alibaba's brand value at \$131.2 billion in 2018, up 48 percent on the previous year. Companies like Alibaba are at the nexus of a national eco-

nomics strategy to encourage more domestic consumer spending and thereby lessen the reliance on fickle foreign demand for Chinese exports. —AFP

Asia oil buyers, shippers go on alert after Saudi ship, facility attacks

SINGAPORE/TOKYO: Asian shippers and refiners have put ships heading to the Middle East on alert and are expecting a possible rise in marine insurance premiums after recent attacks on Saudi oil tankers and pipeline facilities, industry sources said on Tuesday.

On Monday, armed drones attacked two of Saudi Aramco's oil pumping stations and forced the state producer to briefly shut its East-West pipeline, known as Petroline. The attack came two days after the sabotage of four oil tankers - two of them owned by Saudi Arabia - near the United Arab Emirates.

The attacks pushed up global oil prices by more than 1 percent on Monday, adding to rising costs for Asian refiners, who are now paying the highest premiums in years for spot cargoes in an already tight market after Washington stopped sanction waivers for Iranian oil buyers this month.

"It's a headache for North Asian refiners who are heavily reliant on Middle East oil supplies. We are currently monitoring the situation. It's an unfavorable factor for the overall crude oil market ... driving up prices," said a North Asian oil refining source, declining to be named due to company policy.

Asia gets nearly 70 percent of its crude oil from the Middle East, and any disruption to oil production, loading facilities or key shipping routes such as the Strait of Hormuz could have a severe impact on Asian economies. Oil tankers typically refuel at UAE's Fujairah port, one of the world's largest bunkering hubs, where the ship attacks occurred.

Following Sunday's attack on oil tankers, oil and shipping companies said they would have to alter their routes or take precautions near Fujairah. "We had a ship which was refuelling at Fujairah when the incident occurred. Fortunately nothing happened," said KY Lin, spokesman at Taiwan's Formosa Petrochemical Corp. "There are no other (bunkering) choices nearby. We may choose to refuel at Singapore instead," Lin said.

Japanese shipper Nippon Yusen has already decided to refrain from sending tankers to Fujairah for bunkering, maintenance or crew swaps except for emergencies, a company spokesman said.

If its tankers need to anchor at the port, they are advised to shorten their stay as much as possible, the spokesman said. Ashok Sharma, managing director of shipbroker BRS Baxi in Singapore said: "There seems to be no increase in risk (insurance) premia as of yet." Risk premium increases would be inevitable, however, if security in the region continued to deteriorate, he added.

Noriaki Sakai, an executive officer at Idemitsu Kosan Co Ltd, Japan's second-largest refiner, told reporters on Wednesday that while there is no impact on oil loading or ship operations, the company is closely watching the situation. —Agencies

Business

Gulf Insurance Group announces net profit of KD 3.7m for Q1 2019

Shareholder equity reaches KD 84.5 million

KUWAIT: Gulf Insurance Group (gig) announced a net profit of KD 3.7 million (\$12.3 million), or 20.90 fils per share, for the financial period ended March 31, 2019 compared to KD 3.3 million (\$ 11 million) for the same period last year. This rise of KD 0.4 million (\$1.3 million) or 12.2 percent, is due to the increase in the group's net underwriting results and increase of the share of results from its subsidiaries.

Shareholder equity reached KD 84.5 million (\$277.8 million) as at March 31, 2019, while book value per share reached fils 472. Gross

written premium reached KD 92.6 million (\$304.4 million), with an increase of 3.2 per cent compared to the KD 89.6 million (\$294.8 million) recorded for the same period last year. Net investment income and sundry income reached KD 4 million (\$13.1 million) for the financial period ended March 31, 2019, representing an increase of 10.9 per cent compared to the KD 3.6 million (\$11.8 million) registered for the same period last year.

Net technical reserves reached KD 157.7 million (\$518.49 million) as at March 31, 2019.

This reflects the support to the company's technical operations and protection of the policyholders rights, thereby strengthening gig's ability to withstand emergencies and risks that may rise in the future. Total assets came to KD 610.9 million (\$2.01 billion) as at March 31, 2019, an increase of KD 43.8 million (\$144 million) or 7.7 per cent from December 31, 2018.

Khaled Saoud Al-Hasan, gig's CEO, said: "The growth reflected in our first quarter results is a strong indication of the Group's ability to protect its assets and shareholders' equity. It also underlines our continuous efforts

to provide the best insurance services to our clients across all markets we operate in, supported by our strategy for regional expansion and increasing our domestic and regional market share," he added: "We thank our clients for these achievements, as well as the support of our shareholders, namely KIPCO - Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - and Fairfax Middle East Ltd. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to our dedicated employees for their efforts."



Khaled Saoud Al-Hasan

URC's total operating revenues grew 19.1% to reach KD 24.7m

KUWAIT: United Real Estate Company, K.S.C.P (URC), one of the leading real estate developers in the MENA region, announced its financial performance for the first quarter of 2019, achieving a growth in total operating revenues of 19.10 percent to reach KD 24.7 million, as compared to KD 20.7 million for the same period of last year. The Company also recorded an increase of 17.96 percent in net operating profit for the first quarter of 2019 to reach KD 4.13 million as compared to KD 3.5 million for the same period of last year.



Ahmad Kasem

URC also achieved a 2.15 percent increase in net profit of KD 780.9 thousand for the first quarter of 2019 as compared to a profit of KD 764.5 thousand for the same period in 2018, and an increase in earnings per share of 73 fils for the first quarter of 2019 as compared to 71 fils per share for the same period in 2018.

The main reason for the increase in its net operating profit is due to several factors, mainly, increase in gross profit, increase in other income, decrease in provisions, set off against decrease in share of results of associates companies.

Commenting on these results, Ahmad Kasem, Acting Chief Executive Officer, said, "These results reflect positive growth in the contracting and services performance during the first quarter of this year, due to the increase in operating revenues as well with a recorded increase of net operating profit, which strengthens the outlook for the Company's further growth in its activities and projects."

URC primarily operates through a number of operating subsidiaries and investment arms across the MENA region. The company's core business is real estate development and operations and enjoys a diversified portfolio of assets that include retail complexes, hotels, residential properties, and high-rise office buildings.

URC's operations extend to construction and contracting, facility management, and project management through its several subsidiaries. The company's portfolio of assets and businesses are geographically spread across a number of countries through several assets such as Marina World, Marina Hotel, and KIPCO Tower in Kuwait, Salalah Gardens Mall & Residences in Oman, Abdali Mall in Jordan, Raouche View 1090 in Lebanon, Hilton Cairo Heliopolis & Waldorf Astoria Hotels in Egypt, Aswar Residences in Egypt, and Assoufid in Morocco.

URC's majority shareholder is KIPCO Group, one of the biggest holding companies in the Middle East and North Africa, with consolidated assets of \$34 billion as of 31 December 2018. The Group has significant ownership interests in over 60 companies operating across 24 countries. The Group's main business sectors are financial services, media, real estate, and manufacturing. Through its core companies, subsidiaries, and affiliates, KIPCO also has interests in the education and medical sectors.

China's economy shows further weakness as retail sales struggle

BEIJING: China's economy showed further signs of weakness in April as the slowest growth in retail sales for 16 years highlighted the task leaders have in ramping up domestic demand at the same time as fighting a painful trade war with the US. Authorities have for years been attempting to transition the world's number two economy from being reliant on state investment and exports to a more stable one driven by China's huge army of consumers, with the tariffs stand-off reinforcing the need for such a change.

But those consumers show signs of starting to pull back with clothes and car sales falling in April from the same period last year. The latest figures yesterday show total retail sales expanded 7.2 percent on-year last month, well off the 8.4 percent tipped by economists in a Bloomberg News survey and a big drop from March. —AFP

Amazing details of Lexus NX

KUWAIT: Lexus designers, engineers and master craftspeople have invested exceptional efforts in creating the Lexus NX, a signature Lexus crossover. Showcasing brave Lexus design, the NX certainly stands out. Here we focus on four stand-out features that exemplify Lexus' intricate attention to details.

Sunroof - engineering openness

One of the most popular options for any vehicle is the sunroof, as it allows passengers to enjoy open-air driving without having to fuss with a moving top. In the NX, the sunroof opening is larger than any of its competitors, providing a motoring experience much closer to that of a genuine convertible without any sacrifice to structural integrity.

In conventional designs, the mechanism and latch that powers the roof occupy about 30 percent of the roof opening. However, by creating the world's first Forward Transfer Latch that moves the moon roof forward when it tilts up (not back as in conventional systems), Lexus engineers have succeeded in maximizing the opening (30 percent larger than conventional designs) without the need for creating a large hole in the roof.

Wiper blades - noteworthy form and function

Unless it's raining, no one pays much attention to a vehicle's windshield wipers, but at Lexus, no detail goes ignored when it comes to the pursuit of perfection. The NX features new windshield wipers that not only perform better in the rain, they improve the vehicle's overall appearance and driving character.

In contrast to conventional wiper blades, which feature four support

points, the NX wipers have a single support point that eliminates the need for support arms, which in turn lowers the height of the blade. This results in reduced wind noise when driving and a clean appearance from both inside and outside the vehicle when not in use. And, a new fin design reduces lift along the entire blade ensuring excellent wiping performance during high-speed driving.

Cup holder - small, yet special

With a total of six cup holders inside its spacious cabin, every one of the NX's occupants has a place to store their drinking bottles, but unlike conventional cup holders, those for the driver and front-seat passenger are lined with elastomer, a high-friction material commonly found in the sole of athletic shoes.

Such front cup holders are specially developed for the vehicle that keeps plastic bottles from moving while the cap is being screwed on or off, thus allowing the driver to twist off the cap with only one hand. The rubber-like material does not deform when in contact with oils or grease (such as sunbathing lotion) and is resistant to dust accumulation. It can also be removed and cleaned easily.

Wood finishing - gorgeous detail

There's wood trim, and then there's Shimamoku wood trim, which is a special treatment developed by Lexus where dark and light wood veneers are combined to create a truly unique and natural-looking surface.

The Shimamoku wood trim in the NX is finished with a treatment called "steel kenma", where the wood shine is slightly taken off the finish by deliberately putting microscopic scratches onto the surface. This method, executed by Yamaha, can only be performed by a master craftsman and was previously used only on its finest grand pianos. The tiny, twinkling studs on the knee bolsters are indeed the same as the ones on the LFA supercar.



Kuwait consumers of Huawei's P30 Pro, P30 phones to get free Ramadan gifts

KUWAIT: The innovative phone developer, Huawei Consumer Business Kuwait (CBG) has launched a Ramadan celebration offer in Kuwait for consumers of its feature-packed P30 Pro, which comes with a super versatile multiple lens camera, and its leading edge P30, which boasts a super sensing camera with an ultra-wide angle lens. Customers buying the leading-edge phones until June 8, 2019 will receive complimentary Huawei FreeBuds Lite in-ear wireless earphones and car charger as well as membership of Huawei's VIP rewards privilege program.

"The gift package is our gesture of celebrating the caring philosophy of Ramadan," said Jason Jiang, General Manager, Huawei CBG Kuwait. "We also recognize that these two phones, which have stretched the boundaries of phone cameras, would be ideal Eid gifts and perfect for capturing the family celebrations of Eid al-Fitr to create colorful memories," he added.





Senior management members

KFH's family gathers during its annual Ramadan Ghabqa



Yousuf Al-Rowayeh



Waleed Khaled Mandani

Kuwait Finance House (KFH) held the annual Ramadan Ghabqa for its staff in the presence of the executive management and a huge number of KFH employees. Group Chief Retail and Private Banking Officer at KFH, Waleed Khaled Mandani congratulated KFH employees on the holy month of Ramadan, asking Almighty Allah to help them fast, pray and worship.

Mandani stressed during his speech at KFH's Ghabqa, the importance of dedication and devotion for better serving customers while maintaining the leadership position of KFH. He expressed his thanks to the employees for their efforts in serving customers and the bank.

He said that communication is a main pillar of KFH strategy, indicating this contributes in improving performance while achieving further development and leadership. He said that improving customer service and maintaining the

pioneering position of the Bank are common goals between staff and the management.

During the Ghabqa, a short video on the KFH volunteer teams was displayed, highlighting the achievements of the team during the first week of Ramadan. KFH volunteer's team prepared a comprehensive program in Ramadan that encompassed different activities that cover all social segments. The team distributed daily 20,000 breakfast meals at different locations. KFH is collaborating with "Ramadan Aman" campaign and the Ministry of Interior to distribute 100,000 meals.

KFH voluntary team has been active in meeting the public directly and distributing Ramadan presents and confectionaries (Qerqean) at different locations. The Team organized several visits to health centers, hospitals and nursing homes to congratulate patients on the Holy month of Ramadan while distributing gifts.



Fahad Al-Mkhaizim



Health & Science

LED light can damage eye's retina, disturb sleep health, authority warns

MAISONS-ALFORT: The "blue light" in LED lighting can damage the eye's retina and disturb natural sleep rhythms, France's government-run health watchdog said this week. New findings confirm earlier concerns that "exposure to an intense and powerful [LED] light is 'photo-toxic' and can lead to irreversible loss of retinal cells and diminished sharpness of vision," the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES) warned in a statement.

The agency recommended in a 400-page report that the maximum limit for acute exposure be revised, even if such levels are rarely met in home or work environments. The report distinguished between acute exposure of high-intensity LED light, and "chronic exposure" to lower intensity sources.

While less dangerous, even chronic exposure can "accelerate the ageing of retinal tissue, contributing to a decline in visual acuity and certain degenerative diseases such as age-related macular degeneration," the agency concluded.

Long-lasting, energy efficient and inexpensive, light-emitting diode (LED) technology has gobbled up half of the general lighting market in a decade, and will top 60 percent by the end of next year, according to industry projections. LED uses only a fifth of the electricity needed for an incandescent bulb of comparable brightness. The world's leading LED light-bulb makers are GE Lighting, Osram and Philips. The basic technology for producing a white light combines a short wavelength LED such as blue or ultraviolet with a yellow phosphor coating. The whiter or "colder" the light, the greater the proportion of blue in the spectrum.

Circadian rhythm

LEDs are used for home and street lighting, as well as in offices and industry. That are also increasingly found in auto headlights, torches (flashlights) and some toys. LED cellphone, tablet and laptop screens do not pose a risk of eye damage because their luminosity is very low compared to other types of lighting, Francine Behar-Cohen, an ophthalmologist and head of the expert group that conducted the review, told journalists.

But these back-lit devices — especially

when they are used at night or in a dark setting — can "disturb biological rhythms, and thus sleep patterns," the agency cautioned. Because the crystalline lens in their eyes are not fully formed, children and adolescents are particularly susceptible to such disruptions, the ANSES reports noted. Interfering with the body's circadian rhythm is also known to aggravate metabolic disorders such as diabetes, as well as cardiovascular disease and some forms of cancer, noted Dina Attia, a researcher and project manager at ANSES.

In addition, a stroboscopic affect in some LED lights — provoked by tiny fluctuations in electric current — can induce "headaches, visual fatigue and a higher risk of accidents," the report said. For domestic lighting, ANSES recommended buying "warm white" LED lighting, limiting exposure to LED sources with a high concentration of blue light, and avoiding LED screens before bedtime. ANSES also said that manufacturers should "limit the luminous intensity of vehicle headlights," some of which are too bright. Finally, the agency cast doubt on the efficacy of some "anti-blue light" filters and sunglasses. — AFP

'Extreme drought' in N Korea: KCNA

SEOUL: North Korea's average rain and snowfall this year fell to the lowest level in 37 years, Pyongyang's state media said yesterday, just days after the UN expressed "grave concerns" about food shortages. The isolated, impoverished nation—which is under several sets of sanctions over its nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programs—has long struggled to feed itself and suffers chronic food shortages. A number of international organizations, including the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), have said minor disasters, including drought, can significantly worsen and hamper food production in the country.

From January to early May this year, North Korea only received 54.4 millimeters of rain or snow, the smallest amount since the same period in 1982, the state-run KCNA said, describing the

situation as "an extreme drought". Last month, the WFP and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization said in a joint report that North Korea's crop output last year hit the lowest level since 2008, and that an estimated 10 million people — 40 percent of the entire population—are in urgent need of food. "The situation could further deteriorate during the lean season from May to September, if no proper and urgent humanitarian actions are taken," the report said.

The WFP executive director David Beasley was in Seoul earlier this week, and said he is "very concerned" about food situation in the North during his meeting with the South Korean Unification Minister Kim Yeon-chul. A Unification Ministry official said Tuesday it is "necessary" to send food aid to the North sometime between May and September as recommended by the WFP report. Seoul in 2017 had aimed to send \$4.5 million worth of nutritional products to North Korea through the WFP, but that never happened partially due to Pyongyang's nuclear tests that year. The South's presidential Blue House has said US President Donald Trump supports Seoul's plan to provide humanitarian food aid to the North. — AFP

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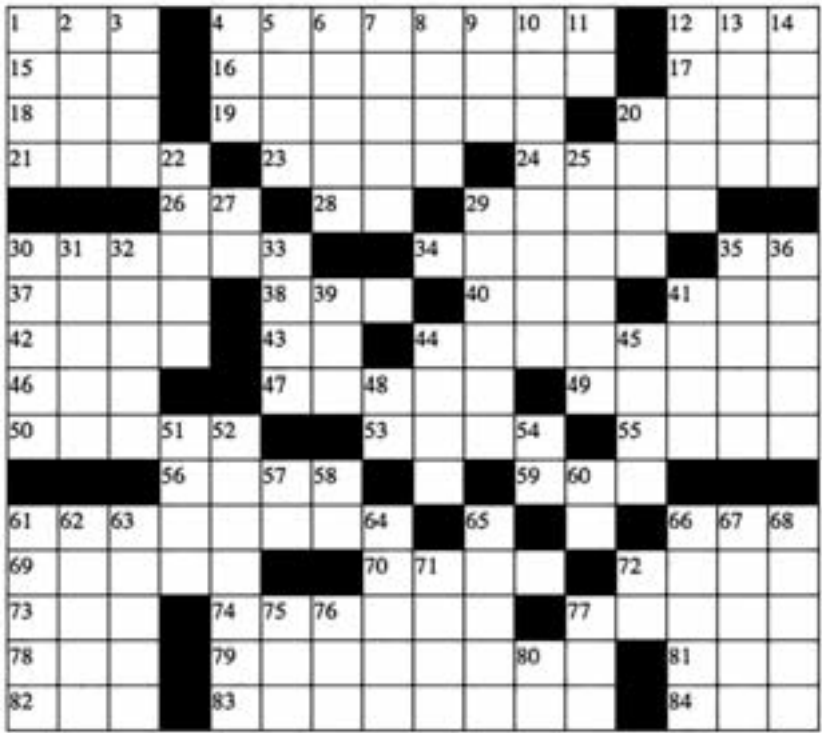
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CROSSWORD 2209



ACROSS

- 1. Experiencing or showing sorrow or unhappiness.
- 4. Mature fruiting body of an ascomycetous fungus.
- 12. A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
- 15. A user interface in which you type commands instead of choosing them from a menu or selecting an icon.
- 16. Devoid of physical sensation.
- 17. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- 18. A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.
- 19. A bag used for carrying money and small personal items or accessories (especially by women).
- 21. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
- 23. An aromatic balsam.
- 24. (Old Testament) The first of the major Hebrew prophets (8th century BC).
- 26. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
- 28. A Mid-Atlantic state.
- 30. The act of escaping physically.
- 34. Small and light boat.
- 37. A lawman concerned with narcotics violations.
- 38. A light touch or stroke.
- 40. An awkward stupid person.
- 42. Assist or encourage, usually in some wrongdoing.
- 43. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
- 46. A tight-fitting headdress.
- 47. An anti-TNF compound (trade name Arava) that is given orally.
- 49. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
- 50. 100 thebe equal 1 pula.
- 53. A small cake leavened with yeast.
- 55. French cabaret singer (1915-1963).
- 56. Little known Kamarupan languages.
- 59. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
- 61. A musical composition for voices and orchestra based on a religious text.
- 69. Hungarian choreographer who developed Labanotation (1879-1958).
- 70. Being of delicate or slender build.
- 73. Small cubes with 1 to 6 spots on the faces.
- 74. A medicinal drug used to evoke vomiting (especially in cases of drug overdose or poisoning).
- 78. Not in good physical or mental health.
- 79. Moths whose larvae are cutworms.
- 81. The state of matter distinguished from the solid and liquid states by.
- 82. The compass point midway between east and southeast.
- 83. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
- 84. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

- 1. A fraudulent business scheme.
- 2. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
- 3. Evergreen tree of eastern Asia and Philippines having large leathery leaves and small green-white flowers in compact cymes.
- 4. Hormone secreted by the posterior pituitary gland (trade name Pitressin) and also by nerve endings in the hypothalamus.
- 5. A space reserved for sitting (as in a theater or on a train or airplane).
- 6. A rule or especially body of rules or principles generally established as valid and fundamental in a field or art or philosophy.
- 7. In a manner differing from the usual or expected.
- 8. An important seaport on the Island of Cebu in the Philippines.
- 9. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
- 10. Characteristic of a region.
- 11. A silver-white metallic element of the platinum group that resembles platinum.
- 12. Tall perennial herb of tropical Asia with dark green leaves.
- 13. Largest known toad species.
- 14. Distinctive and stylish elegance.
- 20. Informal terms for a (young) woman.
- 22. Show a response or a reaction to something.
- 25. An ancient musical horn made from the horn of a ram.
- 27. A long-playing phonograph record.
- 29. African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and a fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
- 31. A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
- 32. Paper with a crinkled texture.
- 33. Tropical starchy tuberous root.
- 35. All the plant and animal life of a particular region.
- 36. Fiber from an East Indian plant Hibiscus cannabinus.
- 39. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- 41. Being three more than fifty.
- 44. Rounded like an egg.
- 45. Thin fibrous bark of the paper mulberry and Pipturus albidus.
- 48. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- 51. A Chadie language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- 52. A nonstandard form of American English spoken by some American Black people.
- 54. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
- 57. A state in northwestern United States on the Pacific.
- 58. A state in New England.
- 60. A state in the Rocky Mountains.
- 62. A bar or bars of rolled steel making a track along which vehicles can roll.
- 63. A poplar that is widely cultivated in the United States.
- 64. An annual award by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for achievements in motion picture production and performance.
- 65. A Roman Catholic priest who acts for another higher-ranking clergyman.
- 66. The ending of a series or sequence.
- 67. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- 68. Squash bugs.
- 71. A cord that is drawn through eyelets or around hooks in order to draw together two edges (as of a shoe or garment).
- 72. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- 75. Worthless or oversimplified ideas.
- 76. The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
- 77. Light informal conversation for social occasions.
- 80. Being one more than fifty.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Today you may meet with someone who is pushy and what you consider aggressive. Sometimes, when we look into our soul's mirror, we don't like what we see especially in someone else. The universe shows us qualities in us that we may not appreciate in others by being able to see it in action. You may even find yourself being defensive. You feel a need to protect yourself, everything and everyone you love. It's hard not to go after anyone you think is being disrespectful to those for whom you care. Take a moment and think before you leap. Protection is one thing but you need to know for sure before you make your move.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You're just not in the mood to take anything off anyone right now especially if you don't love or even like them. Coworkers may or may not fit into that category. As long as others let you alone then you'll do the same for them. You want to work and even appreciate its value to you right now. Others need to allow you to do it in the way you please. You're very conservative right now, and you really don't want to be pushed by anyone, including higher ups. Standing too rigid in your beliefs could cause major problems for you. Like the tree who bends in the wind, if you bend you won't break. Try bending a little. It can't hurt.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

The value of items in your life such as music allows you a freedom that moves you above the fray at this time. As a matter of fact, any sensual item can and does do this for you. Remember wanting variety a few days ago. You've got it now. Prayers and meditations are always answered by the Universal Source, no matter what you call the spirit. Money has you working overtime now because you know that's a way of measuring your worth to you. Breakthroughs in your career are here for the taking and you're not missing any of them. One door opens when another door closes. You're on your way.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

The finer things in life is what you look forward to now. From music to art, you appreciate your favorite melodies and photographs. New sheets with a higher thread count may give you the nights rest you'd like with an extra hint of luxury in the mix sending your sensual pleasure to a new high. Money means more because it's the item that gives you the ability to buy fun and happiness in the way of objects you can enjoy around the house. At this time, new presents for you and the home remind you that your love of all things beautiful is a Godsend and that they have a cost. You are blessed. Enjoy today.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

At work you're doing well. Material gain is forthcoming and you're making the company prosper. You feel as if you're being forced to become more conservative in your approach to life now, not something you really like. Defensiveness could be your mood now. A new cycle from the stars is making you feel as if you need to preserve what you have for you and yours. This isn't an easy time for you, Leo. Thinking more about the value of things especially money makes you rethink what you may have decided was great a few days ago. Right now, you know that money is the answer, or so you think, to all your woes.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

In this new cycle that starts today you may find yourself becoming more defensive about almost anything in your life whether friends, work or family. You're cautious which is a good thing. The only problem is there is someone waiting to challenge you because of your beliefs. Uh oh, pick those battles you go into with care. Learning more is center of your attention now. That could be work related or perhaps you want to expand your college credits on something like law or politics. Talk about having a subject which gets you noticed and maybe not in such a great way. Toss in religion and you have a quarrelsome soup. Take care.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You're moving into a time of feeling more of an urge to take care of those you love even when they've done something you're not sure you can handle. Love to you is more than that. When loved ones are concerned, you're ready to fight for them at the drop of a hat. This transition has you becoming more conservative and practical. Sensuality is a need along with other items it brings that you truly need. Music plays a big part in your life now. Money is more important to you and will be for some time to come. Your family, especially children, ring your bell in a great way. Need for them keep you going.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Start your day out listening to a little special music you love. Take time for your lover by doing something both can enjoy. Then you can go to work with a happy face. Look forward to some good gossip about someone you probably don't like there. You're sensitive to others both at work and at home especially if you like them. You'll find yourself wanting to protect those for whom you care. Draw the claws in because you don't need a repeat of yesterday in the place you make your money. Because of yesterday you may be a little proactive in your haste to take care of the situation. Be cautious with your ire.



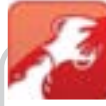
Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

The cycle you're entering now is one you're going to enjoy. Anything artistic catches your eye. Music may be the one thing you enjoy more than most. Value of items you desire shows you how much you need to work in order to purchase them. You're willing to put in the work if you get material fortune. You may have to make the decision as to whether this can happen on the job you're currently in now. Sensual pleasure is at home in your house. Having someone to share life's goals with is more important now than it's been in some time. You may notice the sensitivity of others more now too. All in all, it's a great time.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Things are thankfully settling down now. Some peace is making its way back into your life. You'll love this part. It's here to stay for a little while. Bask in it while you have it. This is also a very practical time where you can make more money and get items you'd love to have. Chances are hard to decide to take now, but they can bring huge rewards also. Think about that for a minute while you plan. Thinking about others and what they've been through, keeps your feet on the ground when thinking of gambling on your finances. You can be a little defensive now as well because of the last few days. All in all, this is a great time for you now.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Pick your battles with care. Protecting those with whom you share a loving bond may not be the place you want to start a war. Think about the situation first. Was it meant to hurt that loved one? Or was it a miscommunication? After you've figured that out and if you still think you need to battle it out, go for it. Love for the sensual part of life and the finer things has you working towards making that part of your life better. You have needs. Plus, you sense the needs of others. That makes for a very good way to share your life with your lover.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Protecting and preserving what you love whether family or personal possessions is what life's about for you now. This is the best time to call people on their abusive ways with your aggressive nature that has come to visit now. If you want to get something off your chest try to be forceful but kind. You can be a little defensive now too. Conservatism has you feeling that you need to tone that down as well. Love has you taking on a completely new value system for a little while. Excitement in this romance makes you want to cling to the other half of it and to do what they want. This won't last.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Geometry 2 - Word Search



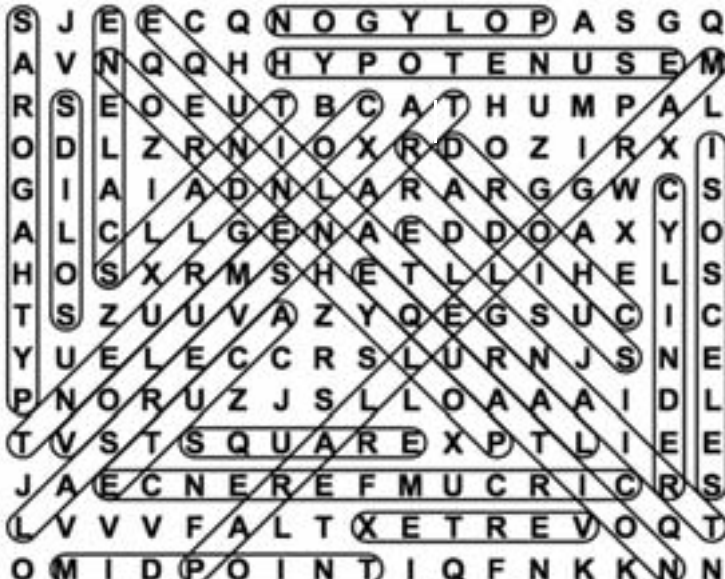
APOTHEM
AREA
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PYRAMID
QUADRILATERAL
RHOMBUS
SECANT

SIDE
SLOPE
SPHERE
TANGENT
TRAPEZOID

Yesterday's Solution

Geometry 1 - Solution

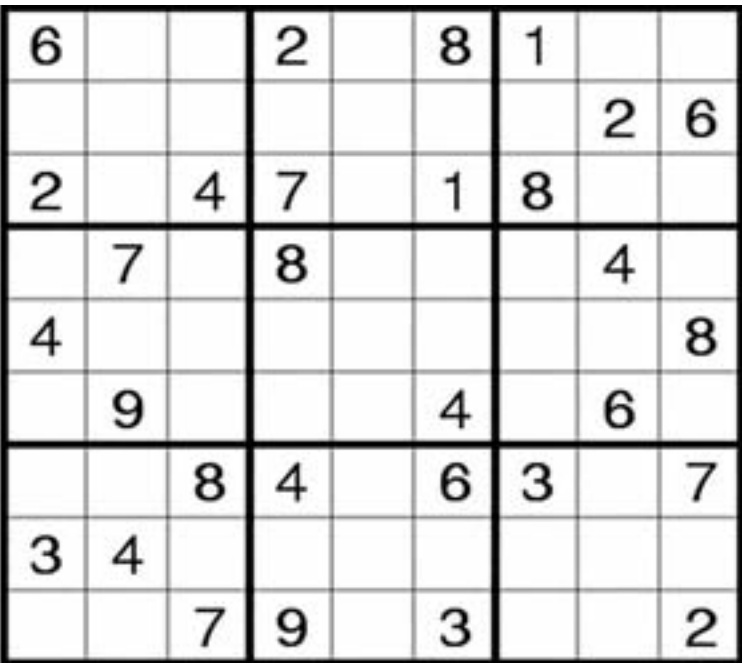


ACUTE
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CYLINDER
EQUATION
EQUILATERAL
HYPOTENUSE

MIDPOINT
PARALLELOGRAM
POLYGON
POLYHEDRON
PYTHAGORAS
RADIUS
SCALENE
SLANT

SQUARE
TRANSVERSAL
TRIANGLE
VERTEX
VOLUME

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, MAY 16, 2019



Brazilian model Alessandra Ambrosio arrives for the screening of the film 'The Dead Don't Die' during the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

Keanu Reeves sinks hands, feet at Hollywood's Chinese Theatre



Actor Keanu Reeves signed his name and sunk his hands and feet in fresh cement Tuesday in front of the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood. More than 30 years have passed since the star of "The Matrix," "Speed" and "Point Break" tried his luck by taking his car from Toronto to Hollywood to become an actor. "It is a great honor to be here and to be invited to this remarkable, historical, magical place," Reeves told a crowd gathered for the ceremony at the Chinese Theatre.

"To be included among all of the incredible artists who have made their mark here over the past 92 years, to be a part of this Hollywood tradition started by Sid Grauman all those years ago and which continues to this day, I thank you. Thank you very much." Born in Lebanon's capital Beirut in 1964 but raised in New York and Toronto, Reeves left high school to become an actor. He came to Hollywood in 1986 to work on the film "Youngblood," also starring Rob Lowe.

Reeves rose to fame with "Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure" and its sequel, but is best known for his role as Neo in "The Matrix" trilogy. Friday will see the release of his latest starring role, in another trilogy, "John Wick: Chapter 3 - Parabellum." Laurence Fishburne, who played the role of Reeves's mentor Morpheus in "The Matrix" and also appears in the upcoming "John Wick" film, called Reeves one of the "smartest and most intelligent men that I have ever met."

"After being in the public eye for so many years, he has somehow managed to maintain more than a little bit of mystery, which is really cool," Fishburne said at the Hollywood ceremony. "He is a deeply sensitive and thoughtful person, and he is also a courageous and passionate artist." Reeves' marks in front of the Chinese Theatre come after he received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2005.—AFP

Curtains for 'The Big Bang Theory,' unlikely ratings giant

Peopled by sometimes-awkward geeks making physics references, "The Big Bang Theory," whose finale episode airs today, seemed destined at first to appeal to a niche audience. But as the show reaches its conclusion, it has become one of the most-watched series in the world. Focused on whether characters Sheldon Cooper and Amy Farrah-Fowler will win the Nobel prize, the show is going out on top as it wraps up its 12th and final season.

The show, which airs on US network CBS, has carved its place at the top of American television, with more than 12 million live viewers for much of the most-recent season (17 million when including delayed watchers) — similar levels to "Game of Thrones." According to research firm Parrot, "Big Bang" was one of the five most popular shows in the world last year, a streak CBS would have been happy to continue were it not for Sheldon actor Jim Parsons having announced he would leave the show after the 12th season.

For producer and writer Stephen Engel, who worked on it at the beginning of its run, "Big Bang" owes much of its success to the annoying-but-lovable character. "It was a serendipitous blending of a character and an actor that was just magic," he told AFP. Depicting a brilliant scientist who is socially clueless, Sheldon's portrayal was "just a perfect marriage of point of view, jokes, voice and actor that made that character jump off the screen," Engel said.

Rise of geek culture

But Sheldon's charm alone can't explain how a series that wasn't critically acclaimed or even breaking into the top 50 most-popular at the

end of its first season went on to run longer than American sitcom classics like "Friends," "The Cosby Show" and "Seinfeld." According to conventional wisdom, it was "The Big Bang Theory"'s depiction of characters like Sheldon, Leonard, Howard and Raj as proud geeks-obsessed with TV series, video games and obscure sub-genre interests—that allowed for its longevity.

Long associated with niche interests, geek, or nerd, culture has made its way into the mainstream, thanks to sagas like "The Lord of the Rings," "Star Wars," "Game of Thrones" and others, meaning there was a growing audience that could feel an affinity with "The Big Bang Theory"'s characters. "There was a tendency in the wake of 'Friends' to just to put as many good looking people in a room as possible and just hope people would look at them and just want to watch the show. 'Big Bang Theory' just decided because they were nerds, we can get the funniest actors we can find," Engel said. "They don't have to be handsome."

The end of the sitcom?

Though "The Big Bang Theory" differs from most shows in its popularity and subject matter, the series still relies on a variety of tried-and-true sitcom conventions: the episodes, shot on multiple cameras, are made up of a series of punchlines interspersed by a laugh track, some of it edited in later (the show is filmed in front of a studio audience). The end of the series, which coincides with the end of ABC's "Modern Family," which will finish with its 11th season next year, marks the end of an era for the genre.

Sitcoms on traditional networks, such as "Big

Bang" spin-off "Young Sheldon," and "Mom," also the work of "Big Bang" creator Chuck Lorre, just don't bring in the same audience numbers. And Netflix has tried its hand at the format, with "Fuller House" and "One Day at a Time," though neither will be returning after the end of the year. By 2020, the classic sitcom will be absent from nearly every major streaming platform, including Amazon and Hulu.

"I've lived in many periods in this business where people have said: the sitcom is dying," said Stan Zimmerman, who worked on "Roseanne" as a producer and writer. "And then it somehow comes roaring back." Coupled with the decline of the traditional sitcom, the fragmentation of audiences means there is concern that universal series, capable of capturing the attention of large swaths of the public, like "The Big Bang Theory" or even "Game of Thrones" was able to do, is gone.

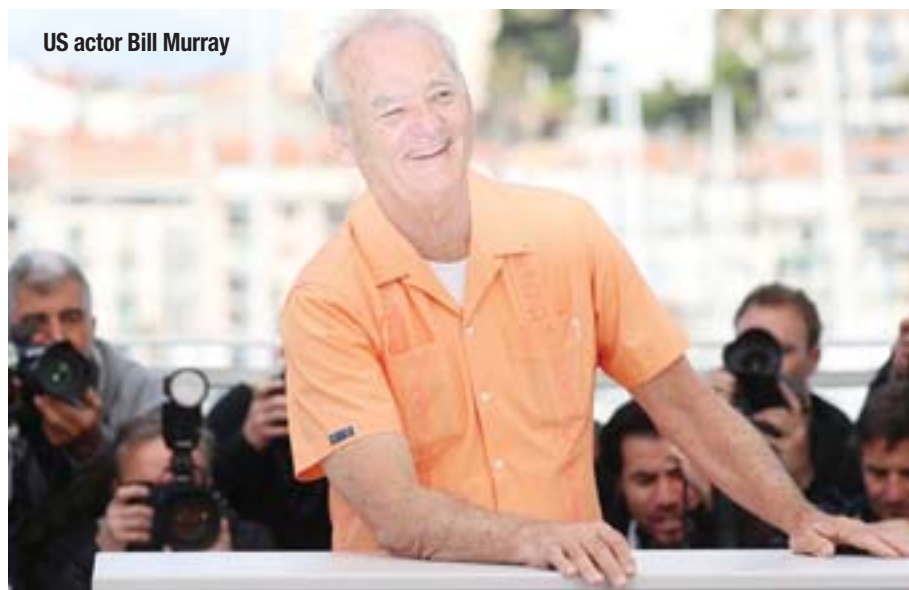
"I think it's wonderful that we are being so diverse in the programming and the voices that we are hearing and we just need to have more of that," said Zimmerman, who is working on a show called "Silver Foxes," a comedy centered on aging gay men. But he says he wouldn't count out water-cooler series just yet. "There's still room for a big, general-audience show that everybody could sit and watch and laugh and talk about the next day at work," he said. "There's room for everything now." — AFP



In this file photo the cast from the television comedy series 'The Big Bang Theory', from left, Johnny Galecki, Jim Parsons, Kaley Cuoco, Simon Helberg, Kunal Nayyar, Mayim Bialik and Melissa Rauch, place their hands into two blocks of cement at a Handprint Ceremony at the TCL Chinese Theater in Hollywood, California. — AFP



Spanish actor Javier Bardem, left, and French actress and singer Charlotte Gainsbourg pose as they arrive for the screening of the film 'The Dead Don't Die' during the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP photos



US actor Bill Murray



From left to right, US film director Jim Jarmusch and his partner Sara Driver, British actress and model Tilda Swinton, US actor Luka Sabbat, US actor Adam Driver, US singer and actress Selena Gomez and US film actress Chloe Sevigny pose as they arrive for the screening of the film 'The Dead Don't Die.'

GLITZY CANNES FILM FESTIVAL OPENS TEEMING WITH STARS



Lebanese director and President of the Un Certain Regard Jury Nadine Labaki



US actress and member of the jury of the Cannes Film Festival Elle Fanning

The Cannes film festival opened Tuesday with one of the glitziest line-ups in years as Hollywood stars and studios return in strength to the world's biggest film jamboree. Spanish star Javier Bardem and French actress Charlotte Gainsbourg declared the 12-day marathon open, before sitting down to watch the first movie—"The Dead Don't Die"—with its small army of A-list stars led by Bill Murray, Adam Driver, Chloe Sevigny, Tilda Swinton and pop idol Selena Gomez.

The cast of the zombie flick send-up of Donald Trump's America by art house favorite Jim Jarmusch also takes in Steve Buscemi, Danny Glover and music legends Iggy Pop, Tom Waits and Wu-Tang Clan guru RZA. Having watched its Tinseltown thunder stolen in recent years by Venice, which US studios have used as their Oscars launch pad, this time Cannes is putting its much smaller rival back in its place.

Quentin Tarantino brings auteur heft and star power to the party with the premiere of his epic "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood", a quarter of a century after he lifted the Palme d'Or-Cannes top prize-for "Pulp Fiction". The panorama of Charles Manson-era Los Angeles stars Leonardo DiCaprio as a television Westerns star and Brad Pitt as his stunt double. Margot Robbie also appears as actress Sharon Tate, who was murdered by the cult leader's followers.

Rambo V and Rocketman

Almost as big a coup was persuading Elton John to launch his warts-and-all musical biopic "Rocketman" on the Croisette out of competition: with festival director Thierry Fremaux hinting that the singer will perform on his grand piano at the premiere. The screening today is the first big blockbuster event at the festival, where Sylvester Stallone will also unveil a teaser for "Rambo V: Last Blood".



Canadian director Monia Chokri, right, and Canadian actress Anne-Elizabeth

Another headline-grabber, soccer legend Diego Maradona, is sure to create a stir when he turns up for a documentary on his rollercoaster career by the maker of the Oscar-winning "Amy". The festival has sparked controversy by giving a prize to veteran French star Alain Delon, with the Women and Hollywood group saying honoring a man who has admitted to hitting women "sucks".

Tempers also flared after French taxi drivers protesting about online ride-hailing rivals blocked traffic at nearby Nice airport, holding up movie movers and shakers trying to reach Cannes. Mexican director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, who heads the jury that will pick the Palme d'Or winner, also struck a political note Tuesday by condemning populist leaders like Trump, but without naming names.

"The world is melting and these guys are ruling with rage and anger and lies and making people believe that they are facts," he told reporters. "This (is a) dangerous thing we are returning to, to 1939," he added, referring to World War II. "We know how this story ends if we keep with this rhetoric." Analysts, meanwhile, were upbeat about this year's offerings.

The Oscars? Who cares?

"That Cannes has managed to get 'Rocketman' is a very big coup because Paramount was historically one of the studios who were the most reluctant to show films at the festival," said Christian Jungen, author of the book "Hollywood in Cannes". Studios have often been reluctant to risk their big-budget productions, fearful of a savaging from critics. Cannes got "Rocketman" thanks to Fremaux's friendship with Paramount boss Jim Gianopulos, Jungen said, who was head of Fox when it took "Moulin Rouge" to the Croisette in 2001.

It's precious breathing space for the festival, which is stuck in a stand-off with Netflix over the streaming giant's refusal to release its films in French cinemas. Yet Netflix has far from turned its back on Cannes. Jerome Paillard, the head of the festival's vast market, where deals worth hundreds of millions of dollars are done, said it has sent a team of around 25 buyers and executives. That is even bigger than it was last year, he told AFP.

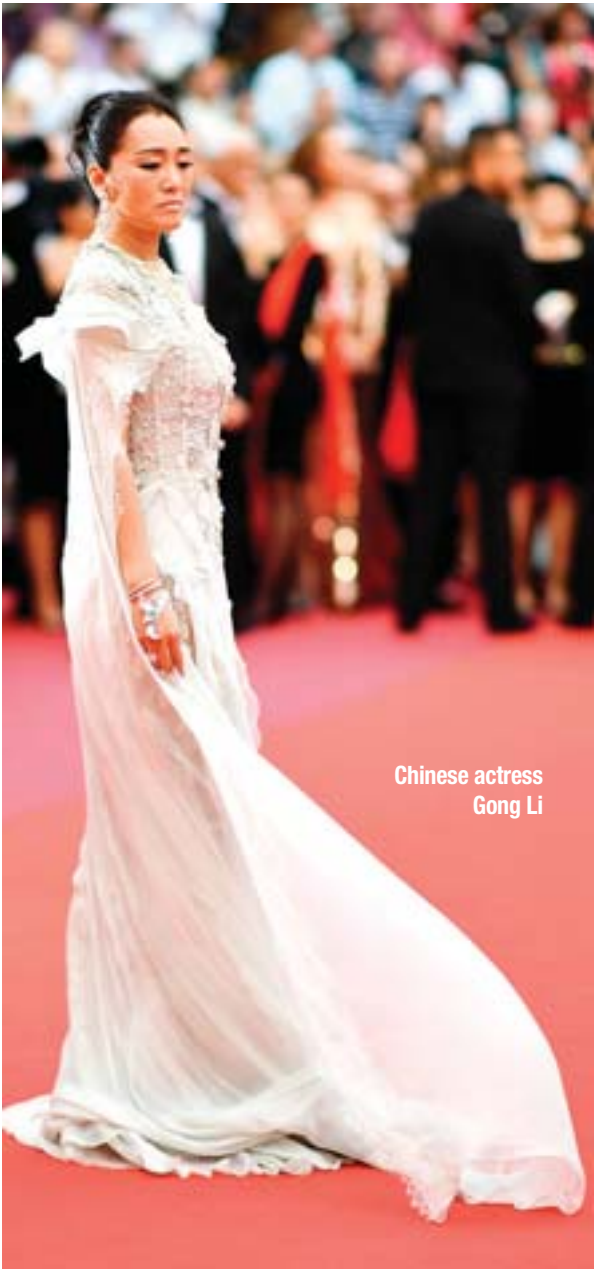
"More than ever the whole world comes to Cannes, particularly the Americans. They are still the biggest group overall, and their numbers remain stable," Paillard added. Even so, the last big Cannes Oscar success was the comedy "The Artist" in 2012, which won five gongs after being premiered on the Croisette. Fremaux—who had only two US films in the main competition last year—claimed that Cannes is above "this general obsession about the Oscars". The festival, which calls itself the "Olympics of film", is "about world cinema", he said, and giving a platform to new voices and auteurs.—AFP



US actress Julianne Moore, right, and the Co-President of Chopard Caroline Scheufele



British-Thai actress Araya Hargate



Chinese actress Gong Li



French actress
Frederique Bel



Jury members sit on stage during the opening ceremony of the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.



US actress Eva Longoria



Brazilian model
Izabel Goulart



French model Estelle Lefebure

Ladj Ly: From Paris riots to Cannes red carpet

The 2005 riots that shook France began in the suburban high rises where he grew up. Now Ladj Ly, who has been dubbed France's answer to Spike Lee, is bringing his story of angry youth to the red carpet at the Cannes film festival. For Ly, the seething Paris suburbs around Clichy-sous-Bois are both home and film set, and the setting for "Les Misérables", his first feature-length film now vying for Cannes' top prize. One of Paris' infamous "banlieues", Clichy-sous-Bois hit the headlines in October 2005 when two teenagers died while fleeing the police in an area home to many impoverished immigrants.

Their deaths unleashed a wave of fury that engulfed the housing estates then spread through the country in a three-week crisis whose dramatic images of burning cars and street fighting flashed around the globe, in the most serious unrest in France since 1968. It was in the rundown tower blocks of the Bosquets estate that Ly grew up, and when the protests erupted, he went out to film, capturing the explosive anger of the troubled suburbs in what has become the dominant theme of his work.

"Les Misérables" tells the story of three policemen during the 2005 riots and is a full-length version of a short documentary he made two years ago, which was nominated last year for a Cesar Award-France's equivalent of an Oscar.

'Tell our stories'

It is here on this downtrodden estate with 5,400 residents and 40-percent unemployment that Ly set up a film school in a joint project with the Kourtrajme art collective which counts figures like JR, a local graffiti artist turned global star who is from the same suburb, among its members. Entry is free and anyone can apply, offering an unparalleled opportunity to learn scriptwriting, directing and post-production techniques, with more than 1,500 candidates applying for

the 30 places available on each of three specialist tracks.

Nine out of 10 applicants were from the margins of France's biggest cities. Ly, who was born to Malian immigrants, says the idea is to show that "it's possible to make films without having a pile of money", while also sharing his knowledge and connections with "those who have none". "There are doors which do not open to those from a certain social class," says the 39-year-old, who trained at the prestigious Femis cinema school in Paris. But things are starting to change. "Cinema is beginning to open up to diversity. Little by little, we too are going to be able to tell our stories," he says. "That's the challenge, I've had enough of other people telling our story for us."



In this file photo French director Ladj Ly poses during a portrait session in the Chene Pointu council estate in Clichy-sous-Bois. — AFP

'Kicking the doors in'

On an afternoon in April, half a dozen students are shooting a short documentary in the hilltop Paris neighborhood of Montmartre. Gaspa, who runs a community centre in the Paris suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis, said he struggled to make a short film because he "lacked connections". "And along comes Ladj, like the Messiah!" says the 33-year-old, who admits he cannot think of even one black French film director. For Nouta Kiaie, 23, the training has helped demystify the world of cinema.

"I have learned that there are ways into this notoriously closed environment and it's up to us to do it—even if it means kicking the doors in," she says, smiling. "And when you're a woman, you have to make even more of an effort." Former hip-hop dancer Bouchra Ouikou, 36, says it's all about confidence. "Ladj showed us it was possible," she says.

'Passing it on'

For their instructor, Thomas Gayraud, the fact that a local boy has managed to scale the heights to compete in the world's top film festival is a game changer. "The fact that Ladj, a guy from the estate who became a filmmaker during the riots, is now competing for the Palme d'Or alongside Ken Loach or Terrence Malick, is decisive," he said.

Visiting the school for a masterclass, Olivier Nakache, who co-directed the 2011 French blockbuster "Intouchables" (Untouchable), hailed it as "an incredible place" which serves as a reminder that cinema "is open to anyone". "Ladj, who came from nothing, is passing it on. Cannes is the reward for 20 years of work," says his younger brother and right-hand man, Amade. "We're sharing this happiness with everyone in the neighborhood." —AFP

Chinese heartthrob Hu goes to dark side in Cannes debut

Popular Chinese actor Hu Ge, whose suave looks made him the star of small screen imperial dramas, has tapped into a different side of himself for "Wild Goose Lake", a gritty gangster flick competing for the top prize at the Cannes film festival. The Shanghai-born heartthrob plays the male lead in acclaimed Chinese director Diao Yinan's latest film, which follows the noirish vein of his 2014 crime thriller "Black Coal, Thin Ice" which won the Golden Bear at Berlin.

Chinese authorities, notorious for strict censorship, appear to have officially approved the movie's premiere at Cannes on Saturday. Hu will be testing his acting chops against Hollywood stars Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio who star in Quentin Tarantino's new film, which is also in the running for the Palme d'Or. The dark role is dramatically different to the wholesome heroes Hu usually plays. Starring as a biker gang leader in "Wild Goose Lake", Hu's character is his first lead role on the big screen following a stellar career in television.

A string of hits has made him one of the highest-paid male actors on Chinese TV, commanding fees of around 100 million yuan, Hong Kong news site HK01 reported last year. The new movie marks his return to the limelight after a hiatus to study in the US. Hu, 36, shot to fame in mainland China for his leading roles in wildly popular period series starting with the historical martial arts drama "Chinese Paladin" in 2005.



In this file photo Chinese actor and singer Hu Ge poses during a photocall at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. — AFP

'I want to be a bad guy'

But his meteoric rise was derailed by a tragic car accident the following year that killed his assistant and left him with severe injuries. The actor was left requiring reconstructive surgery, according to reports. In 2015, he starred in "Nirvana in Fire", a TV adaptation of a Chinese online novel, which earned numerous awards and enjoyed wide commercial success in China. State-owned tabloid Global Times even proclaimed that the show had restored people's confidence in period dramas.

The actor eventually caught the eye of Italian fashion designer Giorgio Armani and in 2017 became the face of clothing brand Emporio Armani in China and Asia. He epitomizes "the modern urban man combined with an elegant and dynamic look", the designer was quoted as saying by luxury fashion website Men's Folio. Hu also shot ads for a Swiss jeweler.

All too aware of his pristine public persona, the actor and style icon revealed his desire to rebel against what has endeared him to so many fans. "I really want to act a bad guy or even a villain," he said last year. "Since I have always played roles with nearly perfect personalities, I wonder if I could step into other ranges of characters, and somewhat subvert the stereotyped image on screen," he said. —AFP

New Woody Allen movie to open in France in September

Woody Allen's latest film, which has been put on ice in the US over decades-old sex abuse allegations against the director, will be released in France this year, a distributor said Tuesday. "A Rainy Day in New York" starring Timothee Chalamet, Elle Fanning, Selena Gomez and Jude Law will hit French cinemas on September 18, Mars Films said ahead of the opening of the Cannes film festival. "The 50th feature film by Woody Allen... is a romantic comedy set in present-day New York City," the company's CEO Stephane Celerier said

on Twitter. In February, Allen filed a \$68 million (60 million euros) suit against Amazon for breach of contract, accusing the streaming giant of cancelling the film because of a "baseless" accusation that he sexually abused his daughter. Allen has said Amazon sought to terminate the deal in June 2018, and has since refused to pay him \$9 million in financing for "A Rainy Day in New York". The film has been completed but not released.

Earlier this month, Variety magazine reported it would be released in Italy in October. The movie was one of

several to be produced with the Oscar-winning director under a series of agreements reached after Allen made the "Crisis in Six Scenes" program for Amazon. Allen has been accused of molesting Dylan Farrow, his adopted daughter, when she was seven years old in the early 1990s. He was cleared of the charges, first leveled by his then-partner Mia Farrow, after two separate months-long investigations, and has steadfastly denied the abuse. But Dylan, now an adult, maintains she was molested.

Her brother Ronan Farrow revived the allegations on

the day the Cannes film festival opened in 2016 with Allen's "Cafe Society", lashing out at the media for failing to ask hard questions about the director. Amazon's relationship with Allen began with "Cafe Society" (2016), to which the studio had purchased the rights, before producing and distributing "Wonder Wheel" (2017), then committing to four additional films. —AFP



The burnt Central Library in the Faysaliyah quarter in Iraq's northern city of Mosul is pictured. — AFP photos



A man stands amidst dusty books.

In Iraq, academics restock Mosul's barren bookshelves

Watheq Mahmud is pursuing an advanced engineering degree but the textbooks he needs are often missing in his native Mosul, the Iraqi city where jihadists burned volumes and destroyed libraries. To track down the books, he has had to travel 400 kilometers south to Baghdad, and even a further 600 kilometers to Basra.

"Everything is reversed today. Mosul used to be the hub for students and researchers from all across Iraq and the Arab world," said Mahmud, 33. "But today, Mosul's people are forced to leave their city in search of education, books, and resources," he added. For centuries, Mosul was known for its artists and writers, for libraries brimming with books in multiple languages, and for housing Iraq's first printing press.

But when the Islamic State group seized the city in 2014, it banned any texts deemed un-Islamic and burned treasured archives. And although Mosul has been back in government hands since 2017, its young academics see the barren bookshelves as part of IS's dark legacy.

"It's extremely hard for a researcher to complete his dissertation because there are so few resources available," Abdulhamid Mohammad, a 34-year-old pursuing a doctorate in history, told AFP. Roa al-Hassan, who is studying food science, fears much of her city's written riches will never be recovered. "Some books were never digitally available, and now they'll be lost forever," she lamented.

Looted, burned

One of Mosul's most prominent literary hubs was the Central Library, erected in 1921 in the eastern Faysaliyah quarter. It housed books ranging from donated novels to rare volumes, fragile manuscripts, and old blueprints. The library even held books in the Syriac language, produced in the 19th century by Iraq's first printing press, across the Tigris river in Mosul's west.

Mosul also boasted several large government collections, a library of religious texts, the Mosul University library, dozens of archives linked to churches and



Iraqi women sort out books at the new library of Mosul University in Iraq's northern city of Mosul.

mosques, and even more private bookstores along Nujaiifi Street, nicknamed "Culture Boulevard." Those gems were all destroyed in February 2015, when IS fighters looted the Central Library and systematically destroyed other collections, despite howls of protest locally.

Some experts say IS set aside precious manuscripts to sell on the black market, along with ancient artifacts retrieved from heritage sites it had destroyed. The Iraqi government's recapture of Mosul in 2017 facilitated support to restock the libraries, with donated volumes arriving from all over the world. "We had 16,338 books before the library was looted and ruined," said Jamal Ahmad Hesso, the associate director of the Central Library.

The library has received 11,758 volumes but is still missing more than a quarter of its previous content, said Hesso. Mosul's main religious archive once housed around 58,000 books. It now holds 48,000, according to its

keeper, Shamel Lazem Tah. "Among them were 4,361 rare and important manuscripts that were all stolen by Daesh (IS)," said Tah, 41. They included "al-Muhit al-Burhani," a key text in Islamic jurisprudence that dated back 900 years.

'What it once was'

Mosul University, too, was ravaged by IS's three-year rule over the city, said agriculture professor Mohammad Abdallah. "The university library lost more than a million scientific and academic books, including more than 3,500 valuable prints," said. "Manuscripts, periodicals more than 300 years old, copies of the Quran dating back to the 9th century—all of them were looted or burned," Abdallah said.

Around 90 to 95 percent of the library's contents were lost. Slowly but surely, the university is restocking: nearly 100,000 books were donated from other colleges and

non-governmental agencies, both inside and outside Iraq. "The university is determined to rebuild its library so it can be what it once was—a rich resource of knowledge and academia," Abdallah said. While most of the current stocks are donations, some volumes remain from Mosul's original archives—survivors of IS.

"More than 3,000 books were saved. We have also stored away the remnants of another 4,000 destroyed books," said Mosul University librarian Omar Tufiq. Abu Mohammad, 33, was one of the Mosul residents who contributed to the rescue effort. "I rescued more than 750 books: one of my friends and I," he said. He hid the literary treasures in the cellar of an abandoned home. "When the library was being burned, we carried them away in small bags, despite it being dangerous," Mohammad.—AFP

Sherpa completes record 23rd Everest climb

For the hardy few, climbing Everest is a bucket-list feat of endurance, danger and wonder. But Kami Rita Sherpa's 23rd record summit of the world's highest peak yesterday was just another day at work. Sherpa, 49, reached the summit yesterday morning, breaking his own record that he set last year, his expedition company confirmed. A guide for more than two decades, he first summited the 8,848-metre peak in 1994 when working for a commercial expedition.

"I did not climb for world records, I was just working. I did not even know you could set records earlier," he said last month before setting off for Everest base camp. The accomplished Nepali climber has also conquered other challenging 8,000-metre peaks including the world's second-highest mountain, K2 in Pakistan. Last year he ascended Everest for the 22nd time, breaking the previous record

of 21 summits he shared with two other Sherpa climbers.

Ethnic Sherpas from the valleys around Everest have become synonymous with high-altitude climbing, crucial for Nepal's lucrative mountaineering industry, which nets the impoverished Himalayan country more than \$4 million a year. With their unique ability to work in a low-oxygen, high-altitude atmosphere, they are the backbone of the industry, helping clients and hauling equipment up Himalayan peaks. "It would be impossible for many foreign climbers to summit mountains without the help of a Sherpa," said Ang Tshering Sherpa, former president of the Nepal Mountaineering Association.

"They are critical for Nepal's mountaineering and take a huge risk to keep this industry running," he added, pointing out that the government does not give them the recognition and financial security they deserve. Nepal has issued a record 378 permits costing \$11,000 each for this year's spring climbing season, sparking fears of bottlenecks enroute to the summit if poor weather cuts down the number of climbing days.

Most Everest hopefuls are escorted by a Nepali guide, meaning about 750 climbers will tread the same path to the top in the coming weeks. And at least 140 others are coming to scale Everest from the northern flank in Tibet, according to expedition operators. This could take the total past last year's record of 807 people reaching the summit. The mountain also claimed five lives last year.

Mountaineering has become a lucrative business since Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay made the first ascent of Everest in 1953. There are mounting concerns, however, that the numbers are unsustainable, with fears of dangerous overcrowding as well as trash and other environmental problems.—AFP



In this file photo Nepali mountaineer Kami Rita Sherpa tries on a climbing jacket in a shop in Kathmandu. — AFP

Masters of puppets: Indonesia's 'Ondel-Ondel' kids

Peeking through a slit in her giant puppet costume, Indonesian teen Juniarti is drenched in sweat as she moves stiffly under the blistering sun. The 15-year-old and a motley crew of other children—some as young as nine—make a living by strapping on two-meter brightly colored folk effigies known as Ondel-Ondel. The giant-headed puppets are a staple on the streets of Indonesia's bustling capital and often appear in celebrations to help ward off evil spirits.

Wobbling from side the side as they move, the puppets' face used to be made from paper mache although a fiberglass or plastic resin mold is more common these days. Usually Ondel-Ondel come in a male version with a thick moustache and red face while the female's white face is punctuated by bright-red lipstick—with coconut leaves for hair.

Juniarti and her puppet-wearing friends collect change from passers-by with some jerky dance steps and selfie poses for entertainment. Nearby, the teen girl's four-year-old cousin Hassan wiggles and bops to mobile phone music while holding a bucket for change. With the fasting month of Ramadan underway in Muslim-majority Indonesia, the kids are hoping that calls to give to the less fortunate will put more rupiah in their pockets. But while they can pocket as much as \$20 a day, it's not easy money.

Ondel-Ondel wearers balance a bamboo

frame on their shoulders to carry the oversized costume, which weighs up to 30 kilograms. "Of course it's tiring," Juniarti told AFP during a break behind a luxury shopping mall. "It is so hot inside that my clothes are all drenched." Bastian, who has been busking for three years, has permanent reminders of his difficult work. "The Ondel is really heavy—look at my scar," the 11-year-old said as he pulled his t-shirt to reveal red marks and scratches on his shoulder.

Many adults don the costumes too, but children are increasingly picking up the practice. That has alarmed youth protection advocates who fear that they're vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. But Juniarti and Bastian insist they've suffered little harassment—apart from being shooed away by security guards. Their path to this job tugs at the heart, however. Juniarti dropped out of school in the third grade and went to work to help her family after their father passed away.

Residents in her Jakarta neighborhood, where the hand-painted dolls are traditionally made from scratch, asked if she wanted to join the Ondel-Ondel ranks. It is a common way for people in the poor district to earn money. And having the chance to blend work with play means some of puppet kids think they've got a pretty good deal. "I can have fun with my friends and work at the same time," said 13-year-old Yogi Susanto. — AFP



This picture shows Indonesian teen Juniarti, inside his giant puppet costume.



People walk past Ondel-ondel effigies worn by children. — AFP photos

Classifieds

Thursday, May 16, 2019



STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h causing rising dust over open areas.

BY NIGHT: Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 35 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

| WEATHER WARNING | No Current Warnings | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|
| STATION | MAX. EXP. | MIN. REC. | SFC. CHART 15/05/2019 0000 UTC |
| KUWAIT CITY | 43 °C | 30 °C | |
| KUWAIT AIRPORT | 43 °C | 29 °C | |
| ABDALY | 44 °C | 24 °C | |
| BUBYAN | - °C | - °C | |
| JAHRA | 44 °C | 30 °C | |
| FAILAKA ISLAND | 42 °C | 27 °C | |
| SALMIYAH | 40 °C | 30 °C | |
| AHMADI | 39 °C | 31 °C | |
| NUWAISIB | 44 °C | 27 °C | |
| WAFRA | 43 °C | 25 °C | |
| SALMY | 41 °C | 24 °C | |

| 4 DAYS FORECAST | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------|--|--------------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| DAY | DATE | WEATHER | Temperatures | | Wind Direction | Wind Speed |
| Thursday | 05/16 | Hot | 43 °C | 28 °C | NW | 12 - 40 km/h |
| Friday | 05/17 | Hot | 42 °C | 27 °C | VRB-SE | 08 - 28 km/h |
| Saturday | 05/18 | Hot and Relatively humid and some high clouds will appear | 41 °C | 27 °C | VRB-SE | 12 - 35 km/h |
| Sunday | 05/19 | Hot and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain | 39 °C | 29 °C | SE | 15 - 35 km/h |

| PRAYER TIMES | |
|--------------|-------|
| Fajr | 03:27 |
| Sunrise | 04:56 |
| Zuhr | 11:44 |
| Asr | 15:20 |
| Sunset | 18:33 |
| Isha | 20:00 |

| RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| MAX. Temp. | 43 °C |
| MIN. Temp. | 21 °C |
| MAX. RH | 35 % |
| MIN. RH | 06 % |
| MAX. Wind | NW 50 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 |
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CHANGE OF NAME

I, ISABEL SEBASTIANA LAURI-ANA FERNANDES, daughter of Antonio Milton Fernandes and Purificacao Isabel De Almeida, wife of Mr. Ignatius Francis D'Silva, Major of age, Married, R/o. P.O. Betim, Salvador Du Mundo, Salem Saloi, Bardez, Goa, presently resident of Bldg# 23, Block# 9, Ibn Zuhr Street, Khaitan, Kuwait, do here wish to correct my name from Isabel Lauriana D'Silva to Isabel Sebastiana Lauriana Fernandes and my mother name Purification Fernandes to

Purificacao Isabel De Almeida, in my Indian Passport bearing No. M5455148. Hereafter in all my dealings & Documents I will be called in name of ISABEL SEBASTIANA LAURIANA FERNANDES. (C 5529)

I, Saifuddin Kutbuddin, holder of Indian Passport No. Z1922953 issued at Kuwait on 17/09/2011, permanent resident of Mohammediya Galiakot, Rajasthan, Pin 314026, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare the name change as Given Name: Kutbuddin Surname: Saifuddin. (C 5531)

16-5-2019

EMERGENCY
112

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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

| Arrival Flights on Thursday 16/5/2019 | | | | | Departure Flights on Thursday 16/5/2019 | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------|-------------|-------|-----|---|-------------------|-------|------|------|-------------|-------|-----|-------|------------|-------|
| Airlines | Flt | Route | Time | | Airlines | Flt | Route | Time | | MSR | THY | 611 | Cairo | 13:45 | |
| IGO | 1757 | Kochi | 00:10 | KNE | 231 | Riyadh | 14:10 | AIC | 976 | Goa/Chennai | 00:05 | IRA | 600 | Tehran | 14:00 |
| THY | 772 | Istanbul | 00:20 | QTR | 1078 | Doha | 14:10 | JZR | 713 | Sohag | 00:10 | AXB | 394 | Kozhikode | 14:10 |
| DLH | 625 | Dammam | 00:50 | FDB | 5059 | Dubai | 14:15 | MSC | 406 | Sohag | 00:15 | UAE | 872 | Dubai | 14:15 |
| KAC | 102 | London | 00:50 | GFA | 221 | Bahrain | 14:15 | MSR | 615 | Cairo | 00:30 | KAC | 673 | Dubai | 15:00 |
| JZR | 722 | Alexandria | 01:00 | SVA | 500 | Jeddah | 14:15 | FDB | 072 | Dubai | 00:30 | KNE | 382 | Taif | 15:00 |
| JZR | 734 | Cairo | 01:00 | KAC | 792 | Madinah | 14:40 | JZR | 409 | Delhi | 01:10 | GFA | 222 | Bahrain | 15:00 |
| KAC | 504 | Beirut | 01:00 | KAC | 304 | Mumbai | 14:45 | IGO | 1758 | Kochi | 01:10 | FDB | 5060 | Dubai | 15:05 |
| RJA | 642 | Amman | 01:20 | KAC | 618 | Doha | 14:50 | KAC | 677 | Dubai | 01:50 | JZR | 103 | Bahrain | 15:15 |
| UAE | 853 | Dubai | 01:40 | KAC | 562 | Amman | 14:50 | THY | 773 | Istanbul | 01:50 | QTR | 1079 | Doha | 15:15 |
| KLM | 446 | Bahrain | 01:45 | KAC | 788 | Jeddah | 14:55 | DLH | 625 | Frankfurt | 01:50 | SVA | 501 | Jeddah | 15:45 |
| PGT | 858 | Istanbul | 01:50 | KAC | 118 | New York | 15:00 | JZR | 701 | Asyut | 02:00 | KNE | 530 | Jeddah | 15:55 |
| KKK | 1268 | Istanbul | 01:55 | KNE | 529 | Jeddah | 15:05 | KAC | 417 | Manila | 02:00 | KAC | 563 | Amman | 16:00 |
| PGT | 828 | Istanbul | 02:00 | KAC | 412 | Bangkok | 15:10 | JZR | 111 | Doha | 02:10 | KAC | 743 | Dammam | 16:05 |
| ETH | 620 | Addis Ababa | 02:15 | ETD | 303 | Abu Dhabi | 15:15 | THY | 765 | Istanbul | 02:50 | KAC | 775 | Riyadh | 16:05 |
| GFA | 211 | Bahrain | 02:15 | OMA | 645 | Muscat | 15:20 | PGT | 859 | Istanbul | 02:50 | KAC | 615 | Bahrain | 16:10 |
| QTR | 1086 | Doha | 02:30 | ABY | 127 | Sharjah | 15:35 | KKK | 1269 | Istanbul | 02:55 | ABY | 128 | Sharjah | 16:15 |
| KAC | 156 | Istanbul | 02:35 | UAE | 857 | Dubai | 15:45 | PGT | 829 | Istanbul | 02:59 | KAC | 785 | Jeddah | 16:20 |
| OMA | 643 | Muscat | 03:05 | KAC | 546 | Cairo | 15:50 | ETH | 621 | Addis Ababa | 03:05 | ETD | 304 | Abu Dhabi | 16:20 |
| ETD | 305 | Abu Dhabi | 03:05 | JZR | 222 | Riyadh | 16:05 | KLM | 446 | Amsterdam | 03:10 | OMA | 646 | Muscat | 16:20 |
| JZR | 406 | Kochi | 03:05 | KNE | 531 | Jeddah | 16:05 | UAE | 854 | Dubai | 03:30 | JZR | 1233 | Taif | 16:25 |
| MSR | 612 | Cairo | 03:15 | FDB | 051 | Dubai | 16:10 | ETD | 306 | Abu Dhabi | 04:00 | KAC | 619 | Doha | 16:25 |
| KAC | 418 | Manila | 03:20 | JZR | 732 | Cairo | 16:10 | OMA | 644 | Muscat | 04:05 | KNE | 532 | Jeddah | 16:55 |
| QTR | 1076 | Doha | 03:30 | QTR | 1072 | Doha | 16:15 | QTR | 1087 | Doha | 04:15 | FDB | 052 | Dubai | 17:10 |
| LMU | 510 | Cairo | 04:00 | KAC | 502 | Beirut | 16:15 | MSR | 613 | Cairo | 04:15 | QTR | 1073 | Doha | 17:25 |
| KAC | 382 | Delhi | 04:05 | FEQ | 241 | Alexandria | 16:45 | LMU | 511 | Cairo | 05:00 | KAC | 151 | Istanbul | 17:35 |
| IGO | 1751 | Chennai | 04:10 | SAW | 705 | Damascus | 17:00 | IGO | 1752 | Chennai | 05:10 | KAC | 503 | Beirut | 17:40 |
| KAC | 784 | Jeddah | 04:25 | JZR | 116 | Doha | 17:05 | KAC | 303 | Mumbai | 05:15 | KAC | 283 | Dhaka | 17:40 |
| MSR | 0516 | Cairo | 04:25 | JZR | 124 | Dubai | 17:15 | QTR | 1077 | Doha | 05:15 | UAE | 858 | Dubai | 17:40 |
| DHX | 170 | Bahrain | 04:30 | SVA | 510 | Riyadh | 17:15 | JZR | 1219 | Jeddah | 05:25 | FEQ | 242 | Alexandria | 17:45 |
| JZR | 404 | Hyderabad | 04:30 | GFA | 215 | Bahrain | 17:30 | MSR | 0517 | Mumbai | 05:25 | KAC | 343 | Chennai | 17:50 |
| THY | 770 | Istanbul | 05:20 | JZR | 214 | Jeddah | 17:35 | THY | 771 | Istanbul | 06:30 | KAC | 381 | Delhi | 17:55 |
| JZR | 402 | Mumbai | 05:25 | JZR | 104 | Bahrain | 18:10 | GFA | 212 | Bahrain | 06:50 | JZR | 253 | Amman | 18:00 |
| KAC | 344 | Chennai | 05:30 | QTR | 1080 | Doha | 18:10 | RJA | 643 | Amman | 07:00 | SAW | 706 | Damascus | 18:00 |
| KAC | 552 | Cairo | 05:50 | MSR | 620 | Cairo | 18:30 | KAC | 167 | Paris | 07:15 | SVA | 511 | Riyadh | 18:15 |
| JZR | 112 | Doha | 05:50 | JZR | 302 | Istanbul | 18:40 | BAW | 156 | London | 07:40 | GFA | 216 | Bahrain | 18:20 |
| KAC | 362 | Colombo | 06:05 | RJA | 640 | Amman | 19:05 | KAC | 173 | Munich | 07:45 | JZR | 403 | Hyderabad | 18:25 |
| BAW | 157 | London | 06:10 | GFA | 217 | Bahrain | 19:05 | KAC | 413 | Bangkok | 07:45 | JZR | 733 | Cairo | 18:35 |
| KAC | 284 | Dhaka | 06:15 | ABY | 123 | Sharjah | 19:20 | JZR | 211 | Jeddah | 08:00 | JZR | 721 | Alexandria | 18:40 |
| JZR | 714 | Sohag | 06:20 | KAC | 744 | Dammam | 19:25 | IGO | 1756 | CNN | 08:10 | QTR | 1081 | Doha | 19:20 |
| KAC | 678 | Dubai | 06:40 | NIA | 161 | Cairo | 19:30 | KAC | 163 | MXP | 08:35 | MSR | 621 | Cairo | 19:30 |
| KAC | 206 | Islamabad | 06:50 | KAC | 616 | Bahrain | 19:40 | KAC | 501 | Beirut | 08:50 | KAC | 691 | Muscat | 19:35 |
| KAC | 302 | Mumbai | 07:00 | KAC | 776 | Riyadh | 19:45 | KAC | 545 | Cairo | 08:50 | GFA | 218 | Bahrain | 19:50 |
| QTR | 8511 | Doha | 07:05 | KNE | 381 | Taif | 20:00 | KAC | 561 | Amman | 08:55 | ABY | 124 | Sharjah | 20:00 |
| JZR | 408 | Ahmedabad | 07:05 | FDB | 057 | Dubai | 20:05 | KAC | 613 | Bahrain | 09:00 | RJA | 641 | Amman | 20:05 |
| IGO | 1755 | CNN | 07:10 | OMA | 647 | Muscat | 20:05 | KAC | 117 | New York | 09:05 | KAC | 357 | Kochi | 20:05 |
| KAC | 354 | Bengaluru | 08:00 | DLH | 624 | Frankfurt | 20:10 | QTR | 8512 | Doha | 09:05 | JZR | 401 | Mumbai | 20:30 |
| KAC | 352 | Kochi | 08:05 | MEA | 402 | Beirut | 20:15 | KAC | 791 | Madinah | 09:10 | NIA | 162 | Cairo | 20:30 |
| IRA | 601 | Tehran | 08:10 | RBG | 213 | Sohag | 20:30 | IRA | 666 | Esfahan | 09:10 | KAC | 353 | Bengaluru | 20:50 |
| JZR | 702 | Asyut | 08:25 | KAC | 620 | Doha | 20:30 | KAC | 671 | Dubai | 09:15 | KNE | 232 | Riyadh | 20:50 |
| ETD | 301 | Abu Dhabi | 08:50 | QTR | 174 | Munich | 20:30 | KAC | 787 | Jeddah | 09:15 | FDB | 058 | Dubai | 20:50 |
| ABY | 125 | Sharjah | 09:00 | KLM | 1088 | Doha | 20:40 | KAC | 773 | Riyadh | 09:40 | DLH | 624 | Dammam | 20:55 |
| QTR | 1070 | Doha | 09:30 | ETD | 307 | Abu Dhabi | 21:10 | JZR | 731 | Cairo | 09:45 | KAC | 333 | Trivandrum | 21:05 |
| IGO | 1753 | Ahmedabad | 09:40 | UAE | 859 | Dubai | 21:15 | ETD | 302 | Abu Dhabi | 09:55 | OMA | 648 | Muscat | 21:05 |
| KAC | 384 | Delhi | 09:45 | ALK | 229 | Colombo | 21:15 | KAC | 101 | London | 10:05 | RBG | 214 | Sohag | 21:10 |
| SVA | 512 | Riyadh | 10:00 | JZR | 1234 | Taif | 21:15 | JZR | 301 | Istanbul | 10:20 | MEA | 403 | Beirut | 21:15 |
| IAW | 157A | Al Najaf | 10:00 | KAC | 168 | Paris | 21:20 | KAC | 617 | Doha | 10:40 | KAC | 301 | Mumbai | 21:25 |
| GFA | 213 | Bahrain | 10:40 | THY | 764 | Istanbul | 21:30 | QTR | 1071 | Doha | 10:40 | QTR | 1089 | Doha | 21:50 |
| MEA | 404 | Beirut | 10:55 | KAC | 164 | MXP | 21:40 | IGO | 1754 | Ahmedabad | 10:40 | DHX | 171 | Bahrain | 21:50 |
| JZR | 1220 | Jeddah | 10:55 | GFA | 219 | Bahrain | 21:50 | SVA | 513 | Riyadh | 10:55 | KAC | 203 | Lahore | 22:00 |
| QTR | 1074 | Doha | 11:00 | KAC | 564 | Amman | 21:55 | IAW | 158A | Al Najaf | 11:00 | KLM | 445 | Bahrain | 22:10 |
| SYR | 341 | Damascus | 11:00 | QTR | 1082 | Doha | 22:05 | GFA | 214 | Bahrain | 11:35 | ETD | 308 | Abu Dhabi | 22:15 |
| JZR | 410 | Delhi | 11:50 | ETD | 309 | Abu Dhabi | 22:15 | MEA | 405 | Beirut | 11:55 | ALK | 230 | Colombo | 22:20 |
| IAW | 157 | Al Najaf | 12:00 | KAC | 786 | Jeddah | 22:20 | SYR | 342 | Damascus | 12:00 | KAC | 383 | Delhi | 22:35 |
| SAW | 701 | Damascus | 12:30 | AIC | 981 | Chennai/Ahmedabad | 22:25 | JZR | 213 | Jeddah | 12:05 | UAE | 860 | Dubai | 22:35 |
| THY | 766 | Istanbul | 12:30 | RBG | 555 | Alexandria | 22:30 | QTR | 1075 | Doha | 12:10 | GFA | 220 | Bahrain | 22:50 |
| KAC | 614 | Bahrain | 12:30 | GEQ | 8456 | Frankfurt | 22:55 | JZR | 221 | Riyadh | 12:40 | KAC | 783 | Jeddah | 22:55 |
| UAE | 871 | Dubai | 12:45 | BBC | 043 | Dhaka | 23:00 | JZR | 123 | Dubai | 12:45 | KAC | 551 | Cairo | 23:00 |
| MSR | 610 | Cairo | 12:45 | MSC | 501 | Alexandria | 23:10 | IAW | 158 | Al Najaf | 13:00 | ETD | 310 | Abu Dhabi | 23:05 |
| IRA | 667 | Esfahan | 13:00 | JZR | 254 | Amman | 23:10 | JZR | 115 | Doha | 13:25 | RBG | 556 | Alexandria | 23:10 |
| AXB | 393 | Kozhikode | 13:10 | MSC | 415 | Sohag | 23:15 | SAW | 702 | Damascus | 13:30 | QTR | 1083 | Doha | 23:20 |
| KAC | 774 | Riyadh | 13:35 | MSR | 614 | Cairo | 23:30 | | | | | | | | |

Oil facility attacks target global supplies, Saudi says

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia, the world's top crude exporter, said yesterday that attacks on two of its tankers and a major pipeline targeted the security of global oil supplies. Drone attacks claimed by Iran-aligned Yemeni rebels shut down one of the kingdom's main oil pipelines on Tuesday, further ratcheting up Gulf tensions after the mysterious sabotage of four ships, two of them Saudi tankers, on Sunday.

“The cabinet affirms that these acts of terrorism and sabotage ... do not only target the kingdom but also the security of world oil supplies and the global economy,” it said after a meeting chaired by King Salman in the Red Sea city of Jeddah on Tuesday evening. Tuesday's drone strikes hit two pumping stations on the kingdom's east-west pipeline, which can carry five million barrels of crude per day and provides a strategic alternative route for Saudi exports if the shipping lane from the Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz is closed.

Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed responsibility for the strikes and said they were a response to “crimes” committed by Saudi Arabia and its allies during more than four years of war in support of the government. The Saudi tankers Al-Marzoqah and Amjad suffered “significant damage” in as yet unexplained sabotage attacks in the Sea of Oman off the United Arab Emirates on Sunday, Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said, but there were no casualties or any oil spill.

An Emirati official said three Western countries—the US, France and Norway—would be part of an investigation into the ship attacks along with the UAE and Saudi Arabia. The ships—which also included the Norwegian tanker Andrea Victory and an Emirati vessel—were docked in the sea off the coast of the emirate of Fujairah, the official added. Neither Saudi Arabia nor the UAE, both close allies of the United States, have yet given details on the exact nature of those attacks, which come amid heightened tensions between Washington and Riyadh's arch-rival Tehran.

OPEC giant Saudi Arabia currently pumps around 10 million barrels per day (bpd) of which around seven million bpd are exported. At present, most Saudi exports are loaded onto tankers at terminals on the kingdom's Gulf

coast and must pass through the Strait of Hormuz. The Saudi cabinet called for “confronting terrorist entities which carry out such sabotage acts, including the Iran-backed Houthi militias in Yemen”.

Iranian tools

Iran has repeatedly threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz in case of a military confrontation with the United States. The US has already strengthened its military presence in the region, including deploying a number of strategic B-52 bombers in response to alleged Iranian threats.

Iran and the US have engaged in a war of words in recent weeks since Tehran began to roll back commitments set out in a landmark 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. US President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the deal last year and has unilaterally reimposed tough sanctions on Iran. The International Energy Agency said yesterday that Iranian crude oil output fell in April to 2.6 million barrels per day, the lowest level in over five years, and could tumble in May to levels not seen since the 1980s war with Iraq.

Shiite-majority Iran rivals Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia for influence in the Middle East, with the two taking opposing sides in multiple regional conflicts including in Yemen. A military coalition, led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, intervened in the Yemen war in March 2015 to bolster the efforts of the internationally recognized government against the Houthi rebels. The conflict has killed tens of thousands and left up to 14 million Yemenis at risk of starvation according to UN agencies.

The head of the rebels' Supreme Revolutionary Committee, Mohammed Al-Houthi, said on Twitter yesterday the “Yemeni people want the aggression to stop... and the embargo to be lifted”. The Yemeni government condemned the Houthi-claimed attacks, saying the insurgents were tools of the Iranian regime. “The Houthis work for the interest of the Iranian camp,” the government said in a statement carried by the state news agency Saba. “The targeting of the oil (pumping stations) in Saudi Arabia... is further proof that the Houthi militia does not believe in peace.”— AFP

Hashem criticized insurance companies describing them as “sharks” - claiming the new law favors the companies at the expense of the insured. MP Abdullah Al-Kundari criticized the law saying it does not provide sufficient protection for those insured and encourages monopoly for some companies besides that it does not encourage competition.

MP Saadoun Hammad said that the law does not require foreign companies to comply with the capital requirements as the Kuwaiti insurance companies and called for imposing the law on foreign companies wishing to open in Kuwait. At the end of the debate, 34 lawmakers voted for the law against 13. The second reading will be debated following the introduction of several changes.

If the greatest of Allah's creations could not take decisions without turning to Allah then what about the rest of mankind? We definitely need to! This Ramadan is a month of supplication and the month of seeking forgiveness for all the wrong decisions which led to wrong actions and sometimes sins.

Dua for istikhara (decision making)

O Allah, I seek Your guidance [in making a choice] by virtue of Your knowledge, and I seek ability by virtue of Your power, and I ask You of Your great bounty. You have power, I have none. And You know, I know not. You are the Knower of hidden things.

O Allah, if in Your knowledge, this matter (then it should be mentioned by name) is good for me both in this world and in the Hereafter (or: in my religion, my livelihood, and my affairs), then ordain it for me, make it easy for me, and bless it for me. And if in Your knowledge it is bad for me and for my religion, my livelihood and my affairs (or: for me both in this world and the next), then turn me away from it, [and turn it away from me], and ordain for me the good wherever it may be and make me pleased with it).” (In Bukhaari, Saheeh 1166).

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 inter-faith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, you can contact TIES at Tel: 25231015/6; Hotline: 94079777; e-mail: info@tiescenter.net.

military because there is not going to be any war.” Pompeo told Russian officials in the Black Sea resort of Sochi that the US “fundamentally do not seek a war with Iran.” Playing down the statements by Washington's top diplomat, Kremlin spokesman Peskov told reporters: “There were no assurances from Pompeo,” and “there is an obvious situation which unfortunately tends to escalate further.”

Germany and the Netherlands said yesterday they were halting their training of soldiers in Iraq as tensions rise between neighboring Iran and the United States. “The German army has suspended the training,” defense ministry spokesman Jens Flosdorff said, adding that there was “generally heightened alert, awareness” for soldiers currently operating in the region.

Flosdorff said training may resume in the next few days and that there was “no concrete threat” at the moment. Germany has about 160 soldiers deployed in Iraq, including 60 in Taji, just to the north of Baghdad, and 100 in Erbil, in Kurdish-controlled northern territory. Separately, the Netherlands' defense ministry said it was also suspending its training mission in Iraq due to “threats”, the Dutch ANP news agency said.

More than 50 Dutch soldiers are training Kurdish troops in Erbil in the context of the international coalition against the Islamic State group, ANP said. The defense ministry website says the Netherlands also supplies two military advisers and four civilian experts to the NATO “capacity-building mission” in Baghdad. Lithuania, which has eight soldiers in Iraq, said it did not plan to halt its mission. — Agencies



AT SEA: In this file photo, the Spanish Navy frigate ESPS Mendez Nunez (center front), the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (left), the aircraft carrier USS John C Stennis (right), the French Marine Nationale frigate FS Languedoc and the guided-missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf sail in formation in the Mediterranean Sea.— AFP

Facebook curbs ‘livestreaming’

PARIS: Facebook announced yesterday it would tighten access to its livestreaming feature as New Zealand's premier Jacinda Ardern and French leader Emmanuel Macron prepared to launch the global “Christchurch Call” initiative to tackle the spread of extremism online. Facebook boss Mark Zuckerberg has been under intense pressure since March when a white supremacist gunman used Facebook Live to stream his rampage at two mosques in the New Zealand city of Christchurch, which left 51 people dead.

The California-based platform said it would ban Facebook Live users who shared extremist content and seek to reinforce its own internal controls to stop

the spread of offensive videos. “Following the horrific recent terrorist attacks in New Zealand, we've been reviewing what more we can do to limit our services from being used to cause harm or spread hate,” Facebook vice-president of integrity Guy Rosen said in a statement.

Ardern and Macron will later issue the Christchurch Call to fight the spread of hateful and terror-related content along with leaders from Britain, Canada, Norway, Jordan and Senegal, who will also be in Paris. The largely symbolic initiative is intended to keep up the pressure on social media companies who face growing calls from politicians across the world to stop their platforms being abused. “It's an action plan, it's the start of something,” Ardern told CNN in an interview yesterday. Many countries have already tightened legislation to introduce penalties for companies that fail to take down offensive content once it is flagged by authorities. — AFP

Palestinians mark ‘Nakba’...

Continued from Page 1

several places along the Gaza Strip fence. “The rioters are setting tyres on fire and hurling rocks. A number of explosive devices have been hurled within the Gaza Strip, as well, and a number of attempts have been made to approach the security fence. IDF troops are responding with riot dispersal means.”

Yesterday's rallies were called to mark Nakba Day, what Palestinians term the catastrophe that befell them at Israel's creation in 1948, when hundreds of thousands fled or were expelled from lands in what is now Israel. “Our people rise today to announce their rejection to this crime and to assert their right in Palestine, all of Palestine,” Islamic Jihad leader Khader Habib said at one demonstration, referring to Israel and the territories it captured in the 1967 Middle East war.

“Palestine is ours, the sea is ours, the sky is ours and the land is ours, and those strangers must be removed,” he said. Another protester, Jamila Mahmoud, 50, said

Attacks expose weaknesses...

Continued from Page 1

The US Navy's Bahrain-based Fifth Fleet is tasked with protecting commercial ships in the area. The British and French navies maintain a presence, while Saudi Arabia and the UAE have high-tech naval capacities. But Gulf Arab states are struggling to build an effective system to defend against drones and low-tech sabotage attempts, Eurasia Group said in a note. “There are hundreds, if not a few thousand, small boats moving in that area every day. Many of these vessels are smugglers operating between Iran and the Gulf states,” said Norman Roule, a retired senior US intelligence officer.

“This will make it difficult, but not impossible, to trace any small vessels which may have been involved in the operation.” Port security in Dubai, the region's trading hub, was unchanged, a spokeswoman for the government media office said. But the UAE may still face pressure to increase patrols. “The UAE needs to send a signal to reassure the shipping industry that Fujairah is safe and this is not going to happen again,” a Western diplomat in Abu Dhabi said.

More than three days on, little information has been provided on where the ships were when they were attacked, what sort of weapon was used, and who did it. Navigational data indicated at least some of the ships may have been within nine nautical miles of the shore, well within UAE territorial sea. Saudi Arabia's energy minister has said at least one of them was further out, in the UAE's exclusive economic zone where international law largely applies.

Reuters and other journalists taken on a tour off the Fujairah coast saw a hole at the waterline in the hull of a Norwegian ship, with the metal torn inwards. A Saudi tanker they viewed showed no sign of major damage. Maritime security sources told Reuters that images suggest the damage was likely caused by

her family had originally come from Asqlan, now the Israeli city of Ashkelon, near Gaza. “If we don't return, maybe our children and grandchildren will do, one day we will get our rights back,” Mahmoud said at the border protest site. Palestinians also held rallies in the occupied West Bank but no major clashes with Israeli forces were immediately reported.

This year's Nakba protests were preceded by a surge in deadly cross-border fighting between Gaza militants and Israel which ended in a ceasefire on May 6. Israeli troops have killed more than 200 Palestinians and wounded thousands in regular border protests since March 2018, according to human rights groups. UN investigators have said the Israeli military might be guilty of war crimes for using excessive force. Israel has said it is defending its border against attacks against its troops and infiltration attempts by gunmen.

Israel has rejected a Palestinian right of return as a threat to maintaining a Jewish majority in a country it describes as the nation-state of the Jewish people. Frustration is growing among Palestinians as hopes fade for a two-state solution to the conflict which would give them an independent country. President Donald Trump's announcement in December 2017 of US recognition of disputed Jerusalem as Israel's capital also fuelled Palestinian anger.— Reuters

limpet mines attached close to the waterline with less than 4 kg of explosives.

One source said the level of coordination and use of mines were likely to rule out militant groups such as Al-Qaeda. “It's not those guys seeking publicity, it's someone who wants to make a point without necessarily pointing in any given direction,” said Jeremy Binnie, Middle East and Africa editor for Jane's Defense Weekly. “It's below the threshold (for war).”

Jean-Marc Rickli, head of global risk and resilience at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, said the attacks could be a message that Iran has means to disrupt traffic. Saudi state oil company Aramco said output and exports were not disrupted by the attack on the pumping stations, but it temporarily shut the East-West pipeline to evaluate its condition.

Both attacks targeted alternative routes for oil to bypass Hormuz. Fujairah port is a terminal of the crude pipeline from Abu Dhabi's Habsshan oilfields. The Saudi East-West line takes crude from eastern fields to Yanbu port, north of Bab Al-Mandeb. The commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards said last year that Tehran would block exports through the waterway if countries heeded US calls to stop buying Iranian oil.

US officials have said closing the Strait would be crossing a “red line” and pledged action to reopen it. The waterway separates Iran and Oman, linking the Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea. The Strait is 21 miles wide at its narrowest point, but the shipping lane is just two miles wide in either direction. Even during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, when the two sides sought to disrupt oil exports by attacking ships in what was known as the Tanker War, shipping did not stop although insurance rates spiked.

JBC Energy Research Centre said Fujairah would continue to be seen as a reliable bunkering hub, especially with a US strike group arriving in the region and navies from Britain, France and China available to assist. “No matter who is behind this,” Rickli said, “it contributes to heightened tensions in the region and leads to a situation where an incident could trigger a larger response.” — Reuters

MPs approve insurance and...

Continued from Page 1

supervision of the Central Bank and opposed the proposal to establish an independent body for the insurance sector.

Ashour said the new law increases the capital of insurance companies to between KD 5 and 15 million which will impact existing companies. MP Safa Al-

Decisions: Time to reflect...

Continued from Page 1

We seek forgiveness for the bad decisions we took. In this fast-paced world sometimes we do not consider enough. What I am about to do - is it acceptable in front of Allah? Am I compromising my deen by doing something? Am I trying to justify the decision by saying that it's not all bad? When we seek to reflect in the quietness of our own thoughts often as we grow older and wiser...we seek Allah's mercy and guidance to help us take the right decisions.

We pray Istikhaara now whereas in the past we didn't. We consult (Shura'aa) now when didn't used to. We beseech the Almighty to give us what He knows is best (Khair). Yes, we know we have not taken some decisions in the right way in our lives but we also know that Allah can open our hearts with His light and mercy. We are weak and helpless without Him.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) came to teach the Book of Allah - the Quran - and Wisdom. This is mentioned in several places in the Quran (Al-Baqarah 2:129, 151, and 231; Al Imran 3:164; An-Nisaa' 4:113; Al-Ahzab 33:34; Al-Jumu'ah 62:2). The Quran does not contain the rules only, but also the wisdom. It gives us practical rules and guidelines for making ethical decisions.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a master decision-maker. However, for all his decisions he turned to Allah...

US orders ‘non-emergency’...

Continued from Page 1

National Security Advisor John Bolton warned that Washington would respond with “unrelenting force” to any attack by Tehran, including by its regional allies. On Sunday, mysterious attacks by unknown assailants against four ships in the region, including two from Saudi Arabia, sent war talk up another notch.

Neither Saudi Arabia nor the UAE, both close allies of the United States, have given details on the exact nature of those attacks. The Pentagon said last week it was sending several massive, nuclear-capable B-52 bombers to the region in response to indications of an alleged plan by “Iranian and Iranian proxy forces” to attack US forces.

But a British general said Tuesday there had been “no increased threat from Iranian-backed forces in Iraq and Syria.” The comments by Major General Chris Ghika, a British spokesman for Operation Inherent Resolve, the coalition fighting the Islamic State group, drew a sharp retort from US Central Command. Both Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Pompeo have said this week played down fears that their countries were headed for conflict.

Khamenei told Iranian officials the standoff “is not

Sports

Rockies outlast Red Sox in 11 innings despite 24 Ks

Rays’ Morton, three relievers combine to shut out Marlins

BOSTON: Mark Reynolds hit a tiebreaking RBI single in the top of the 11th inning as the Colorado Rockies overcame a near-historic number of strikeouts to beat the host Boston Red Sox 5-4 on Tuesday. The Rockies had fanned 24 times without a walk before Ryan McMahon and Nolan Arenado reached on ball four from Ryan Brasier (2-2) in the 11th. Reynolds' game-winning single came on an 0-2 count with two outs. Colorado narrowly avoided the major league record of 26 collective strikeouts in a game. Red Sox ace Chris Sale was responsible for a career-high 17 of them, becoming the first pitcher in major league history to reach that total in seven or fewer innings. Mike Dunn (1-0) finished the bottom of the 10th for the win, and Wade Davis worked around a two-out single for his seventh save.

CUBS 3, REDS 1

Kyle Hendricks pitched into the ninth inning and allowed only one run and three hits, and he had three hits and two RBIs at the plate, helping visiting Chicago win the opener of a three-game series against Cincinnati. Kris Bryant also had three hits and Javier Baez had two hits for the Cubs, who have won six of seven and 13 of 15. Joey Votto homered for the Reds, who had won three of four coming in. Hendricks (3-4) struck out seven and walked one in eight-plus innings. He hadn't allowed an earned run in his previous two outings covering 17 innings.

TWINS 4, ANGELS 3

Mitch Garver hit a two-run homer and Byron Buxton doubled in a run and also threw out the potential tying run at the plate in the eighth inning to lead Minnesota to victory over visiting Los Angeles. Kyle Gibson (4-1) allowed three runs on six hits over 5 2/3 innings to pick up the win as the Twins avoided their first three-game losing streak of the season. Blake Parker recorded the final four outs to pick up his seventh save. Shohei Ohtani

went 3-for-4 with an RBI, and Tommy La Stella and David Fletcher each had two hits for Los Angeles. Opener Cam Bedrosian (1-2) took the loss after yielding a run on two hits in one inning.

BREWERS 6, PHILLIES 1

Yasmani Grandal and Ryan Braun homered, and visiting Milwaukee dispatched Philadelphia as Grandal, Orlando Arcia and Keston Hiura had two hits apiece for the Brewers, who broke their three-game losing streak. Milwaukee starter Brandon Woodruff (6-1) allowed just one hit in six scoreless innings. Woodruff walked five and struck out five. Jean Segura's infield single in the first was the Phillies' lone hit against the right-hander. Segura produced two hits for the Phillies, who had their three-game winning streak snapped. Philadelphia managed only five hits overall. Phillies starter Jerad Eickhoff (2-2) struggled through four innings. He allowed eight hits and five runs and saw his ERA balloon from 1.50 to 2.65.

INDIANS 9, WHITE SOX 0

Jordan Luplow recorded his second two-homer game of the season and Carlos Carrasco (4-3) tossed seven strong innings to propel host Cleveland past Chicago. Luplow belted a two-run homer off Manny Banuelos (2-3) in the fourth inning before leading off the sixth with a blast against Josh Osich. Luplow, who has four homers this season, launched a pair of solo shots off Banuelos in Cleveland's 5-0 rain-shortened win last Thursday.

Jake Bauers, Roberto Perez and Jose Ramirez also went deep for the Indians, who answered Chicago's four-homer performance on Monday with a season-high-five the following day. Cleveland's nine runs were the most it has scored in 2019.

METS 6, NATIONALS 2

Wilson Ramos hit a grand slam against his former



BOSTON: J.D. Martinez #28 of the Boston Red Sox hits a home run in the second inning against the Colorado Rockies at Fenway Park in Boston, Massachusetts. — AFP

team and starter Noah Syndergaard did not allow a hit in the first five innings as visiting New York whipped struggling Washington.

The Nationals have now lost the first game of a series 12 times in 14 occasions and are 7-17 since April 19. Syndergaard (3-3) had averaged less than five innings per start in his previous six games at Nationals Park but he went eight on Tuesday while allowing just two runs on four hits. Ramos, a catcher for the Nationals from 2011-16, smashed a two-out grand slam in the first inning off Washington starter Jeremy Hellickson (2-2).

RAYS 4, MARLINS 0

Charlie Morton pitched six scoreless innings and Avisail Garcia slugged a 471-foot homer and added two RBI singles to lead Tampa Bay to a win over host Miami. Morton (4-0) allowed just three hits—all singles—and no walks, striking out five and lowering his ERA from 2.64 to 2.32. Morton is 33-10 since the start of the 2017 season. Marlins starter Caleb Smith (3-1) took a hard-luck loss. In 5 1/3 innings, he allowed four hits, two walks and two runs, striking out eight. — Reuters

Zain’s surprises at Al Roudhan tourney continues daily

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the continuation of its daily surprises at the 40th edition of Abdullah Meshari Al Roudhan Ramadan Football Tournament. The company is the Diamond Sponsor of the tournament for the fourth year running, which comes under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Zain's support to this unique event for the fourth consecutive year comes in line with the company's belief in the importance of supporting the youth and sports sectors in Kuwait, as well as encouraging the various sporting initiatives that cater to young people. The event witnesses impressive participation of football enthusiasts from across Kuwait and the GCC, and Zain will remain committed to supporting and sponsoring sports, emphasizing its dedication to the elevation of Kuwaiti youth and sports.

Al Roudhan Ramadan Football Tournament is considered the most prominent sporting event in Kuwait during the Holy Month of Ramadan of every year. Football fans in Kuwait and the GCC look forward to it with great passion, given the fact that it witnesses high levels of professionalism through both the competing local teams as well as the international football stars hosted. This year, Al Roudhan tournament will witness the participation of three international football legends that have millions of fans around



One of the participating teams.

the world: Italian legend Francesco Totti, Ivorian legend Didier Drogba, and Croatian legend Luka Modri.

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, and more.

Zain believes in the support of the various initiatives that contribute to the development of the Kuwaiti sports and youth sectors. The company reflects this belief through its support to such distinguished sports events as well as through its support to Kuwaiti athletes in various sports who proudly represent Kuwait in local and international arenas.

Tiger, Koepka hunt more major glory in PGA at Bethpage

BETHPAGE: Masters winner Tiger Woods, chasing a 16th major title, and defending champion Brooks Koepka lead a powerhouse field into today's opening round of the PGA Championship at rain-drenched Bethpage Black.

Woods, who ended an 11-year major title drought last month at Augusta National, and Koepka, who held off Woods to win last year's PGA crown, join reigning British Open champion Francesco Molinari of Italy in the feature group of the first two days.

"I'm just looking forward to playing with him," Koepka said of Woods. "I don't think we've really been paired together too much, especially over the last couple years. It'll definitely be interesting."

It's the same layout where Woods won the 2002 US Open and shared sixth behind winner Lucas Glover at a rain-hit 2009 US Open, both times with the vocal support of New York crowds who made the Long Island trek.

"This week is going to be a lot of fun with the crowds, the excitement that we've had here," Woods said. "The pairing I'm involved in, it's going to be just a boatload of fun for all of us." Woods would match Sam Snead's career US PGA Tour win record of 82 with a triumph and move within two of the all-time major win mark of 18 by Jack Nicklaus with a victory.

The 43-year-old American would become the 10th oldest major winner, two days older than Ted Ray when he won the 1920 US Open, and match record co-holders Nicklaus and Walter Hagen with a fifth Wanamaker Trophy.

He would also be halfway to a calendar year Grand Slam, the PGA shifting to May for the first time since 1949 in a revamped world golf calendar. Woods won the first two majors of 2002 at the Masters and US Open at Bethpage, where two inches of rain has soaked the course.

"In order to win this one, driving is going to be at the forefront with the rough as lush as it is," Woods said. "Fairways are plenty wide because it's wet. You've got to hit it not only straight but you've got to hit it far."

Woods played a practice round last week but will have only two nine-hole sessions this week ahead of what could be an endurance test over the 7,459-yard, par-70 layout. "This is not only a big course, but this is going to be a long week the way the golf course is set up. This could be a hell of a championship," Woods said.

"There's definitely going to be a component to stamina as the week goes on. Four days over a tough championship that is mentally and physically taxing takes its toll."

Koepka could become the first golfer to own back-to-back titles in two different majors at once, having defended his US Open crown last June at nearby Shinnecock before denying Woods last August at Bellerive. — AFP



Football enthusiasts at Al Roudhan tournament.

Alonso frustrated as Indianapolis 500 practice opens

LOS ANGELES: Two-time Formula One world champion Fernando Alonso endured a frustrating day of Indianapolis 500 practice Tuesday, completing just 50 laps as he wrestled with electrical issues.

The Spaniard posted a best lap of 224.162 mph (360.75 Km/h), on the 2.5-mile Indianapolis Motor Speedway oval in his Chevrolet powered McLaren — 32nd-fastest out of 30. Australia's 2018 Indy 500 winner Will Power topped the practice speeds at 229.745 mph in contrast.

Team principal Gil de Ferran told NBCSPORTS.com that it was a difficult day, all the more so since the team are "baffled" by the problem. "Obviously, I'm disappointed and a little frustrated we had the issue in the afternoon," de Ferran said. "We are trying our best to understand what the problem is. So far, it's baffling. We lost the entire afternoon session."

De Ferran and McLaren had not determined the cause of the electrical issue late Tuesday as they continued to scour over reams and reams of data on their computers. NBCSports.com was allowed into the team's garage in Gasoline Alley as lead engineer Andy Brown continued to look for the cause of the issue.

"If we understood what the issue is, it would have been fixed," de Ferran said. "That's why it's so baffling. It's an electrical issue; not mechanical. 'It's been a difficult start. No doubt about that. We'll see what we can do.'"

Alonso, 37, led 27 laps as an Indianapolis 500 new-

comer in 2017 before a mechanical problem ended his race with 20 laps remaining. He was named the Indy 500 Rookie of the Year for his efforts.

Alonso's career includes F1 crowns in 2005 and 2006, Monaco victories in 2006 and 2007 and a share of the 2018 24 Hours of Le Mans title from the pole alongside teammates Sebastian Buemi of Switzerland and Kazuki Nakajima of Japan.

He's back again to try to join Britain's Graham Hill as the only drivers to have won the "Triple Crown" of LeMans, Monaco and Indy classics, taking the Indy 500 in 1966. In 2017, McLaren partnered with Honda and team Andretti Autosport.

This year, they are powered by Chevrolet and have an engineering alliance with the smaller Carlin Racing outfit. "We are under no illusions how big a challenge we have," de Ferran said. Practice for the May 26 race continues on Wednesday, with qualifying on the weekend. —AFP

Sports

Dumoulin toughs out Giro d'Italia despite knee injury

UCI suspends four for potential anti-doping breach

FRASCATI: Former Giro d'Italia winner Tom Dumoulin confirmed yesterday he will continue this year's race despite an knee injury picked up in a fall on the fourth stage.

"Knee still hurts but we hope it will get better through the day. Will give everything I have to make it. Fingers crossed," the Dutch rider, winner of the three-week race around Italy in 2017, wrote on Twitter.

The fifth stage, a short 140km run from Frascati, just south of Rome, to Terracina, will be mostly raced under the rain, with a 1.5km home straight which should set the scene for a spectacular sprint finish.

"He (Dumoulin) has been cleared to race by the team's medical staff, but is still suffering with his knee," his Sunweb team said. "He will give it his best shot and see what the day brings."

Dumoulin came second at both the Giro d'Italia and the Tour de France in 2018, as well as winning the 2017 Giro and the 2017 world championships time-trial, making him a chief contender in all major tours and races.

"For sure, the overall ranking is over for me," Dumoulin said on Tuesday. The 28-year-old is now in 56th position 4min 30sec behind race leader Primož Roglič of Slovenia. "There is no fracture, which is good news, but my knee is very swollen," he added.

Meanwhile, four European cyclists, including two retired riders, have been provisionally suspended for potential doping violations following information from the Austrian law enforcement authorities, the International Cycling Union (UCI) said yesterday.

Slovenia's Kristijan Koren of Team Bahrain Merida

and Croatian Kristijan Durasek of UAE Team Emirates as well as former riders Alessandro Petacchi and Borut Bozic have been notified of potential Anti-Doping Rules Violations (ADRV) as part of the 'Operation Aderlass' investigation.

Koren is competing at the Giro d'Italia and will not be allowed to start yesterday's stage according to the regulations. Italian Pettachi, 45, retired in 2015, while 38-year-old Slovenian Bozic ended his cycling career last year and is now Assistant Sports Director at Team Bahrain Merida.

The four are under investigation for employing prohibited doping methods between 2012 and 2017. "The UCI and the Cycling Anti-Doping Foundation (CADF)... have been in close contact with the sport and state authorities involved in the Aderlass investigation, in particular with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the Austrian law enforcement authorities," UCI said in a statement.

Operation Aderlass is looking into blood doping, a process where athletes have blood transfusions to increase their stamina and performance—a method prohibited under WADA regulations.

The provisional suspension begins on the day of the notice and a UCI Anti-Doping Tribunal will be established to hear the anti-doping rules violations. UAE Team Emirates have suspended 31-year-old Durasek.

"The Team hopes that Durasek can prove he was not involved in the affair. Should it be proven otherwise, he will be terminated immediately," they said in a statement. Team Bahrain Merida have also provisionally suspended 32-year-old Koren and Bozic.



FRASCATI: Team Sunweb rider Netherlands' Tom Dumoulin rides during stage five of the 102nd Giro d'Italia - Tour of Italy - cycle race, 140kms from Frascati to Terracina. — AFP

"The team strictly advocates zero-tolerance doping policy and has therefore provisionally suspended both members concerned," the Bahrain-based team said in a statement. "We would like to stress that both cases

relate to the 2012 and/or 2013 seasons. The team always carries out thorough medical checks (including biological passport checks) of any new signed rider." — Agencies

Kohli defends leaving out Pant for World Cup

NEW DELHI: India picked veteran Dinesh Karthik over rising talent Rishabh Pant for the World Cup because of his composure under pressure, captain Virat Kohli said in an interview released yesterday.

The selection of the 33-year-old Karthik in the 15-member squad was sharply criticised by some former cricketers who felt the 21-year-old Pant should have been given a chance. Since making his debut in 2018, Pant has impressed with his batting, including a maiden Test century in England.

He scored 488 runs from 16 matches in the just-finished Indian Premier League, while Karthik made 253 runs from 14 games. Both players are vying for the reserve wicketkeeper slot behind former skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

"In pressure situations, he (Karthik) has shown composure. It was something that everybody on board was convinced about. He has the experience," Kohli told the Times of India newspaper. "If, god forbid, something happens to MS (Dhoni), Karthik can be



Virat Kohli

immensely valuable behind the wickets. As a finisher, he's done well.

"So, it was the overall exposure to a tournament of this magnitude that was taken into primary consideration," said Kohli. After making his debut in 2004, Karthik has played 91 one-day internationals while Pant has five to his name.

Kohli, who will be leading India for the first time at the World Cup, said he was not both-

ered about the constant attention he gets as a batsman and captain. "I don't want to be the centre of everything. Nobody wants that. But when your intent is to make the team win, eventually you end up doing things which are always going to be seen," said Kohli, the world's number one Test and one-day player.

"I would always put my body on the line for the team." India are chasing their third World Cup after wins in 1983 and 2011. — AFP



BRISTOL: England's Jonny Bairstow plays a shot during the third One Day International (ODI) cricket match between England and Pakistan at The Bristol County Ground in Bristol. —AFP

ing over the ropes.

"I was really pleased with that hundred," Bairstow told Sky Sports. "Coming back into English conditions after playing in the IPL (Indian Premier League) was a big change and it's nice to hit the ground running."

Morgan added: "Roy and Bairstow were absolutely outstanding and really did set the platform." Meanwhile Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed took some consolation from his side's batting display.

"The way we put runs on the board, I was very confident," he said. "But the bowling wasn't quite up to the mark." Roy set the tone for England's reply with a huge straight six off Afridi and flat-batted medium-pacer Faheem Ashraf's first ball straight back over the bowler's head for another.

He eventually sliced Faheem to Asif Ali at cover-point, having hit eight fours and four sixes. Bairstow, dropped on 86 when Faheem could not hold a tough caught and bowled chance off a fierce drive, was severe on anything short and went to his seventh ODI

hundred off 74 balls, including 12 fours and three sixes. He eventually fell when he bottom-edged a pull off Junaid Khan into his stumps, with England well on their way at 234 for two in the 29th over.

Earlier, Chris Woakes bolstered his chances of being included in England's final 15-man World Cup squad with four wickets for 67 runs in a maximum 10 overs. The Warwickshire paceman reduced Pakistan to 27 for two, a full-length ball having Fakhar Zaman - fresh from a hundred at Southampton - edging to Root at second slip before a sharp off-cutter bowled Babar Azam.

But left-handed opener Imam went to his sixth hundred in 27 ODIs and first against England-off 97 balls. The 23-year-old nephew of Pakistan great and selection chief Inzamam-ul-Haq, upped his tempo by driving left-arm quick David Willey for six.

Imam surpassed his previous ODI best of 128 against Zimbabwe at Bulawayo last year before he was bowled, giving himself room, by Curran. — AFP

Morgan banned from fourth Pakistan ODI for slow over-rate

BRISTOL: England will have to find a new captain for the fourth one-day international against Pakistan on Friday after skipper Eoin Morgan was banned from the match by the International Cricket Council for a slow over-rate offence.

Morgan was sanctioned after World Cup hosts and favourites England took around four hours to bowl their 50 overs in a six-wicket win over Pakistan in the third ODI at Bristol on Tuesday. He was also fined 40 percent of his match fee and his players 20 percent of theirs after match referee Richie Richardson ruled England were two overs short after time allowances were taken into consideration.

As Morgan had previously been found guilty of a minor over-rate offence during the Barbados ODI against the West Indies on February 22, this latest incident constituted his second minor over-rate offence within a 12-month period and so led to a one-game ban.

"The suspension means Morgan will miss the fourth ODI against Pakistan in Nottingham on Friday," said an ICC statement issued yesterday. England

have been rotating their side during the Pakistan series as they look at options before naming a final 15-man squad for a home World Cup starting later this month.

BUTTLER OPTION

England may well have rested Morgan for at least one game during the five-match Pakistan series in order to give vice-captain Jos Buttler more leadership experience. As it is, star batsman Buttler, rested at Bristol, could now return as captain for Friday's match at Nottingham's Trent Bridge.

Buttler has captained England in five ODIs and four Twenty20 matches, while Test skipper Joe Root is also a mainstay of England's one-day team. Morgan's cumulative punishment will not roll over into the World Cup, with an ICC spokeswoman telling AFP that all players taking part would start the tournament with a "clean slate".

Jonny Bairstow also found himself censured by former West Indies captain Richardson as a result of events in Bristol. The England wicket-keeper was reprimanded for breaching level one of the ICC's code of conduct relating to "abuse of cricket equipment or clothing, ground equipment or fixtures and fittings" when smashing his stumps in frustration after he was bowled for a match-winning 128.

In addition, one demerit point has been added to his disciplinary record. England are 2-0 up against Pakistan, with games in Nottingham and Leeds to come, after rain forced the abandonment of last week's opener at The Oval. — AFP

English cricket chiefs admit Hundred 'mistakes' as draft announced

LONDON: English cricket bosses have accepted they made mistakes in promoting "The Hundred", their controversial new short-form tournament that is due to start next year. The England and Wales Cricket Board faced huge public criticism for suggesting the 100-balls-per-side competition was aimed at attracting a new audience as opposed to existing fans.

Questions have also been raised about whether there is a need for another short-form event in an already congested calendar, given the success of Twenty20 matches and the new competition's potential impact on English cricket's existing 18 first-class counties.

On Wednesday, the ECB confirmed that a televised player draft for The Hundred would be held on October 20, ahead of the inaugural competition, starting in July 2020. Yet more than two years on from when county bosses first discussed the eight-team city-based concept, the ECB has still to confirm team names and venues for the five-week event.

"We've definitely made mistakes in the build-up, but this is about the future of the game. This is about growing cricket," said ECB chief executive Tom Harrison. The ECB have long

insisted The Hundred is essential in attracting the next generation of cricket supporters.

According to their research, just five percent of British children aged six to 15 list cricket in their top two favourite sports. "We have the ability to extend our fanbase into young families, diverse communities and young people to give them an experience they potentially haven't felt through the current offerings," said Harrison.

In 2005, the ECB controversially abandoned terrestrial television coverage of international cricket in England following that year's Ashes series. But 11 Hundred matches will be broadcast free to air on the BBC, with satellite channel Sky screening all the games in the tournament.

England director of cricket Ashley Giles likened the hostility to The Hundred to concerns surrounding the advent of Twenty20. "When I was a player back in 2003 and Twenty20 came in, we hated it," the former England spinner recalled.

"To the point where my side Warwickshire were in the first finals day, and I didn't go and play in it because it was seen as some sort of sideshow. It certainly isn't that now." — AFP

OPENERS RUN RIOT

But Bairstow and opening partner Jason Roy, who made 76 after Shaheen Shah Afridi dropped an easy chance to catch him at mid-off on 21, shared a blistering stand of 159 inside 18 overs. The pair took advantage of a good pitch, short boundaries, fast outfield and an inexperienced Pakistan attack—Mohammad Amir was again ruled out with chicken pox—to repeatedly send the ball soar-

Sports

Aston Villa beat West Brom on penalties to reach playoff final

Guardiola beats Klopp to manager of the year award

LONDON: Aston Villa progressed to within one game of a return to the Premier League after edging West Midlands rivals West Bromwich Albion 4-3 on penalties in the Championship playoff semi-finals on Tuesday.

West Brom won 1-0 on the night at the Hawthorns to level the tie at 2-2 on aggregate thanks to Craig Dawson's first-half header. However, the Baggies' hopes of an immediate return to the top-flight were dented when captain Chris Brunt was sent off 10 minutes from the end of normal time.

The hosts held out manfully during extra-time, but Villa goalkeeper Jed Steer saved West Brom's first two penalties of the shootout from Mason Holgate and Ahmed Hegazi. "There's obviously a lot of luck involved but wow," Steer told Sky Sports. "We practise penalties, so I think I must've faced a 100 a day the last few days."

Conor Hourihane, Mile Jedinak, Jack Grealish and Tammy Abraham kept their cool from the spot as Villa set up a May 27 Wembley meeting with Leeds or Derby for a lucrative place in the Premier League. Marcelo Bielsa's Leeds hold a 1-0 first-leg lead over Frank Lampard's Rams ahead of the second leg at Elland Road.

Villa missed out in the playoff final last year, losing

1-0 to Fulham and Grealish, who has been linked with a summer move to Tottenham, is keen to make amends in what could be his final game for the club.

"The crowd made it tough with the atmosphere but in the end I felt we ran out worthy winners," said the midfielder. "It's no good getting to Wembley and falling at the final hurdle again, so fingers crossed. All of us are very hungry."

Meanwhile, Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola edged out Jurgen Klopp to a trophy for the second time in three days as the Catalan claimed the League Managers' Association manager of the year on Tuesday.

Guardiola's City retained the Premier League title on Sunday, beating Klopp's Liverpool by a single point at the end of a thrilling title race. Having also won the League Cup earlier in the campaign, Guardiola's side could complete a first ever domestic treble in English football when they face Watford in the FA Cup final at Wembley on Saturday.

Guardiola topped the vote ahead of Jurgen Klopp, Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino, who has led Spurs to their first ever Champions League final, and Nuno Espirito Santo of Wolves, who finished seventh in their first season back in the top flight. — AFP



Aston Villa players celebrate as they pip West Brom on penalties to reach final of Championship playoffs.

Griezmann exit leaves Atletico lost as rivals get set to strengthen

MADRID: Antoine Griezmann's decision to leave Atletico Madrid has plunged the club into chaos and fired the starting gun for a summer scramble among Europe's elite. Top scorer in each of his five seasons, Griezmann was the stardust of Atleti, offering spontaneity and craft in a team renowned for discipline and grit.

But he grafted too, which is why he was the perfect fit. Griezmann would run and chase as much as he passed and shot, his willingness perhaps exceptional for one of the world's premium attackers, a class in which he now deservedly belongs.

"I said it last season and I'll say it again - Griezmann is the best player in the world," coach Diego Simeone said in October. In a team that creates more chances and gives him a greater chance of converting them, Griezmann is likely to deliver an even better return than his 129 goals for Atletico in 256 games.

One more against Levante on Saturday will edge the Frenchman clear of Fernando Torres but Torres left a hero. Griezmann's exit will leave a bitter taste. "The truth is it has been difficult to take this route but it's what I feel I need," Griezmann said in a video for the fans.

He will be too late for a last outing in front of them at the Wanda Metropolitano, perhaps out of respect for Diego Godin, the godfather to his daughter, who was given a rousing farewell on Sunday after the club's final home game of the season.

Perhaps Griezmann was wary too, unsure if he waved to the stands whether it would be waving hands he saw coming back. The hope was he would be play-



Antoine Griezmann

ing there in the Champions League final on June 1, the dream of hoisting a European trophy on home turf a key factor in his decision to reject Barcelona last year.

Godin would have led them out but, at 33, with his best years behind him, he goes with the blessing of the fans, a La Liga title, two Champions League finals, two Europa Leagues, three Super Cups and a Copa del Rey under his arm.

Griezmann, five years younger, should be entering his prime, and departs with only one Europa League and a Super Cup. Worse, most suspect he is about to strengthen Barcelona.

"I think my best time is still to come," Griezmann said in December. "I know I can get even better." But his choice is a reflection on Atletico too, raising ques-

tions about their future under Simeone, who was there on Tuesday with chief executive Miguel Angel Gil Marin and sporting director Andrea Berta, when his star player said he needed something new.

Two of Atletico's three outstanding players - Griezmann, Godin and Jan Oblak - are about to move. Oblak signed a new deal last month but it contains a release clause, reportedly set at 120 million euros, hardly an obstructive price for arguably the world's number one goalkeeper.

Lucas Hernandez has already agreed to join Bayern Munich. Juanfran, Filipe Luis or Rodrigo could be next. Admiration for Simeone is unwavering among supporters but frustration simmers too over style and progress. Atletico sit 11 points behind Barcelona in La Liga, one year after the gap finished at 14.

Griezmann's early decision at least allows time for what is Simeone's biggest rebuild since he took charge in 2011. He also begins it in a summer when Atletico's rivals are expected to respond to the success of the Premier League with spending sprees of their own.

Neither Griezmann's rejection of Barcelona, nor the fans whistling him at Camp Nou, will deter the club from a fresh approach. There have been whistles there as well for their own Philippe Coutinho, whose future would become even more uncertain with Griezmann's arrival.

A reduction in Griezmann's release clause from 200 million euros to 120 on July 1, means there is also time for others to enter the bidding. Paris Saint-Germain are likely to offer the fiercest competition, particularly if they lay down a financial package Barca cannot match.

Griezmann at PSG could in turn give encouragement to Real Madrid, whose president Florentino Perez retains a strong interest in both Kylian Mbappe and Neymar, each seen as the sort of statement signing to launch a glorious new era under Zinedine Zidane.

Another is Paul Pogba, who Madrid might find easier to lure if United framed Griezmann as his replacement. For Atletico, the knocks could keep on coming. — AFP

USA to focus on firepower in search of fourth World Cup

NEW YORK: The United States are widely tipped to retain their crown at the Women's World Cup but to do so they will have to focus on their firepower and park the potentially distracting differences between the players and their football association.

The decision by the squad to file a lawsuit in a California court alleging "institutionalized gender discrimination" under the Equal Pay Act earlier this year has cast a shadow over their preparations, but the American women know their value in what is expected to be the biggest Women's World Cup to date.

Having won three of the previous seven tournaments and four Olympic gold medals, the U.S. women are ranked number one in the world, and bookmakers have them neck-and-neck with hosts France as favourites to win the 2019 tournament.

With players such as striker Alex Morgan and midfielders Carli Lloyd and Julie Ertz, they have both the attacking power and the physicality to go all the way again.

They cruised through the 2018 CONCACAF Championship which serves as the qualifying campaign for the World Cup, winning the tournament on home soil without conceding a goal.

The opposition then was not as strong as what awaits in France, but Morgan, Lloyd and Megan Rapinoe showed the full potency of the American attack as the team scored 26 goals in their five tournament games.

The world champions will have plenty of time to find their feet in France, opening their Group F campaign against Thailand on June 11 before taking on World Cup debutants Chile five days later - neither of which should stretch them but gives their forwards the chance to find their range. They round off with a stiffer-looking test against Sweden on June 20 which is likely to decide the top two positions in the group.

British-born coach Jill Ellis has raised a few eyebrows with some of the names in her squad, selecting the likes of Ali Krieger, who only recently returned to the national team, and Allie Long and Morgan Brian, who have both been hampered by injuries.

"These 23 players have been through adversity and success, and it's a group that has the talent, confidence, experience and desire to help us win the World Cup," Ellis said as she announced her squad.

Though the 52-year-old coach does not have a huge array of specialist options at full back, she has plenty of versatile players who can cover, and her embarrassment of attacking riches mean that it is unlikely to be an issue as the Americans go in search of their fourth world title. — Reuters

Germany eye return to world elite after decade in doldrums

BERLIN: Germany are targeting a return to the world's elite at the Women's World Cup next month after a string of disappointing results for the two-times champions in recent years.

The Germans won the World Cup in 2003 and 2007 but were eliminated in the quarter-finals in 2011 and finished fourth in 2015, and the fans' passion for women's football appears to have waned.

A shock quarter-final exit at the 2017 European Championship, an abysmal performance at the invitational SheBelieves Cup and a poor start to their World Cup qualifying campaign led to coach Steffi Jones being sacked last year.

Former Germany international and youth coach Horst Hrubesch took over on an interim basis to secure World Cup qualification, and after restoring order with seven wins and a draw from his eight games, handed the reins over to Martina Voss-Tecklenburg. The Germans, who have been drawn in Group B with Spain, China and South Africa, are widely expected to advance to the knockout phase, where they should avoid hosts France and defending champions the United States until a potential final.

"We obviously want to win the group," Voss-Tecklenburg said. "That is our first aim. Then we reach the knockout stage and as we want to qualify for next year's Olympics we need to reach minimum the quarter-finals or the semi-finals (depending on the number of European teams.) This is our minimum demand."

The former Switzerland coach, who took over in November, named 23 players in her squad with five more players set to join Germany's training camp in Bavaria later this month as alternates in case of last-minute injuries. Voss-Tecklenburg has retained a backbone of experienced players in the side, including Olympic champions Dzsenifer Marozsan, Melanie Leupolz, Alexandra Popp and Lena Goessling, among others, while bringing in several younger players. — Reuters

Tough Bronze brings Lyon experience to Lionesses

LYON: When Lucy Bronze kicked off her professional career at Everton, her earnings were all-but wiped out by the cost of being a footballer. Bronze did not care about the money, though. She just wanted to play football.

It was a focus that paid off, and next month the Olympique Lyonnais defender will be central to England's assault on the women's World Cup in France. A self-described aggressive and hardworking defender, the 27-year-old says she is now enjoying the "house and the car" in Lyon, where she hopes the Lionesses will play the semi-finals and the final of the sport's top event.

And Bronze trusts that the experience she has accumulated since joining Europe's most successful club in 2017 will prove an asset for England who finished third in the 2015 World Cup. "When I first signed a contract with a women's team, my contract stated that if I played I would get 100 pounds and if I didn't play it would be zero," Bronze told Reuters in an interview.

"If you got injured you got zero, it was crazy." But Bronze wanted just one thing after years of practice on the streets with her brother, and growing up with parents who did not watch football, let alone play it.

"My mum and dad don't like football, they didn't watch it at all. Obviously they watch it now, they watch me, but my dad can't play football, he's terrible and my mum's the same," she recalled.

"My brother is two years older than me and he just used to play football on the street with his friends after school. And everything my brother did, I wanted to do the same... I wanted to be him."

In due course, Bronze got a degree in sports science and said she was soon facing a choice. "It was at that moment when I thought 'do I want to get a job now and keep playing football or am I just gonna play football?'"

"I didn't get paid enough money really to live properly, sleeping on people's sofas and stuff, but

that was the moment when I thought I just wanna play football professionally whether I get paid 10 euros or 10,000 euros, I just wanna play."

And she played, moving up the ranks from Everton to Lyon to make it to the short list of the first women's Ballon d'Or, via stints at Liverpool and Manchester City. "I think it was only five years ago now when I kind of took that jump and left my education to the side and left all those other things to focus on football," said Bronze.

"I wanted to be the best at it and I had to put all the things aside and go for it, and if I wasn't gonna make any money, I wasn't gonna make any money. "I didn't think I was gonna be in the position I am in today with a house and car and living a nice life, but back then it didn't matter and it still doesn't matter."

Sexist remarks didn't matter either to a player who says she would 'run through a brick wall to win a game'. "I never had a problem with the people I was close to because I was playing football with them and they knew I could play, it didn't matter that I was a girl," she explained.

"It's more people from the outside, fans, people you don't know who question it. I remember teachers at school thinking 'she thinks she can play football, but she's a girl'. But it didn't bother me.

"When you're a woman in any job you get 'she can't do that because she's a woman' but to me it kind of makes me laugh-if you think I can't do it I'll show you that I can do it and then you're the one who's gonna look stupid for having those stupid opinions."

Bronze, playing in a team who won a record five Champions Leagues, is an asset her England coach Phil Neville is well aware of. "He asks me a lot of stuff about what I do in Lyon, or what the club does," she said. What Bronze will do when her professional career ends is anyone's guess. "I wanna play until I am 45 if my body will let me," she said with a smile. "After football I have no idea. — Reuters



25 Rockies outlast Red Sox in 11 innings despite 24 Ks



26 Dumoulin toughs out Giro d'Italia despite knee injury



27 Aston Villa beat West Brom on penalties to reach playoff final



OAKLAND: Damian Lillard #0 of the Portland Trail Blazers shoots the ball during the second half against the Golden State Warriors in game one of the NBA Western Conference Finals at ORACLE Arena in Oakland. — AFP

Curry powers Warriors over Blazers

Warriors shrugged off absence of injured superstar Kevin Durant

LOS ANGELES: Stephen Curry drained nine three-pointers on the way to 36 points Tuesday to propel the Golden State Warriors to a 116-94 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers in game one of the NBA Western Conference finals.

Curry added seven assists and six rebounds as the Warriors led all the way over a Trail Blazers team coming off a game-seven victory over Denver in the second round on Sunday.

Klay Thompson added 26 points and provided an imposing defensive presence as the Warriors shrugged off the absence of injured superstar Kevin Durant. Draymond Green added 12 points, 10 rebounds, five assists, two steals and three blocked shots for the two-time defending NBA champions, who are playing in their fifth straight Western Conference final. Curry said he just took advantage of what a free-flowing Warriors offense gave him. It was a nice flow," Curry said. "It just puts so much pressure on the defense.

"You can't key it on one guy and even if you try to somebody else is going to be open." The Trail Blazers connected on only 36.1 percent of their shots from the field, making just seven of 28 three-point attempts as the Warriors drained 17 from beyond the arc.

Portland star Damian Lillard hit just four of 12 shots to score 19 points with six assists, four rebounds and seven turnovers. CJ McCollum, who starred as Lillard struggled in game seven against the Nuggets, scored 17 points on seven-of-19 shooting.

"The schedule favored us," acknowledged Golden State coach Steve Kerr, whose Warriors polished off the Houston Rockets on Friday. "I thought we took advantage of the situation and got off to a good start."

The Warriors pushed their lead to 10 in the second quarter before Portland put together a run that trimmed the deficit to 48-45.

Curry answered with a pair of late three-pointers-abetted by a Lillard turnover-to send the Warriors to

the locker-room leading 54-45.

The Trail Blazers made another push in the third period, cutting a 17-point deficit to six. Rodney Hood and Seth Curry both had three-pointers in the Blazers' 11-4 scoring run to end the quarter, but those were the only points of the night for the younger Curry brother—a Portland reserve—as the game marked the first time siblings have met in an NBA conference final.

The Warriors reserves opened strong in the fourth quarter to rebuild the cushion in a stretch that Kerr called key. "Great job by our bench," Kerr said. "If we can buy some time for our starters to rest and even extend the lead, that's a huge deal for us."

TURNOVERS COST BLAZERS

Despite their shooting woes, the Trail Blazers managed to stay in touch much of the night thanks to making 27 of 31 free throws and out-rebounding the Warriors 47-42.

But their 21 turnovers led to 31 Warriors points—a gift no team can afford to give Golden State. "You can't allow that," said Lillard, who admitted it was hard to come back from the emotional high of beating the Nuggets in Denver.

"I thought our minds were right. We came into the game ready," he said. "But they're a team that can go on runs, they make shots and the game can get away."

In particular, Lillard said, the Blazers need to make things more difficult for Curry, who had open look after open look.

"That was poor execution defensively on our part," Lillard said. "Having our bigs back that far, we've got to bring our guys up and run them off the line."

The Warriors will try to double their advantage in the best-of-seven series when they host game two on Thursday. They are again expected to be without two-time NBA Finals MVP Durant, who has a right calf strain. — AFP

Svitolina, Zverev shocked in Rome as Serena withdraws from Italian Open

ROME: Two-time women's holder Elina Svitolina crashed out of the WTA and ATP Italian Open on Tuesday along with Germany's Alexander Zverev as Serena Williams's return to the courts was short lived with her knee injury flaring up to force the American star out of the final warm-up before the French Open in two weeks times.

Svitolina—who had a first round bye as fifth seed—held a match point at 5-2 in the third set before slumping 6-4, 1-6, 7-5 to Belarus Victoria Azarenka in a 2hr 14min battle at the Foro Italico which was twice interrupted because of rain.

Serena earlier announced she was withdrawing having just returned after two months out injured, before she was due to play her older sister Venus for the first

time in 21 years in Rome. The 37-year-old had eased past Sweden's Rebecca Peterson in her first round match on Monday, but a day later could not continue "due to pain in my left knee".

"I'll be concentrating on rehab and look forward to seeing you all at the French Open and next year in Rome," Serena said in a statement. Her withdrawal sends Venus, the 1999 winner, through to a third round meeting with either Britain's Johanna Konta or US seventh seed Sloane Stephens.

There are now doubts whether Serena can target a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title in Paris, having played just nine matches this year, and one on clay. Her last Grand Slam singles title was won at the Australian Open in 2017, where she was pregnant, breaking a tie with Steffi Graf for the most, and she is just one short of Margaret Court.

The three-time French Open winner revealed getting back to fitness has been tougher than she had expected. "I haven't been able to train or practice a lot, I was out much longer than I expected," she explained.

"I feel like I'm taking it one day at a time." Nevertheless, last year she arrived at Roland Garros without any clay-court warm-up and still reached the last 16 before retiring before her match against Maria Sharapova, also because of injury.



ROME: Ukraine's Elina Svitolina plays a backhand return against Belarus' Victoria Azarenka during their WTA Masters tournament tennis match in Rome at the Foro Italico. — FP

Svitolina and Azarenka battled late into the night at the Foro Italico before former two-time Australian Open winner Azarenka won through. Svitolina came back after the rain break to drop the second set but rolled off the first three games in the third, before being broken

when serving for the match at 5-2 in the third set.

Azarenka saved match point and took the next game for love, rolling off five in a row to set up a meeting former French Open winner Garbine Muguruza or Danielle Collins for a place in the third round.

Collins advanced past former world number one Caroline Wozniacki who retired with a lower leg injury, after losing the first set 7-6 (7/5). Czech fourth seed Karolína Plisková eased through to the third round along with Australian Ashleigh Barty, the eighth seed.

In the men's competition, world number five Zverev, the 2017 winner and runner-up to Novak Djokovic last year in Rome, extended his terrible clay-court run, falling 7-5, 7-5 to Italian wild card Matteo Berrettini in the second round.

"The match that I played was horrendous," said Zverev, who has won just four matches on clay this season, including a run to the quarter-final of the Madrid Open where he was the defending champion.

"I've lost my voice screaming, I'm overjoyed. This is a victory that charges me," said 33rd-ranked Berrettini. Belgian David Goffin rallied from a set down to beat former French Open champion Stan Wawrinka 4-6, 6-0, 6-2 to set up a meeting with Argentine seventh seed Juan Martin Del Potro for a place in the third round. — AFP