



3 Kuwait renews commitment in search of missing Kuwaitis



6 6 killed as violence erupts in Indonesia after election



28 Raptors thump Bucks, level Eastern Conference finals



Ramadan KAREEM

IMSAK	03:11
Fajr	03:21
Dhur	11:45
Asr	15:20
Magrib	18:37
Isha	20:06

Amir: Region faces critical, dangerous circumstances

Kuwait's diplomacy playing a realistic and balanced role



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is pictured with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and other top officials at Bayan Palace yesterday.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said "the Foreign Ministry has a further responsibility to carry amidst critical and very dangerous" circumstances in the region. His Highness the Amir (accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah) visited the Foreign Ministry building on Tuesday.

He said escalation has been accelerating in the region and "we hope calm is restored and wisdom prevails." "These circumstances and challenges place upon you (diplomats) a doubling responsibility, and you should continue your diplomatic endeavors to achieve the higher interest of your country," he added.

His Highness the Amir, received by Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, commended ministry's employees for building bridges of peace and cooperation with people around the world away from interfering in domestic affairs of others and promoting good neighborliness.

"We, from a humanitarian approach, extended a helping hand to every needy in different parts of the world ... and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and Kuwait charitable institutions are a clear example ...," he said. It has been almost a year and half Kuwait took the position as a non-permanent

member in the UN Security Council, "through which Kuwait diplomacy succeeded in playing a realistic and balanced role towards a host of issues."

This role, he added, "was admired by many world countries despite sensitivity and importance of issues discussed at the Security Council. Kuwait diplomacy succeeded in representing the Arab and Islamic group, and defending causes of our Arab and Islamic causes," said His Highness the Amir.

His Highness the Amir was also accompanied by deputy head of Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The meeting was attended by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, on his part said Kuwait has been adopting a balanced diplomatic role that honors Kuwait's higher interest as well as meeting aspirations of the Arab and Islamic people. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, commending His Highness the Amir for setting foundations of Kuwait's diplomacy, said "we are living in an uncertain region and a dark political scene. We see deterioration of situation of our brothers and a prolonged conflict that tarnished our skies, and on the other hand we experience an escalation ... which requires the strengthening of efforts to protect our region from tension and confrontation." — KUNA

India launches world's fastest cruise missile

NEW DELHI: India said the world's fastest cruise missile passed another key test yesterday when it successfully hit a land target after being fired from a fighter jet. India is developing the supersonic BrahMos missile - which has a top speed of 3,450 kilometers per hour - with Russia, and according to media reports wants to soon start selling it abroad. The missile is one-and-a-half times faster than the old Concorde supersonic jet.

The Indian defense ministry said a specially converted Su-30 MKI fighter jet successfully fired the 2.5-tonne missile, which has a range of about 300 kilometers. "The launch from the aircraft

was smooth and the missile followed the desired trajectory before directly hitting the land target," a ministry statement said. It did not say where the test was staged or give other details apart from saying "very complex" mechanical, electrical and software modifications were made to the Russian-origin fighter jet. The first test on a sea target was staged in November 2017.

India said then it was the first country "to have successfully fired an air launched 2.8 Mach surface attack missile of this category on a sea target". "The BrahMos missile provides Indian Air Force a much desired capability to strike from large stand-off ranges on any target at sea or on land with pinpoint accuracy by day or night and in all weather conditions," the ministry said. India has already ordered sea-launched versions of the missile for its navy, and specialist defense media reports have said the

Continued on Page 24



IN THE AIR: Photo shows a Sukhoi Su-30MKI fighter aircraft carrying a BrahMos air to surface cruise missile. — AFP

Advisor defends expats against racist remarks

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A senior Kuwaiti legal advisor yesterday defended expatriates against what he called a "rising trend of racism and arrogance among the Kuwaiti society against expatriates". Hesham Al-Saleh, a professor of law at Kuwait University, said on his Twitter account that expatriates in the neighboring United Arab Emirates make up over 85 percent of the population and the state is progressing.

"Do not blame expatriates and hold them responsible for the failure of the government" said Saleh, a former parliamentary candidate, adding that one of the reasons of such a trend is that some MPs are benefiting from it with the blessing of leading officials.

Continued on Page 24

Ramadan Kareem

Why some supplications are not answered by God

By Hassan T Bwambale

First of all, it should be well-understood that supplication to Allah (to Whom belongs all might and majesty) is an act of worship. Whether you are given what you invoked Him for or not, you will be rewarded. An-Nu'man Bin Basheer (Prophet Muhammad's companion) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said what can be translated as, "Supplication is worship."

Then he (the Prophet) quoted a verse from the Noble Quran: "And your Lord said, 'Call upon Me, I will answer you. Indeed, those who disdain My worship will enter Hell, humiliated.'" (Ghafir 40:60) (This Hadeeth was rated by Al-Albani as authentic in Saheeh At-Tirmidhi # 3, 247) It is a matter of grave concern if someone invokes God earnestly and doesn't get his supplication answered.

Abu Hurairah (RA) said, "Among the supplications of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is: 'O Allah, I seek refuge with You from knowledge that is not beneficial, a supplication that is not heard, from a heart that is not humble, and from a soul that is not satisfied.'" (Muslim # 2, 722) The following are some of the reasons some people's supplications are not answered by God Almighty:

(A) Earning money illicitly by which one feeds himself and his family: Abu Huraira (RA) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said what can be translated as: "O people, Allah is Good and doesn't accept except what is good. Moreover, Allah

Continued on Page 24

US says robust military action deters Tehran

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump's administration on Tuesday appeared set on easing weeks of escalating tensions with Iran, assuring worried lawmakers it does not seek war and crediting robust US military moves with deterring the clerical regime. After a month of fiery warnings to Iran, top Trump officials delivered a classified briefing to the full US Congress where Democrats have accused the administration of hyping intelligence and pushing the United States dangerously close to war.

"This is about deterrence, not about war. We are not about going to war,"

Patrick Shanahan, the acting defense secretary, told reporters after exiting the closed-door briefing he gave with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Shanahan cast the US deployment of an aircraft carrier strike group and nuclear-capable B-52 bombers as reactive actions - and said they sent a strong signal.

"We have deterred attacks based on reposturing of assets - deterred attacks against American forces," Shanahan said. "Our biggest focus at this point is to prevent Iranian miscalculation. We do not want the situation to escalate," he said. Pompeo and Shanahan are believed to have shared intelligence that blamed Tehran - enemy number one for Trump - for security incidents involving US-allied Arabs.

Pompeo, in an interview earlier Tuesday, said it was "quite possible" Iran was behind sabotage of oil tankers off the

Continued on Page 24



WASHINGTON: Acting US Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan (left) speaks to members of the media as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (right) listens after a closed briefing for Senate members on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. — AFP

Maid's body flown to the Philippines

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The Philippine Embassy's Charge d'Affaires Mohd Noordin Pendorina Lomondot confirmed that the remains of Filipina domestic helper Constancia Lago Dayag will be flown back to Manila today morning. Dayag was brought to Sabah Hospital in the afternoon of May 14 from Qairawan and pronounced dead on arrival.

Initial reports published by several papers in the Philippines said Dayag's body bore various contusions and hematoma and signs of sexual assault. But according

to the results of preliminary investigations published in local newspapers, Dayag's death was of natural causes and there are no criminal suspicions.

"Through our strong representation, our request to shift the body out of Kuwait as soon as possible was granted," Lomondot said in a press statement yesterday. He was instructed by the Department of Foreign Affairs' Undersecretary for Migrant Affairs Sarah Lou Arriola to accompany Dayag's remains. "Her body will be flown back tomorrow by the 2 am KU417 flight. Arrival in the Philippines will be at 4 pm," he said.

Lomondot affirmed the forensic investigation is almost done and that gathering DNA and other necessary evidence is completed, so the body was permitted to be sent to Manila. "As per diplomatic procedure, the report will go through the proper channel.

Continued on Page 24



Constancia Lago Dayag

Amir, Crown Prince meet senior state officials at Bayan Palace

Sheikh Nawaf meets former head of Al-Azhar University



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



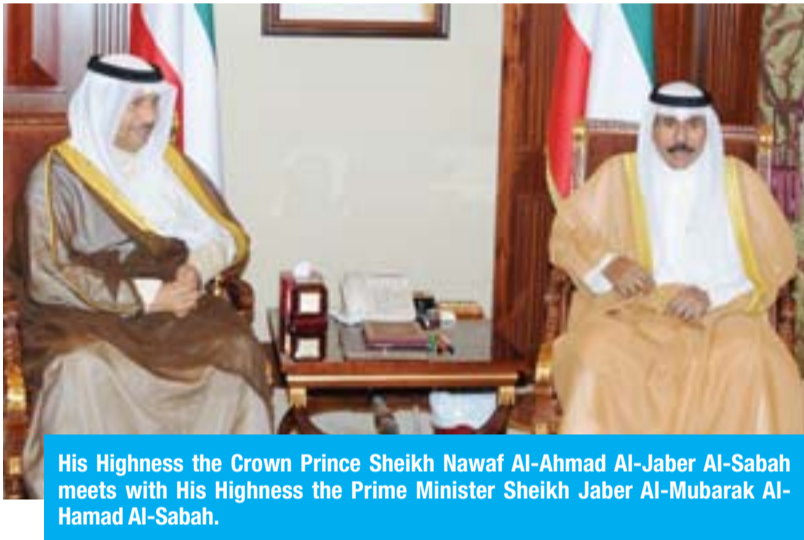
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

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 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness

the Crown Prince received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Crown Prince also received visiting former head of Al-Azhar University Dr Ahmad Omar Hashem. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf welcomed Hashem, a member of Al-Azhar Council of Senior Scholars and praised his role in the religious domain, wishing him more success. In the meantime, Hashem praised Kuwait's

international position and efforts in favor of Arab and Islamic nations to achieve peace and stability under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Director of His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Mubarak Al-Faisal Al-Saud Al-Sabah attended the reception. —KUNA



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



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



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with former head of Al-Azhar University Dr Ahmad Omar Hashem.

Commercial Bank sponsors governorate's girgian ceremony



KUWAIT: Within its annual activities especially designed to share children's joy on various occasions, the Commercial Bank of Kuwait's (CBK) public relations and media department recently sponsored a girgian ceremony organized by Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate for people with special needs hospitalized at Farah

specialized geriatric care center. In this regard, CBK's assistant manager for corporate communication Amani Al-Wera stressed that CBK is keen on taking part in and sponsoring such occasions, especially those jointly set with Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate as part of both sides' social responsibility activities.

KIB continues distributing iftar meals

KUWAIT: As part of its Ramadan campaign for the year entitled 'Hope for Life,' Kuwait International Bank (KIB) organized an iftar meal initiative for those fasting throughout Ramadan. The iftar meals consist of nutritious, complete daily meals which will continue to be distributed throughout the holy month. This initiative was organized with the help of volunteers from KIB, the 'KIB Heroes,' as well as volunteers from Hassad Group.

On this occasion, Senior Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia, said: "As it has become our annual custom, we continue to distribute iftar meals throughout the month of Ramadan. This initiative falls in line with KIB's leading social responsibility program that aims at providing iftar meals for everyone, particularly those who live far away from their families. Additionally, we support needy families who are unable to secure daily iftar meals."

Najia added that KIB always strives to organize this initiative during Ramadan every year, as it combines humanitarian, social and religious causes. He also noted that this initiative reflects the true meaning of the bank's Ramadan campaign, 'Hope for Life,' which aims at promoting values of goodness, hope, love and cooperation between all members of the community. It is worth noting that the distribution of iftar meals is a key initiative within KIB's social responsibility program during the holy month of Ramadan. The program comprises a range of religious, social, charitable, and humanitarian initiatives, in line with the bank's social program that aims at positively impacting all members of the community through organizing initiatives and activities that embody the virtues of the month of giving.



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Local

Kuwait renews commitment in search of missing Kuwaiti persons in Iraq

Kuwait calls on parties involved in Libya for self-restraint

NEW YORK: Kuwait has affirmed it would continue the search for the missing Kuwaiti persons and POWs in Iraq, hailing Iraq's commitment to the international pledges towards Kuwait. The remarks were made by Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, during the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) session on Iraq late Tuesday. Otaibi said Kuwait is willing to provide all support and aid needed for Iraq to fulfill its pledges towards Kuwait.

Otaibi also hailed the efforts of the UN's mission in Iraq to achieve sustainable development in the country and meet the humanitarian needs of people. He noted that it is time for Iraq to recover from all the hardships it had faced, mainly the war against the so-called Islamic State (IS). The Kuwaiti diplomat called on all countries who took part in the Kuwait international conference for reconstruction of Iraq to commit to their pledges on rebuilding the war-torn country.

Meanwhile, the ambassador spoke on the missing Kuwaitis and other countries' nationals in Iraq, saying that there are 369 cases of missing persons in this file, adding that no remains were identified since 2004. Otaibi called on the UN mission in Iraq to continue searching for the missing Kuwaitis and follow on procedures taken for Iraq to return Kuwait's stolen properties and national documents. As part of boosting ties between the two countries, Otaibi noted the meeting of the Kuwaiti-Iraqi supreme joint committee held in Kuwait last week.

Self-restraint

In other news, Kuwait called on all parties involved

in Libya for self-restraint and respect commitment they made to international law on human rights and not to target civilians or civilian facilities, affirming on the importance of peaceful solution through ongoing dialogue. Otaibi made the remarks during a Security Council session on Libya, calling as well on the same parties involved not to resort to military means to end the crisis.

Otaibi highlighted developments in the past years in Libya, ongoing regional and international efforts, including UN exerted efforts to determining the location of hosting a national conference, which was long awaited for and many rounds of talks with all Libyan factions for more than a year. The diplomat added that such efforts was exerted in order to ensure the necessary conditions were met and to find an effective and lasting solution to the crisis that entered its ninth year and led into a political settlement that respects Libyan national principles.

Otaibi pointed out that the international community was anticipating to hold such National Conference after the Security Council reacted positively to invitation through its adoption of press release which welcomed the intention of the Libyan parties to participate actively in the events of this conference, which reflected on UN Secretary General Antonio Gutierrez visits to Tripoli and Benghazi with the goal of creating the appropriate conditions. Otaibi added that the international community urged those parties to ensure participation and acceptance, but was surprised by the outbreak of armed clashes in and around the Libyan capital Tripoli during the first week of last April.

Otaibi pointed out that these confrontations left



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi speaks during a United Nations Security Council's session on Iraq late Tuesday. — KUNA

around 450 dead and more than 2,100 wounded and led to the displacement of about 70 thousand civilians outside the areas of confrontation, thus endangering the life of citizens and their property to real danger. The diplomat noted that these confrontations contributed in endangering the political process there, which may lead to undermine all efforts made over the past years to end the crisis. Otaibi stressed the need to work in a constructive and concrete manner with the calls and efforts led by the United Nations mission in Libya to immediately stop the fire and reduce the military escalation, as well as the importance of cooperating to provide the necessary guarantees to hold the National Conference. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Firefighters battle a blaze at car repair shops in Shuwaikh Industrial.



Firemen battle the Shuwaikh Industrial blaze.

Shuwaikh car workshops fire under control

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Firefighters tackled a blaze that gutted three car repair shops in Shuwaikh Industrial on Tuesday, Kuwait Fire

Service Directorate (KFSD) said. No injuries were reported. Fire engines from stations of Industrial Shuwaikh, Al-Shuhada and Ardhiya rushed to the workshops and succeeded in extinguishing the fire. Meanwhile, KFSD said that firemen fought a fire on the third floor of a building in Farwaniya. The six-storey building was evacuated and the fire was put out.

No congestion

The interior ministry relations and security information department denied claims on social media that there is heavy congestion at the land border outlets in Nuwaiseeb

and Salmi. It said a video clip that went viral recently on social media is actually from 2018. The department said the interior ministry will take legal action against those who published these rumors.

Cultural contest

Kuwait Fire Service Directorate's public relations department said the third cultural contest of the prevention sector was launched under the patronage of KFSD Director General Lt Gen Khalid Al-Mikrad in the presence of Deputy Director General for Prevention Maj Gen Khalid Fahd. The event was held at the prevention sector's main building.

200 surgeries performed at Jaber Hospital

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Association of Surgeons and the head of Jaber Hospital's surgery department Dr Salman Al-Sabah said 200 surgeries had been conducted at the hospital since January. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a ghabqa, he stressed that Jaber Hospital is meant to become the best in the region, adding that all surgical majors had started in the hospital. He warned of the growing rate of obesity in Kuwait, adding that Kuwait in particular and GCC states in general have come a long way in obesity surgeries.

Physiotherapy board membership

Kuwait Physiotherapy Society member Dr Mariam Mansour Al-Mandeel won a four-year membership on the electrotherapy executive board during the recent world physiotherapy conference held and organized in Geneva by the World Confederation for Physical Therapy. Kuwait Physiotherapy Society Chairperson Dr Hana Al-Khamees congratulated Mandeel, pointing out that the executive board plays a significant role in setting comprehensive global plans to improve the use of electrotherapy.

Blood money

Ministry of Social Affairs' acting undersecretary Hana Al-Hajery said the ministry is about to form a special committee to review the regulations and procedures followed on collecting donations to pay blood money and other related compensations. Hajery added that the ministry had made some proposals to the Cabinet to control and regulate collecting donations to pay blood money after the flaws and violations committed recently. Hajery said the committee will be headed by the ministry and include elements from the interior, foreign, justice and awqaf ministries, the financial investigations unit, the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Municipality.

KD 7,535 unlawfully spent on overtime pay

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A recent State Audit Bureau report on the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition showed KD 7,535 had been unlawfully spent on overtime work for some employees. The report also showed that employees working overtime hours had not been using the fingerprint system as instructed by CSC, and instead manual check in and out lists had been used with inaccurate or altered information on them.

Energy management system

Well informed sources said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's (KPC) finance and planning sector is

about to complete the first phase of a contract with Ernst & Young to build an energy management system by September. The sources added that a study on the best risk finance for the corporation and its subsidiary companies and the results of a study on alternatives in lean gas pricing after Feb 21, 2022 have been approved.

Barayeh Salem

Informed sources at Kuwait Municipality said rent of a kiosk at the Barayeh Salem project for entrepreneurs will not exceed KD 800 a month. The sources added that in order to protect the principle of competitiveness, the contract's value will not be affected by the type of activity. The sources said new activities had been added to the project such as game arcades, recreation, sports equipment, roasteries, dry desserts, sun and prescription glasses, electronics, food products, herbs and stationery.

Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan up for first time in two months

TOKYO: Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan jumped 44.4 percent from a year earlier to JPY 70.9 billion (\$641 million) in April, expanding for the first time in two months buoyed by strong exports, the Finance Ministry said yesterday. Kuwait recorded trade surplus with Japan for 11 years and three months, the ministry said in a preliminary report. Kuwaiti overall exports to Japan surged 31.8 percent to JPY 84.4 billion (\$764 million) for the first rise in two months. Imports from Japan declined 9.6 percent year-on-year to JPY 13.6 billion (\$123 million), down for the second month.

Middle East's trade surplus with Japan grew 9.3 percent to JPY 632.7 billion (\$5.7 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region increasing 3.3 percent from a year earlier. Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 95.9 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, went up 3.1 percent. The region's overall imports from Japan slid 14.7 percent, chiefly due to weak demand for automobiles, electric equipment and machinery.

The world's third-biggest economy posted a global surplus of JPY 60.4 billion (\$547 million) in April, marking the third straight month of black ink. But the figure was sharply down 90.3 percent from a year earlier on sluggish exports to China amid US-China trade tensions. Overall exports fell 2.4 percent, as shipments of semiconductor-related equipment and vessels dropped, while imports rose 6.4 percent due to higher crude oil import bill. China remained Japan's biggest trade partner, followed by the US. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors. — KUNA

In My View

Ramadan, the spiritual bonding

By Nazneen Ali

Each morning the rising sun brings in a new message with its twilight. A new day with a new hope, a new spirit, a new challenge, a new rise or a new fall. In this cycle of life from dawn to dusk, each day is a unique day, a unique story for us where we play our role in this large world making our own small contribution towards its progress, towards its perpetuity, and unfortunately, towards its destruction as well.

This routine bounds our life so much that we get entrapped in a vicious circle where our goal is to just ensure our own success, our sustainability, our ambition, our desires.

We as an individual, move away from the 'We culture' to a more self-centric 'I culture' of me, myself and mine. We are so focused on ourselves that we neither turn towards our fellow beings to extend or seek support nor do we turn to the Almighty, the divine power of Allah to be grateful for what has been bestowed on us. We tend to become indifferent to other humans losing any sympathy and empathy towards each other.

To set us free from the shackles of these worldly affairs, to liberate the humanity from egotistical slavery, mankind has been bequeathed religious beliefs, spiritual books and faith in the divine super power that serve as a path of guidance for us to lead our lives in a virtuous manner. Though these virtues are to be practiced daily, Islam as a religion has a month specified for spirituality, to help us to take a pause, to rethink our activities, to remold ourselves shedding our old selfish skins and growing a more selfless personality, a month to start afresh, to set new goals for the betterment of mankind, a month to become pious again, a month to adopt the righteous path from here and thereon, a month to learn how to make sacrifices, a month to be patient, a month to start caring for the needy, a month to get closer to Allah, a month to revive our spiritual bonding with Allah.

This month, Ramadan, is a month to take a step closer to Allah and then continue there on. The Quranic verse of Surat Al-Baqarah, Ayat 183, mentions "O you, who believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous."

In the same Surah, Ayat 277, Allah says "Indeed those who believe and do righteous deeds and establish prayers and give Zakat will have their rewards from their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve."

There are almost 30 verses in the Holy Quran in which Salah and Zakat are explicitly mentioned. So fasting, prayers and Zakat are the cornerstones, the foundations on which the holy month of Ramadan is based. Practicing these three pillars with fidelity confers innumerable benefits to one as an individual and to the society as a whole. A deeper analysis of these pillars reveals that they are not just meant for a specific religion but for the entire mankind. Ramadan is thus, not a holy month for the Muslims alone, but a month to reflect on our character, a month to rebuild our values, and so it is a month to be practiced by everyone, so that the entire society can reap the socio-economic benefits of this month.

Abstaining from food is just the literal meaning of fasting. Fasting in essence is much more than that. Fasting has a lot many inherent sacrifices and self-controls imposed on a person that it can be practiced by all irrespective of their religion. Controlling our hunger during the fast leads us towards the ideology of controlling our inner thrust and anxieties. In today's world, people have a hunger for fame and popularity, success through shortcuts and an urge to be a winner always. This crave for success usually becomes so intense that people get misled on the path of immorality. Fasting helps us to develop a strong will power against such inner drives. We learn to be patient, to wait for the right time, to believe that period of sacrifice will end at a designated time and then we will be given the opportunity to fulfill our desires. Fasting helps us to develop affinity towards each other particularly towards the underprivileged and deprived ones. When we curb our hunger, we realize the pain of the downtrodden, we tend to empathize with them, we understand the importance of the natural resources, we learn to appreciate the blessings that have been granted to us, we become conservative and develop a tendency to avoid any kind of wastage.

In this socio-economic world, we have super powers, developed nations, developing countries and the underdeveloped countries. While the super powers and developed nations are self-sustaining, their underdeveloped counterparts seek economical support for sustainability. There are super rich people who are blessed with much more resources than they need, they have so much that their generations and generations can survive. On the other hand, there are many who lead a hand to mouth life, many who lack even the basic amenities in life. Zakat - paying alms to the poor, is thus a step towards narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor. It is a way to redistribute the wealth between the rich and the poor. It is a way to promote brotherhood between communities; so it is not only for the Muslims to pay Zakat but all individuals and societies should adopt this concept and help their fellow beings lead a better life, contribute in bringing smile on the face of others, feed the hungry, give shelter to the homeless and make the world more balanced financially.

We are leading a stressful life in this competitive world. The entire human race is running behind some invisible goals. All of us are on an unending journey towards some unreachable destination. Since the path is long, not predefined, tough and stressful, we need an eternal support, a support from the Almighty Allah. We need to gain inner strength by developing our bond with Allah, reconnecting ourselves with him and seeking his support. Salah - prayers, especially Qiyam Al-Lail (praying at night) which is widely practiced in Ramadan is a time to refocus on our life, our journey in this world. It is a time to understand the core of our life, the basic purpose of our existence. Recital of the Holy Quran during the prayers is not just reciting, it is for adoption of the teachings of the Holy Quran in our daily lives, it is for us to evaluate our lives against what is expected and accordingly realign ourselves towards the right path - Sirat e Mustaqeem.

So this Ramadan, let us join hands to celebrate humanity, establishing a connection within communities, re-energizing ourselves, becoming more humble, seeking forgiveness and repenting for our sins, practicing goodness, undergoing transformative experience, preventing immorality and wrongdoing, contributing towards tranquility and peace; and together cultivating a conducive environment and creating an amicable world.

Ali is a member of the Writers' Forum Kuwait



ABK celebrates Ramadan with staff ghabqa

ABK's ghabqa shares exciting evening of activities and prizes for employees



ABK employees at the ghabqa.

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) held its Annual Ramadan ghabqa for all members of staff in celebration of the holy month. Taking place at the Arraya Ballroom - Marriott Courtyard Hotel, in an 'old Kuwaiti' architectural style, the ambience created much excitement among employees. The event was

attended by over 600 staff members including Michel Accad, ABK's Group CEO, who opened the evening with a warm welcome.

Throughout the evening, Master of Ceremonies, Humoud Adel, called the senior management to the stage to assist in drawing lucky numbers for some exciting raf-

file prizes which included cash prizes, Smart Phones, and trips to London, Paris, Barcelona, Beirut and Dubai. The biggest prize of evening, and the last prize of the night was for a KD 1,000 cash prize, which was won by Ahmad Ashraf Mohammed.

The evening also saw an array of other entertainment

which included fun games by talented radio presenter, Osama Fouda, an instant photo booth in a traditional old Kuwaiti home setting, a vending machine full of surprise gifts and a coffee booth, as guests enjoyed music played by renowned band 'Jazz Club.' A true family spirit coupled with the spirit of Ramadan was enjoyed by all.



Human Resources Division staff.



Group CEO Michel Accad delivers his welcoming speech.



Fun games with radio presenter Osama Fouda.



ABK staff during the ghabqa.



ABK staff during the ghabqa.



One of the raffle winners.



ABK's bowling team who won the 2019 Bowling Trophy.



Grand prize winner Ahmad Ashraf Mohammed with ABK's management.



Ghabqa organizers with the executive management.



Gulf Bank donates foodstuff boxes to families in need

In partnership with Kuwait Food Bank and Saveco

KUWAIT: In an effort to give back to the local community this holy month, Gulf Bank distributed 'maachla' foodstuff boxes to families in need across Kuwait. In what has become an annual tradition, Gulf Bank has partnered with the Kuwait Food Bank and Saveco to distribute essential food items to local families.

This is the third consecutive year that Gulf Bank partners with the Kuwait Food Bank, and their fourth year partnering with Saveco, to distribute foodstuff boxes. Each box contains essential non-perishable food items that cover one family's needs for approximately one week. Volunteers from Gulf Bank and Saveco prepared the boxes, while members of the Kuwait Food Bank distributed them to families around the country.

Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communications at Gulf Bank said, "We take great pride in giving back to our local community by whatever means necessary, and nothing brings us more joy than to see our partnership with Saveco and Kuwait Food Bank become an annual tradition. After the positive impact of last year's Ramadan initiative, we aimed to distribute more boxes this year and reach more families in need. We would like to extend our deepest gratitude and appreciation to all our partners in this initiative that is truly fitting of the Ramadan spirit."

Salem Al-Hamar, Kuwait Food Bank Society Secretary General commented, "The Kuwait Food Bank is committed to providing local families in need with basic food items and reducing food waste. We are proud to



Ahmad Al-Amir

partner with Gulf Bank again this year and to have taken this initiative to even greater levels than we could ever have hoped for. We look forward to collaborating and helping even more families next year."

Noor Al-Qatami, CEO of Saveco stated, "It gives us great pride to partner with Gulf Bank on this initiative for the fourth year in a row. We are proud to align with a team who is equally committed to social responsibility and who is continuously giving back to the local community. That is what Ramadan is truly about." The Kuwait Food Bank is a charity established to provide food to the needy in Kuwait and to spread awareness about the importance of reducing food waste. Saveco is an all-inclusive mega-market in Kuwait that has quickly grown to be known for its wide range of products and its award-winning customer service.



Girgian brings joy to children

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 with your answer and it might end up in the newspaper.

Abeer Omar, 28, a teacher, told Kuwait Times that her favorite part about Ramadan is girgian. "I love gir-

gian because I love to see the joy in children's eyes," she said. Omar expressed her happiness when she distributes candies to children who would usually be dressed in traditional clothes, hold their small bags and sing Ramadan songs. "I celebrate it every Ramadan with my students at the school," she added. "It has become a special occasion that defines Ramadan for many of us. We grew up celebrating it, and now we are teaching it to children and passing it on to the next generation."



AUB celebrates girgian with children at Mubarak Hospital



KUWAIT: The AUB volunteer team during the visit.

KUWAIT: As part of its interest in bringing joy and happiness among children, putting smile on their faces and spreading hope in their hearts in the holy month of Ramadan, Ahli United Bank (AUB) organized a visit to celebrate girgian with the children in Mubarak Hospital where a number of volunteers from the bank's staff, led by Tareq Muhmood, Acting CEO, Sahar Dashti, General Manager of Customer Protection Department, who is in charge of the Bank Social Responsibility Program participated in the celebration.

On this occasion, Sahar Dashti said: "To see the joy on the faces of children and their families when receiving the girgian and the beautiful gifts brings happiness to all participants in the visit and makes us feel the pleasure of giv-

ing and bringing pleasure to the hearts of others in the month of mercy and giving. This participation stems from our sense of responsibility towards all categories of society, a tradition which AUB is committed to revive in Ramadan every year."

Dashti added that these visits are part of the social program prepared by AUB during of Ramadan which features several charity and humanity activities and events, aiming to support all segments of the Kuwaiti society and promotes the spirit of communication and compassion among its members. In their turn, children and their families in the hospital expressed their great joy of the visit and receiving the girgian and gifts on the occasion of this holy month from AUB.

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Duterte tightens grip on power in Philippine polls

US billionaire's gift to graduates fuels debt debate



JAKARTA: Indonesian anti-riot police take their positions to disperse a mob during a violent demonstration near the Elections Oversight Body (Bawaslu) yesterday. —AFP

Six dead after election riots in Jakarta

Authorities restrict access to social media to stop rumors and fake news

JAKARTA: At least six people were killed as Indonesia's capital erupted in violence yesterday when police clashed with protesters opposed to the re-election of President Joko Widodo. Dozens were arrested and parts of Jakarta were littered with debris and burned-out cars, as the violence triggered security advisories from the US and Australian embassies. Authorities also restricted access to some social media in a bid to stop rumors and fake news from spreading online.

National police chief Tito Karnavian said six people had died, but denied authorities had fired live rounds on protesters, and called for calm. "Some had gunshot wounds, some had blunt force wounds but we still need to clarify this," he told reporters. Jakarta's governor Anies Baswedan said earlier that about 200 had been injured. The violence came after Indonesia's election commission on Tuesday confirmed Widodo had beaten retired military general Prabowo Subianto for the presi-

deny in a poll held on April 17.

Subianto has said he would challenge the results in court - as he did, unsuccessfully, against Widodo in 2014 - but also warned his claims of widespread cheating could spark street protests. That was borne out early Wednesday as protesters set market stalls and cars on fire while hurling fireworks and rocks at security personnel clad in riot gear and holding shields, an AFP reporter on the scene said. Authorities blamed the violence on paid "provocateurs", citing money-filled envelopes found on some of nearly 70 demonstrators who had been arrested. The early morning clashes started after several thousand Subianto supporters rallied peacefully near the election supervisory agency's office in the heart of the capital on Tuesday.

'Don't want chaos'

Later, roads were blocked off in parts of the sprawling metropolis - with some shopping malls, businesses

and schools also closed as small groups of protesters engaged in skirmishes with police. "I open myself to anyone to work together to build and develop this nation, but I won't tolerate anyone who tries to disrupt public security, the democratic process or the unity of our... country," Widodo said at a press briefing, flanked by his chief security ministry and the head of the military. Subianto repeated calls for supporters to avoid violence. "We support people's constitutional rights (to protest) as long as they are civilized, peaceful and non-violent," he told reporters.

By yesterday afternoon, a crowd of several thousand demonstrators had flowed into the city's business and commercial heart for a rally. Election officials and analysts have discounted Subianto's claims, but many supporters appeared convinced of rampant cheating in the world's third-biggest democracy. "We came here to demand justice because there was fraud in this presidential election," protester Mato told AFP. "We don't

want chaos, but that depends on the police," he added.

More than 30,000 troops had been deployed across the city in anticipation of unrest, and the elections commission office was barricaded with razor wire and protected by scores of security personnel. "Avoid areas where demonstrations are occurring & exercise caution in the vicinity of any large gathering," the US embassy said on Twitter.

Elsewhere, hundreds took part in a peaceful rally over election cheating claims in Sumatra's Medan city, while a police station was torched in Pontianak on Borneo island. The protests in support of Subianto have sparked a backlash online from opponents with the hashtag #Tangkapprobawo (#ArrestPrabowo) trending widely on social media. Tensions have also spiked since police said last week that they had arrested dozens of Islamic State-linked terror suspects who had planned to cause chaos by bombing protests. —AFP

Duterte orders garbage shipped back to Canada

MANILA: President Rodrigo Duterte has ordered tons of garbage dumped in the Philippines years ago to be shipped back to Canada, his spokesman said yesterday, escalating a festering diplomatic row. Duterte's spokesman warned also that if Ottawa would not formally accept the shipment of trash it would be dumped inside Canada's territorial waters. The rubbish is stored in dozens of containers which a Canadian firm sent to the Philippines in 2013 and 2014 - ostensibly for recycling - and the issue of what to do with it has rankled for years.

Last week Manila recalled its ambassador from Ottawa because Canada missed a May 15 deadline to repatriate the garbage. "As a result of this offending delay, the president has instructed the appropriate office to look for a private shipping company which will bring back Canada's trash to the latter's jurisdiction," Duterte spokesman Salvador Panelo told reporters. "If Canada will not accept the trash, we will leave the same within the territorial waters or 12 nautical miles out to sea from the baseline of any of their country's shores." Panelo said the order would be carried out "immediately".

The Canadian embassy in Manila referred requests for comment to officials in Ottawa, who were not immediately available. Canada has agreed to take back the dozens of shipping containers, but has not given a timeline. Diplomatic ties were already tested after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, soon after taking office, questioned Duterte's deadly drug crackdown.

Duterte fiercely pushes back against any international criticism of his signature policy, which has seen police kill over 5,300 alleged addicts and pushers since 2016. Last year the president cancelled the Philippine military's \$235 million contract to buy 16 military helicopters from a Canada-based manufacturer after Ottawa put the deal under review because of Duterte's human rights record. During a speech in April, Duterte threatened to unilaterally ship the garbage back to Canada, saying: "Let's fight Canada. I will declare war against them." The president is notorious for foul-mouthed speeches that frequently include threats and hyperbole aimed at critics or perceived enemies. —AFP

Gandhi says gloomy Indian exit polls 'fake'

NEW DELHI: Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi yesterday dismissed as "fake" exit polls predicting a clear election victory for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a day before the scheduled release of results. A slew of exit polls released after the world's largest election ended on Sunday projected that Modi and his allies would return to power with between 282 and 313 seats out of 543 in parliament.

"My dear Congress party workers. The next 24 hours are important. Stay alert and vigilant. Don't be afraid. You are fighting for the truth," Gandhi, head of the Congress party, said on Twitter. "Don't get disappointed by the propaganda of fake exit polls. Keep faith in yourself and the Congress party. Your hard work won't go to waste. Jai Hind (Bow to the motherland)," he wrote.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) welcomed the predictions and Indian stock markets rose strongly on Monday, but exit polls in India are notoriously unreliable. In 2004 they predicted that Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee's BJP-led government would be re-elected but results showed the opposite, bringing a Congress-led alliance to power under Manmohan Singh. In the last election in 2014, the BJP won 282 seats, the first time a party had won a majority on its own in 30 years. It then cobbled together

Fears rise China could weaponize rare earths

BEIJING: The US has hit China where it hurts by going after its telecom champion Huawei, but Beijing's control of the global supply of rare earths used in smartphones and electric cars gives it a powerful weapon in their escalating tech war. A seemingly routine visit by President Xi Jinping to a Chinese rare earths company this week is being widely read as an obvious threat that Beijing is standing ready for action.

"We should firmly grasp the strategic basis of technological innovation, master more key core technologies and seize the commanding heights of industry development," Xi said during the visit, the official Xinhua news agency reported yesterday. "Rare earth is not only an important strategic resource, but also a non-renewable resource," he added, in comments likely to further fuel speculation.

an alliance with a commanding 334 seats. Counting of the roughly 600 million votes cast was due to begin at 8:00 am (0230 GMT) today. If there is a clear trend this should be evident by around midday.

Voting machine doubts

Party volunteers yesterday joined armed police to guard strongrooms containing the four million electronic voting machines (EVMs) used in the election before counting begins. On Tuesday more than 20 opposition parties had called on the election watchdog to ensure the machines were not manipulated after video clips emerged on social media purporting to show irregularities. The Election Commission moved swiftly to refute the reports, saying voting machines were "absolutely safe in strongrooms" and those shown in video clips were reserves.

Amit Shah, president of the BJP, said yesterday that the opposition was rattled by their likely defeat and were "tarnishing" India by raising questions about the electoral process. Vijay Singh, an election agent for the Samajwadi Party in Lucknow - capital of the key state of Uttar Pradesh - was one of those keeping an eye on the strongroom, a common practice during elections, despite the baking heat. "We sit there in shifts of eight hours. The administration has provided a tent where we camp round the clock," Singh told AFP.

"We are the foot soldiers of the party and are always ready to serve our party under any circumstances. And we are there around the strongroom to ensure there is no security breach." Indian government issued an advisory to the regional governments to be vigilant when the votes are

counted Thursday. The home ministry "alerted" the state governments and police chiefs "regarding possibility of eruption of violence in different parts of the country in connection with the counting of votes tomorrow".

"(The ministry) has asked the states and union territories to maintain law and order, peace and public tranquility," the government statement said. "This is in the wake of calls and statements made in various quarters for inciting violence and causing disruption on the day of counting of votes," it added. —AFP

lightbulbs. That gives Beijing tremendous leverage in what is shaping up largely as a battle between the US and China over who will own the future of high-tech.

"China could shut down nearly every automobile, computer, smartphone and aircraft assembly line outside of China if they chose to embargo these materials," James Kennedy, president of ThRE Consulting, wrote Tuesday in National Defense, a US industry publication. China has been accused of using its rare earth leverage for political reasons before. Japanese industry sources said it temporarily cut off exports in 2010 as a territorial row flared between the Asian rivals, charges that Beijing denied.

In 2014, the World Trade Organization ruled the country had violated global trade rules by restricting exports of the minerals. The case was brought by the United States, European Union and Japan, which accused China of curbing exports to give its tech companies an edge over foreign rivals. China has cited environmental damage from mining and the need to conserve supplies as the reason for any past limits on output. While disruptive, any leverage gained from a supply block may be short-lived, experts said. "This would accelerate moves to find alternative supply sources," said Kokichi Mio, who studies China's economy at NLI Research Institute. —AFP

China has leverage

China occupies a commanding position, producing more than 95 percent of the world's rare earths, and the United States relies on China for upwards of 80 percent of its imports. Rare earths are 17 elements critical to manufacturing everything from smartphones and televisions to cameras and



NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (center) gestures as he is garlanded by BJP president Amit Shah, Shiv Sena party chief Uddhav Thackeray, former Chief Minister of Punjab Parkash Singh Badal and other leaders during an NDA dinner meeting on Tuesday. —AFP

International

New Nigeria versus old as governor cuts emir's power

Worries about power struggles ahead

KANO, Nigeria: When the emir of Kano returned from pilgrimage this month, dancing supporters lined the streets to welcome a monarch commanding millions as one of Nigeria's principal Islamic leaders. For years, the Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi II, has inherited an ancient title in northern Nigeria that gave him power over an area the size of Israel with the population of Portugal. But this month his power was cut, in a clash between traditional rule and formal government in Africa's most populous nation that has some worried about power struggles ahead. The local governor carved up Kano emirate creating four new emirs - and Sanusi's funds from state government were split among them in what critics say was a bid to curb his influence. "Kano's pre-eminence as an emirate is dented," said Sule Bello, a history professor from Nigeria's Ahmadu Bello University. "The new emirates will cause the influence and the prestige of the traditional institution to be whittled away." In a changing Nigeria, it is a test case of tensions between governance styles old and new, experts say, that could have wide-reaching impact on other areas of the country.

'Power struggles'

Kano state governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje is the man who signed the new emirs into law. Ganduje was narrowly re-elected in February and sees Sanusi as pro-opposition - but insists he just wants to make traditional institutions more accountable. "It is not a vendetta," Ganduje told reporters. "I'm not against him." But others worry it is a divide-and-rule policy that could lead to conflict. A group of activists, powerful politicians and academics from northern Nigeria calling themselves the "Friends of Democracy", said they were worried about potential violence. Creating new emirs means the "politicization of

traditional authority", the group said. "The situation will lead to power struggles for the throne among the different ruling clans in the new emirates," said Bello, a former head of the National Council for Arts and Culture.

Scholar and critic

Sanusi, an Islamic scholar, is the 14th emir following centuries of rule. But the 57-year-old straddles two very different worlds; a leader of an ancient monarchy, he was once the governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria - a critical role in Africa's biggest oil producer. In that post, he earned a reputation as a straight-talking leader, not afraid to speak out against corruption, although he faced - and denied - accusations of graft himself.

He became emir in 2014, selected by elders and then confirmed by the governor, after inheriting the post from his great-uncle. A modernist reformer, he has also spoken out against traditions of marrying multiple wives and having several children if the man cannot support the family, angering some Islamic leaders.

Loyalty to the emir remains strong. Many ordinary people have grown skeptical of democratic systems they see as rigged, and where elected officials treat public cash as their own private funds. Traditional powers, viewed as the holders of ancient cultural powers passed down through the centuries, still have major influence. As an Islamic leader in a state with sharia law in majority Muslim northern Nigeria, it is a powerful post. "I grew up to revere the emir," said Saratu Bature, a mother, who cried at the news of the changes, fearing it could weaken an ancient system of stability. "The emir has been a source of unity among our people," she said. "The new decision will destroy all that." Many people are unhappy. "The creation of new emirates in Kano was done in bad faith... the gover-



KANO, Nigeria: In this file photo taken on June 25, 2017, Emir of Kano Muhammadu Sanusi II departs on horseback from the Eid prayer ground after prayers to mark the end of the holy month of Ramadan and the start of Eid al-Fitr festival. — AFP

nor has politicized his personal problem with the emir," said Mansur Ibrahim, a textile trader in Kano. "Breaking it into smaller emirates will no doubt distort our history, culture and tradition."

Show of power

Supporters of the emir of Kano see the new law as a way to reduce his influence in the state. "Dismembering the emirate is nothing but destroying it," said teacher Umar Habu. "We all know the governor and the emir have differences, but instead of fighting the emir, the governor is destroying the royal institution. He is throwing away the

baby and the bathwater." The move to cut Sanusi's powers was made while he was in Saudi Arabia on pilgrimage to Makkah.

Neither Sanusi nor his courtiers have made a statement on the issue - but when he returned to Nigeria, his arrival reception was held with extra flair. Supporters fired muskets into the air, as the emir drove through the city in a white Rolls-Royce, dressed in his finery of embroidered robes and turban. It was a very visible display of power. As a message, it could not have been clearer: the emir is here to stay. —AFP

Economic warfare plays out as Libyans battle for capital

TRIPOLI: While rival Libyan forces fight for control of the capital, an economic war is playing out which could have grave and lasting consequences for the oil-rich country. Hundreds of people have been killed and thousands wounded since the battle for Tripoli erupted on April 4, when commander Khalifa Haftar launched an assault to take the city. While fighters loyal to the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) have held Haftar's fighters at bay in the Tripoli suburbs, both sides have economic weapons to use against their rival.

Haftar is backed by a parallel administration in the east, the stronghold of his self-styled Libyan National Army, while his forces also control the country's most important oil fields. But his ability to exploit such resource wealth is limited as the production is managed by the Tripoli-based National Oil Corporation (NOC), while the revenues are channelled through the central bank in the capital. "(Haftar) notes that all the oil money goes mostly to the west, that's what upped the political divisions in Libya since the east is historically considered abandoned by the west," a European diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

Between 2017 and 2018, the parallel authorities in the east tried to sell oil without passing through Tripoli, but the international community - and in particular

Washington - thwarted such efforts. The United Nations envoy to Libya, Ghassan Salame, said Tuesday there are indications the eastern branch of the NOC is "again attempting to export oil in violation of the sanctions regime". "This illegal attempt risks dividing the National Oil Company, which remains the primary source of revenue for the country, and the national social safety net," he told the UN Security Council.

Jalel Harchaoui, a researcher at the Clingendael Institute in The Hague, said it remains "very probably that the pro-Haftar faction will attempt to sell oil (directly) on the international market". Such sales could be "tacitly tolerated by the White House". US President Donald Trump spoke to Haftar by phone in mid-April, a move which was widely perceived to indicate his support for the Libyan commander despite Washington not taking an official stance.

Haftar is unlikely to hold up exports, said Harchaoui, as the United States is pushing to maintain global oil output following a drop in exports from Venezuela and Iran. But if the Trump administration were to publicly confirm its support for the GNA, "the Haftar camp could panic" and block oil exports, according to Harchaoui.

The GNA, led by Fayed Al-Sarraj, is already using its control of the central bank to weaken Haftar's forces. Tripoli oversees civil servant salaries for the entire country and, after Haftar launched his assault on the city, Sarraj vowed to cut payments to those who had joined the LNA. The central bank went further still at the end of last month, limiting access to capital in its banks in eastern Libya while citing "irregularities" found at the financial institutions in question.

A parallel central bank under the rival eastern adminis-



TRIPOLI: Fighters loyal to the Libyan internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) gesture near the frontline during clashes against forces loyal to strongman Khalifa Haftar on Tuesday in the Salah al-Din area. —AFP

tration, meanwhile, criticized the "unequal distribution" of revenues. It slammed a "regional war targeting the banks of Benghazi", the main city in eastern Libya. The administration in the country's east could struggle to pay its employees and Haftar's forces if Tripoli's central bank tightened its measures against them, International Crisis Group said Monday. "This in turn could prompt Haftar to cut oil exports from areas he controls and ignite an economic war," the organization said in its report. "This would deepen the de facto split between east and west... and possibly become a prelude to partition," it added. —AFP

Deposed Istanbul mayor blasts 'lies' used to annul election

ISTANBUL: Istanbul's deposed mayor Ekrem Imamoglu said yesterday that no one believed the "lies" used to overturn his recent election and called on voters to "correct this great shame" in next month's re-run. "Nobody believes their claims," Imamoglu said at a meeting in Istanbul to launch his re-election campaign.



Ekrem Imamoglu

He accused President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling party of peddling "lies" and "excuses" to overturn his narrow victory in the mayoral election in March. "When I look at their facial expressions, I see that they themselves do not believe them either," Imamoglu said.

The election board earlier this month accepted the ruling party's allegations of "irregularities" and called a re-run of the vote for June 23. Imamoglu's victory for the opposition of the Republican People's Party (CHP) was the first time Erdogan's Islamic-conservative party and its predecessors had lost control of the metropolis in 25 years.

Analysts say the government is reluctant to cede control of Turkey's biggest city, which provides its mayor with significant resources for patronage as well as a high-profile platform. "We will show the whole of Turkey on June 23 that there is no way out other than democracy and the ballot box," Imamoglu said. "Come and let's correct this great shame and unfairness all together." Imamoglu said his campaign would focus on reversing extravagant spending in the city's finances which he said he discovered during his brief 18-day stint as mayor.

"The resources of Istanbul municipality are being plundered... Istanbul municipality is not the property of a handful of people," he said. The opposition candidate also accused the ruling party of copying his proposals, including reduced water bills and discounted student transport, saying it was like a school-boy copying his homework. —AFP

Deadly strike hits market as Damascus battles militants

MAARET AL-NUMAN, Syria: Syrian government air strikes killed 15 civilians, 12 of them in a market, as fierce fighting raged for the jihadist-held northwest, a monitor said yesterday. Government forces battled to repel a militant counteroffensive around the town of Kafr Nabuda that has left more than 50 combatants dead in 24 hours, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The Hayat Tahrir al-Sham alliance, led by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate, controls a large part of Idlib province as well as adjacent slivers of Aleppo, Hama and Latakia provinces.

The jihadist-dominated region is nominally protected by a buffer zone deal, but the government and its Russian ally have escalated their bombardment in recent weeks, seizing several towns on its southern flank. At least 12 people were killed and another 18 wounded when the warplanes hit the jihadist-held Idlib province town of Maaret al-Numan around midnight (2100 GMT) on Tuesday, the Observatory said. The market was crowded with people out and about after breaking the daytime fast observed by Muslims during the holy month of Ramadan.

The bombardment blew in the facades of surrounding buildings, and ripped through the flimsy frames and canvas of stalls in the market square, an AFP photographer reported. The bodies of market-goers were torn apart. "Residents are still scared," stallholder Khaled Ahmad told AFP. Two more civilians were killed on Wednesday in air strikes on nearby Maaret Herme, the Observatory said. An third was killed in strikes on the town of Jisr al-Shughur, it added.

The strikes came as heavy clashes raged in neighboring Hama province after the militants launched a counterattack on Tuesday. Fresh fighting yesterday took the death toll to 52 - 29 troops and militia and 23 jihadists, the Observatory said. It said the jihadists had retaken most of Kafr Nabuda from government forces, who had recaptured the town on May 8. Russia and rebel ally Turkey inked the buffer zone deal in September to avert a government offensive on the region and protect its three million residents.

But President Bashar Al-Assad's government upped its bombardment of the region after HTS took control



HAMA, Syria: Syrian First Lady Asma Al-Assad poses for a selfie with patients at the center for prosthetic limbs in this central city yesterday. — AFP

in January. Russia too has stepped up its air strikes in recent weeks. The Observatory says nearly 200 civilians have been killed in the flare-up since April 30. The United Nations said yesterday that Idlib's civilian population once again faced the threat of an all-out offensive. "Despite our repeated warnings, our worst fears are coming true," said David Swanson, a spokesman for the UN humanitarian office. "A full military incursion threatens to trigger a humanitarian catastrophe for over 3 million civilians caught in the crossfire, as well as overwhelm our ability to respond."

Swanson said more than 200,000 people have been displaced by the upsurge of violence since April 28. A total of 20 health facilities have been hit by the escalation - 19 of which remain out of service, Swanson said. Collectively they served at least 200,000 people, he added. The September deal was never fully implemented as militants refused to withdraw from a planned buffer zone around the Idlib region. But it ushered in a relative drop in violence until earlier this year, with Turkish troops deploying to observation points around the region. The Syrian government has accused Turkey of failing to secure implementation of the truce deal by the jihadists. But Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar accused the Syrian regime late Tuesday of threatening the ceasefire deal. "The regime is doing all that it can to break the status quo including using barrel bombs, land and air offensives," Akar told reporters. "Turkish armed forces will not take a step back from wherever they may be," he however added. —AFP

Syrians displaced in the northwest call on Turkey to open border

ATMEH, Syria: Camped on the Turkish border to escape bombardment by Russian and Syrian government forces, many displaced Syrians are angry and frustrated that Turkey has not done more to protect them from the bombs or let them cross the frontier to safety. The border wall a few hundred metres away offers a degree of cover for thousands of people, since air strikes are rare so close to Turkey. But it also blocks any chance they have of fleeing the conflict and joining millions of refugees abroad.

"Turkey is our only option today," said Abu Abdallah, 51, who left his village at the start of the war in 2011 to seek sanctuary near the town of Qalaat al-Madiq, until it was captured by Syrian government forces in early May. "We can no longer put up with living under bombardment or in the open under the trees," said Abu Abdallah, one of thousands of Syrians living in white tents dotted around the rock-strewn olive groves, some of them only 50 metres (yards) from the border.

Some 180,000 people were displaced by the recent attacks in northwest Syria, the last major rebel stronghold. The increase in shelling killed dozens of people and marked the most intense period of violence for months between President Bashar Al-Assad and the rebels, who launched a counter-attack last week. The Syrian government says it is responding to attacks by Al-Qaeda-linked militants. The dominant insurgent faction in the region is the jihadist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), although the army offensive has not focused on the central Idlib area where it is most concentrated, an HTS-aligned opposition figure said.

Much of the bombardment has hit a buffer zone around Idlib province and surrounding territories which was set up by Russia and Turkey in September under a deal which put off a full-blown assault against the region and its 3 million residents. Shells from Syrian government territory also hit a Turkish military observation post, one of 12 set up near the Idlib borders by Ankara, which backs the rebels.

At the border, many of the displaced were angry at the lack of Turkish action in response to the recent offensive, and called on Turkey to open its border to allow people to escape.

"We didn't ask to go into Turkey before," said 32-year-old Khsara Ahmed al-Hussein. "But when you set up a de-escalation zone and ... you guarantee that I won't get struck, but then even the Turkish observation point is struck by the regime, then what's the point of protection if you can't even protect yourself?"

When bombardment of Hussein's village intensified, his family dug holes in the earth outside their house and slept in them. When the situation became unbearable, they headed to the border, where he has been living under trees for two weeks. —AFP



IDLIB, Syria: A Syrian fighter from the Turkish-backed National Liberation Front (NLF) fires a heavy artillery gun from this rebel-held province against regime positions in the northern part of Hama province yesterday. — AFP

International

May implores parliament in final bid to save Brexit deal

Gambit failing as her premiership fades

LONDON: Prime Minister Theresa May yesterday implored British MPs to back her reworked EU divorce deal but saw pro-Brexit Conservatives and opposition parties savage her bid for a compromise to end months of political crisis. On the eve of European elections Britain had not expected to hold three years after the Brexit referendum, May urged lawmakers who have repeatedly rejected her plan to vote for it in early June so that the country can finally leave the bloc later in the summer.

"The opportunity of Brexit is too large and the consequences of failure too grave to risk further delay," the prime minister, who has vowed to stand down following the crunch parliamentary vote, told the House of Commons. "Reject it and all we have before us is division and deadlock." May outlined a package of "compromise measures" aimed at securing the support of MPs from the main opposition Labour Party, which included giving parliament a vote on holding a referendum on her divorce deal.

But Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, who last week pulled out of weeks of cross-party Brexit talks citing the government's unwillingness to compromise, said it was "little more than a repackaged version of her three-times rejected deal". "The rhetoric may have changed but the deal has not," he added. Amid strong opposition from May's Conservative colleagues to the new move, Ian Blackford, leader of the Scottish National Party

in Westminster, said the embattled prime minister was "fooling no one but herself". "Her own party doesn't want her deal... Her time is up."

In a sign of the scale of the apparent internal backlash, Environment Secretary and Brexiteer Michael Gove hinted that the vote in the week of June 3 may not even go ahead. "We will reflect over the course of the next few days on how people look at the proposition," he told BBC radio.

'A question of democracy'

May's offer comes as Britain votes in EU elections today with the two main parties trailing behind the Brexit Party and the pro-EU Liberal Democrats, according to polls. The latest YouGov survey showed eurosceptic populist Nigel Farage's new Brexit Party claiming 37 percent of votes, with the Lib Dems second on 19 percent, followed by Labour on 13 percent and the Tories lagging in fifth place with just seven percent. "If we win big on Thursday, we will kill off any prospect of parliament forcing a second referendum upon us because they know they would lose!" Farage told supporters at a final rally Tuesday.

Liberal Democrat leader Vince Cable, whose party is set to come second in the polls, told a party gathering on Tuesday that a vote for his party was "a vote to stop Brexit". The pro-EU party's outright rejection of Brexit appears to be resonating with Remain voters

who would normally back Labour or the Conservatives.

'Last chance'

May has pitched her "new Brexit deal" as MPs' "last chance" to end the political gridlock that has already delayed Britain's departure from the bloc past its original March deadline and prompted public anger. The government is aiming for the law to be approved by the time parliament's summer recess begins on July 20, which would let the country leave at the end of that month - as long as lawmakers reject a second referendum. Otherwise the process could be delayed until Oct 31 - the deadline set by the EU - or even later if its leaders grant Britain another postponement.

May's proposals threaten to further infuriate resolute eurosceptics in her own Conservative Party. British media reported party power-brokers were to make a fresh attempt later yesterday to change internal rules to allow an immediate leadership challenge to May. Former foreign secretary Boris Johnson, the favorite to replace her as leader, said on Twitter he would not support her new package, having backed it last time it was put to parliament. "We can and must do better - and deliver what the people voted for," he said, rejecting the idea of any customs union or second referendum. Analysts and British newspapers gave May little-to-no chance of winning on this occasion, with the eurosceptic Daily Telegraph calling her move: "Desperate, deluded, doomed." — AFP



LONDON: A combination of video grabs shows Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May reacting as main opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn speaks during the weekly Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) session in the House of Commons yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

Woman head of US Air Force

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump announced Tuesday he had nominated a former ambassador and Arizona businesswoman to lead the Air Force. Barbara Barrett, 68, served as the US ambassador to Finland from 2008 to 2009 under the George W Bush administration. She also chaired an aeronautics research and development center, The Aerospace Corporation, until 2017. "She will be an outstanding Secretary!" Trump tweeted. A former lawyer and test pilot, Barrett is also a board member at the Rand Corporation, a think tank that provides research and analysis to the US armed forces. She and her husband Craig, the former CEO of American technology giant Intel, are major Republican donors. — AFP

Queen pops down to Sainsbury's

LONDON: Britain's Queen Elizabeth popped down to the supermarket yesterday to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the British high street chain, Sainsbury's. The 93-year-old queen visited a pop-up replica of the original Sainsbury's shop which was founded on London's Drury Lane in 1869, selling just butter, milk and eggs. She was greeted by Lord John Sainsbury, the great-grandson of the supermarket chain's founder John James Sainsbury, and was shown around replicas of old shop floors as they developed from the introduction of self-service shopping in the 1950s to the use of modern technology. It was explained to her how shoppers now use self-service tills and pay using their mobile phones, although she did not try it out herself, and she also cut a commemorative birthday cake. — AFP

Nigerian bandits kill at least 20

KANO: Bandit gunmen have killed at least 20 people in separate attacks in northwestern Nigeria, police said yesterday, the latest violence in the restive region of Katsina. Armed bandits on motorcycles stormed into a farming village on Tuesday, spraying the people with gunfire. Katsina state police spokesman Gambo Isah said. "They killed 18," Isah said. That attack happened on at Yargamji village in Batsari district, some 50 km from the state capital Katsina. A self-defense militia from another village then chased the bandits, ending in a gun battle in the forest. Police said the bodies of two militia members shot dead were brought back and buried from that fight, but residents said more people were killed. — AFP

US billionaire's gift to graduates fuels debt debate

NEW YORK: When the American billionaire Robert Smith announced to students graduating from historically black Morehouse College that he would pay off their student loans, he put himself at the center of one of the 2020 US election's key issues. While the cost of Smith's surprise gift announced on Saturday to Morehouse's 396-strong class of 2019 is not yet known, the body's student debt is thought to reach \$40 million. Smith, a Texas businessman who is the wealthiest African-American, has been applauded for his generosity, but his gift also generated jealousy among the many Americans struggling with huge student debts.

"Can a billionaire pledge to pay off my student loan debt? I'm glad for the graduating class, but also envious," one Twitter user wrote, reflecting a sentiment common on social media. Already, several Democratic challengers to President Donald Trump in next year's elections have proposed ways to reduce the nearly \$1.5 trillion American student loan burden, and even politicians who aren't running have weighed in. "People shouldn't be in a situation where they depend on a stranger's enormous act of charity for this kind of liberation to begin with," tweeted Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a rising Democratic House representative who was elected last year in part on the promise of free university education.

Mobilized billionaires

More than two-thirds of American graduates were in debt in 2016, the Institute for College Access and Success said in

Dem impeachment talk gains as Trump blocks testimony

WASHINGTON: Democratic Party talk of impeachment intensified Tuesday after Donald Trump's former lawyer Don McGahn refused to testify about obstruction allegations against the US president. House Democratic leaders held off fresh pressure from rank-and-file legislators to launch an effort to remove the president, after the White House again stymied their probe into Trump's actions in the Russia meddling investigation. But McGahn's refusal to abide by a subpoena from the House Judiciary Committee stoked the furor among Democrats, with more demanding the party resolve to put the president on trial.

In a pair of early morning tweets yesterday, Trump denounced the congressional investigations by House Democrats as "PRESIDENTIAL HARASSMENT!" and complained they were hurting his poll numbers. "Without the ILLEGAL Witch Hunt, my poll numbers, especially because of our historically 'great' economy, would be at 65%. Too bad! The greatest Hoax in American History."

Fears rapist working in NZ parliament

WELLINGTON: The lawmaker in charge of New Zealand's parliament said yesterday he fears a rapist is stalking the building's corridors, after an inquiry exposed the toxic work culture that staffers endure. Speaker Trevor Mallard said he was disturbed by the findings of the independent inquiry, which said bullying, harassment and other abusive conduct was rife in the parliamentary precincts. The most serious accusations concerned three sexual assault allegations against an unnamed man, which the inquiry's report said "appeared to be part of a multi-year pattern of predatory behavior".

Mallard, who is responsible for administering the parliament, said such behavior amounted to rape. "We're talking about serious sexual assault. Well, for me, that's rape," he told Radio New Zealand, saying he did not know the identity of the alleged perpetrator or victims. He added: "Reading the report carefully, I get the sense that the man

April, with their burden averaging \$29,650. Paying off the debt often weighs heavily on young Americans' lives through their 20s and 30s, delaying the starting of families and the purchase of cars and homes. All of that affects the US economy, and Smith isn't the first billionaire to take notice.

Last November, former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg pledged \$1.8 billion to Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, from which he graduated in 1964. The donation aims to make education at the elite school more affordable to low- and middle-income students, who would otherwise have to face fees and living costs totaling about \$72,000 per-year. Another billionaire, Kenneth Langone, gave \$100 million to the New York University School of Medicine last year to make tuition free for its current and future students. Student loan debt levels soared in the US between 1996 and 2012, and Senator Bernie Sanders put the rising costs at the heart of his unsuccessful 2016 presidential campaign.

The following year, the independent politician from Vermont put a measure called the "College For All Act" before the Senate, which would have abolished tuition fees at public universities for most families. The cost of the measure, which the Republicans leading the Senate have shown no interest in, has been estimated at \$600 billion, to be financed by a tax on financial transactions.

Sanders is now among the 23 candidates for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, and together with Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren has once again made student loan debt a plank of his campaign. Warren last month unveiled a detailed proposal to abolish student fees in public universities and cancel student loan debt according to income. The plan, estimated to cost \$1.25 billion over a decade, would be financed by a tax on the very wealthy.

State measures

Though few other detailed plans have emerged, almost

"Stonewalling Congress on witnesses and the unredacted Mueller report only enhances the President's appearance of guilt, and as a result, he has pushed Congress to a point where we must start an impeachment inquiry," said Representative Mark Pocan, one of the leaders of the progressive wing of the Democratic Party. "We need to do our job & vote on impeachment," tweeted Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who has so far fended off pressure to pursue that option, scheduled a party meeting Wednesday to discuss the issue. "I don't think we're there at this point in time," House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, Pelosi's deputy, said Tuesday. Hoyer said they would continue on the current path of investigating Trump, which has included seeking testimony and documents that so far the Trump administration has refused to hand over. "And if it leads to a conclusion that we need to proceed further through other avenues, including impeachment, so be it," he said.

White House 'stonewalling'

McGahn's refusal to appear before the Judiciary Committee was the most recent in a growing list of ways the White House has frustrated investigations by the Democrat-controlled House. Trump's Justice Department has refused to turn over to Congress the unexpurgated version of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's final report on

is still on the premises." Mallard described the situation as "intolerable" but said he could not go to police as all submissions to the inquiry were made on the basis that they would be kept strictly confidential. He said he hoped the women involved would contact police directly, and would receive support from rape counselling services.

There are 120 MPs in the New Zealand parliament, known as The Beehive, but the number of people working in the complex swells to the thousands when advisers, bureaucrats, media and security are taken into account. The five-month inquiry by workplace consultant Debbie Francis was called after allegations against lawmakers from both sides of politics, including that a minister physically attacked a press secretary who she blamed for missing an appointment.

Francis found parliament was a high-pressure, insular environment where unacceptable conduct was too often tolerated. In a 120-page report released Tuesday, she said there was a reluctance to hold MPs accountable over bullying behavior, even though some were regarded by staffers as serial offenders. "The fundamental problem is the power imbalance. It's a master-servant relationship and they're treated like gods," an anonymous respondent told the inquiry. Others described "creepy" behavior towards young women and those who made complaints often said they received little support. — AFP



ATLANTA: In this screen grab taken on May 20, 2019, Robert F. Smith, an African-American businessman with a fortune estimated at \$4.4 billion, announces to the new graduating class at Morehouse College that he plans to pay off the entirety of their student debt. — AFP

all Democratic candidates in 2020 argue for making universities more affordable. With the election still more than a year off, some states are taking their own steps to reduce the cost of higher education. New York state started offering scholarships last year equalling public university fees to students of modest means, with the caveat that graduates remain in the state for a few years after finishing.

Washington state governor Jay Inslee - another Democratic candidate in the 2020 race - on Tuesday signed into a law a bill raising a key business tax and using the revenue to make attending a public university free starting next year for students from families below the median income level. The bill was supported by two of the state's largest taxpayers: Microsoft and Amazon. — AFP

his Russia meddling and obstruction investigation, along with supporting documentary evidence. Arrangements for Mueller himself to testify have been stalled on his insisting that much of his testimony take place in private.

And the White House appealed Tuesday against a federal court order for Trump's accountants to turn over years of his financial records to another House committee. McGahn was subpoenaed to testify on evidence he provided to Mueller on Trump's efforts to stifle that investigation, evidence which Mueller indicated was strong enough to support criminal obstruction charges. Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler said each of the incidents that McGahn described to Mueller "constitutes a crime," and that McGahn must testify. "Our subpoenas are not optional," Nadler said in opening the hearing with the witness chair empty. "Let me be clear: this committee will hear Mr McGahn's testimony, even if we have to go to court to secure it."

Nadler accused Trump of "stonewalling" but the White House maintains that Mueller's sprawling probe cleared the president, meaning there was no need for more digging. The White House also says that people on Trump's staff cannot legally be compelled to testify. Nadler underscored his disagreement and determination to force testimony Tuesday afternoon when his committee subpoenaed former Trump aide Hope Hicks and former McGahn chief of staff Annie Donaldson to testify. — AFP

Turkey ready for US sanctions over Russian missiles

ANKARA: Turkey insisted it would go ahead with its controversial decision to buy the S-400 missile defense system from Russia, saying it was preparing for any possible sanctions from the US. Turkey's push to buy the S-400 system has strained relations with the United States, a NATO ally, which worries about integrating Russian technology with Turkey's Western equipment. Defense Minister Hulusi Akar told reporters late Tuesday that Ankara was "preparing" for US penalties under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), which prohibits business with Russia's state and private defense and intelligence sectors.

He added that Turkey was "fed up" with being just being a buyer of military equipment, and wanted to be involved in joint production and technology transfers. "The idea that we always buy, you always produce, is finished," he told reporters in Ankara. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday said Turkey and Russia would jointly produce S-500 defense systems after the purchase of the S-400 system. Turkey has already sent personnel to Russia for training, Akar said, and the system could be delivered as early as June or July.

Last month, he said the S-400 would likely be used to protect the capital Ankara and Istanbul. In a bid to force Turkey to cancel its S-400 deal, the US offered a renewed proposal in March for Patriots, its own anti-missile and anti-aircraft weapon system. The US has said buying the S-400 could jeopardize the Turkey's involvement in the F-35 fighter jet program, for which it provides some parts. Akar said Turkey was still considering the offer but that there had been "general easing" in negotiations with the US on the F-35s and Patriots.

Akar said Turkey was fulfilling its responsibilities in the F-35 project and expected the program to continue as planned. He said buying the S-400s was only meant to meet Turkey's defense needs and posed no threats. "We are doing whatever normal bilateral agreements mandate. Though there are some issues from time to time, we are pleased that there has been no sharp turn until now... Turkey is also making preparations for the potential implementation of CAATSA sanctions," he said. "In our talks with the United States, we see a general easing and rapprochement on issues including the east of the Euphrates, F-35s and Patriots."

Relations have been tense over multiple issues, including US support to a Syrian Kurdish militia viewed by Ankara as terrorists, and the refusal to extradite a Pennsylvania-based Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen accused of ordering a failed coup in Turkey in 2016. — Agencies

International

Duterte tightens grip on power in Philippine polls

Electoral tsunami also a win for president's family

MANILA: Allies of President Rodrigo Duterte stormed to a landslide victory in midterm polls, final results showed yesterday, dissolving a last check on his controversial rule. Loyalists won both houses of the legislature, shutting out all opposition candidates in the Senate, which had served as a buffer against Duterte's most contentious plans. The results open a path for Duterte - who has remarkably high approval ratings - to make good on his call to bring back the death penalty and advance his project to re-write the constitution.

"It's a clear signal that the people will be behind him as he pushes bills and processes that went nowhere previously," political analyst Ramon Casiple told AFP. With nine Duterte backers and three nominally unaligned politicians taking the 12 seats at stake in the 24-member Senate, only four opposition members will remain, results from the elections authority showed. Duterte allies kept control of the lower House of Representatives, which has approved legislation to bring back capital punishment and re-write the constitution since Duterte's 2016 election.

Among the new senators is former national police chief Ronald dela Rosa, the first enforcer of Duterte's narcotics crackdown that has killed over 5,300. Campaigners say the true toll is at least triple that and may amount to crimes against humanity. "Number one on my agenda is the reimposition of the death penalty for drug trafficking," dela Rosa told reporters. "I will focus on that." Senate seats also went to Christopher "Bong" Go, Duterte's long-time advisor, and Imee Marcos, the daughter of deceased dictator Ferdinand

Marcos, who was ousted in a 1986 popular uprising.

Duterte family wins

The top vote-getter in the Senate race, Cynthia Villar, thanked the president for his backing and asked for a round of applause for him in a speech after the results were announced. "The laws we craft or legislate must consider all interests involved," she added. "A strong and independent Senate has always been our goal." Opponents fear the majority will allow Duterte to push forward his legislative agenda, which includes re-writing the constitution.

In addition to opening avenues for him to stay in power beyond his legally mandated single term that ends in 2022, a charter change could reshape the Philippines for decades. Duterte has pitched constitutional reform to turn the Asian country into a decentralized federal republic where regions would have the power to fix local problems. But the various initiatives launched in his first three years in office have also included proposals dropping term limits, allowing him to run for another term and weakening checks on presidential power.

"The pessimistic assessment is that what we're looking towards is the complete transformation of the Philippine political system in the years to come, well beyond 2022 when Duterte's term is supposed to end," political analyst Richard Heydarian said. The landslide victory was a crushing defeat for the opposition, leaving it mostly in disarray. "Voters were unable to relate to the issues highlighted by the opposition in the elec-



MANILA: Philippines' senators-elect and allies of President Rodrigo Duterte show the Duterte fist during the proclamation ceremony by the Commission on Elections yesterday. —AFP

tion, which was all about defeating Duterte," Casiple said.

The pro-Duterte electoral tsunami was also a win for the Duterte family. Daughter Sara, touted as a possible

2022 presidential candidate, retained her post as mayor of the southern city of Davao, with sibling Sebastian winning as vice-mayor. The eldest son, Paolo, won a seat in the House of Representatives. —AFP

News in brief

Sri Lanka extends emergency

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's president extended yesterday by a further month the state of emergency imposed immediately after the Easter Sunday bombings that killed 258 people. Maithripala Sirisena issued a proclamation saying that the emergency, which gives sweeping powers to security forces to arrest and detain suspects for long periods of time, would continue for another 30 days, citing "public security". Three weeks after the suicide bombings, anti-Muslim riots broke out in a province north of the capital in a backlash against the attacks. At least one Muslim man was killed and hundreds of Muslim-owned shops and homes were destroyed. Several mosques were also vandalized. The police and the military say they have arrested scores of suspects, both in connection with the bombings and over what appeared to be organized violence against the Muslim minority. —AFP

N Korea media slams Biden

SEOUL: North Korean state media yesterday slammed former US vice president Joe Biden as an "imbecile" and a "fool of low IQ" after he criticized leader Kim Jong Un. Biden has been on the campaign trail since announcing last month his candidacy for the Democratic Party nomination in the 2020 presidential election. And some of his comments about the North Korean leadership during campaigning appear to have angered Pyongyang, sparking the colorful commentary by its official news agency KCNA. It accused Biden of "slandering the supreme leadership" of North Korea - a term usually referring to leader Kim - and said the former senator had become "reckless and senseless, seized by ambition for power." "What he uttered is just sophism of an imbecile bereft of elementary quality as a human being, let alone a politician." —AFP

Fake news rampant in Lanka despite social media ban

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan social networks saw a surge in fake news after the Easter suicide bombings a month ago despite an official social media blackout, highlighting the inability of governments to contain disinformation, experts said. A nine-day ban on platforms including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and WhatsApp was introduced following the Islamic State-claimed attacks on churches and hotels on April 21 which killed 258 people and wounded nearly 500.

Many anxious social media users switched to virtual private networks (VPNs) or the TOR network to bypass the order and keep communication open with friends and relatives as the extent of the carnage became clear. But for others, the tools were a means to spread confusion and vitriol as the island struggled to come to terms with one of the worst terror attacks in its history. Sanjana Hattotuwa, who monitors social media for fake news at the Centre for Policy Alternatives in Colombo, said the government blackout had failed to prevent "engagement, production, sharing and discussion of Facebook content", and that he had seen a significant increase in false reports.

AFP has published half a dozen fact-checks debunking false claims made on Facebook and Twitter after the Easter attacks. Some had dug out photos of coffins and funerals from Sri Lanka's brutal decades-long civil war and claimed they showed victims of the blasts. One video posted to Facebook showed police arresting a man dressed in a burqa and claimed he was involved in the bombings. The video was actually from 2018, and showed a man who had used a burqa to hide his identity while he sought to attack someone over a debt issue.

Another used a five-year-old photo from India that showed a group of men wearing T-shirts with "ISIS", another name for Islamic State, written on them to claim there was an active IS cell in eastern Sri Lanka. One Twitter user claiming to be a high-ranking Sri Lankan army brigadier used the platform to accuse neighboring India of being involved in the attacks. The account was later taken down by Twitter after the Sri Lankan army complained.

Authorities in Sri Lanka - where ethnic divisions still linger after decades of war - previously blocked Facebook in March 2018 after Buddhist hardliners used incendiary posts to fan religious violence that left three people dead and reduced several hundred homes and shops to ashes. —AFP

Risk of nuclear war 'highest' since WW2

GENEVA: The risk of nuclear weapons being used is at its highest since World War Two, a senior UN security expert said on Tuesday, calling it an "urgent" issue that the world should take more seriously. Renata Dwan, director of the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), said all states with nuclear

weapons have nuclear modernization programs underway and the arms control landscape is changing, partly due to strategic competition between China and the United States.

Traditional arms control arrangements are also being eroded by the emergence of new types of war, with increasing prevalence of armed groups and private sector forces and new technologies that blurred the line between offence and defense, she told reporters in Geneva.

With disarmament talks stalemated for the past two decades, 122 countries have signed a treaty to ban nuclear weapons, partly out of frustration and partly out of

a recognition of the risks, she said. "I think that it's genuinely a call to recognize - and this has been somewhat missing in the media coverage of the issues - that the risks of nuclear war are particularly high now, and the risks of the use of nuclear weapons, for some of the factors I pointed out, are higher now than at any time since World War Two."

The nuclear ban treaty, officially called the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, was backed by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017. The treaty has so far gathered 23 of the 50 ratifications that it needs to come into force,

including South Africa, Austria, Thailand, Vietnam and Mexico. It is strongly opposed by the United States, Russia, and other states with nuclear arms.

Cuba also ratified the treaty in 2018, 56 years after the Cuban missile crisis, a 13-day Cold War face-off between Moscow and Washington that marked the closest the world had ever come to nuclear war. Dwan said the world should not ignore the danger of nuclear weapons. "How we think about that, and how we act on that risk and the management of that risk, seems to me a pretty significant and urgent question that isn't reflected fully in the (U.N.) Security Council," she said. —Reuters

Grandma Ca: The 99-yr-old standing up to coal rush

VIETNAM: Toothless and nearly blind, grandmother Pham Thi Ca refuses to leave her plot of land even after bulldozers demolished her house - an extraordinary holdout against communist Vietnam's deepening addiction to coal. The 99-year-old was offered money to move as authorities hoovered up land for a planned \$2.6 billion Japanese-funded coal plant in the remote Van Phong Bay she has called home since birth. But when she said no, around 100 authorities showed up, forcibly removed her from the house and bulldozed it as she and her grandson looked on.

They were helpless to prevent the destruction of the property two years ago, but Ca, frail and wizened, has rebuffed all attempts to evict her from the land since. "The authorities carried me away, but I refuse to move," explains Ca, who now lives in a makeshift shelter of corrugated tin, wooden beams and coconut fronds next to the pile of rubble that was once her home. "My house is here, my land is here, so I will be buried here," she tells AFP, sitting on a small cot where she spends much of her time.

It's a story playing out across Vietnam, where a strong-fisted government is powering ahead with coal projects to meet the soaring energy demands of a turbo-charged economy. Coal accounts for about a third of Vietnam's current energy production and is slated to rise to about 50 percent by 2030. That means building more coal plants in places like Van Phong Bay despite a chorus of opposition from locals who complain of land grabs, loss of livelihood and environmental damage.

'I can't do anything'

Some 300 people have already been relocated from Ca's community in south-central Khanh Hoa province. They were offered cash compensation and rooms in state housing - but the residences were far from their farms and fishing grounds. The \$43,000 inducement to leave their 9,000 square-meter plot was not enough to upend Ca's family. "We cannot work there, there is no land for cultivation," says Ca's son Ho Huu Hanh, referring to the proposed relocation area.

He insists that they were never told about the planned coal plant and accuses authorities of bending the law to strongarm residents to leave. The family lost their farmland anyway. Now Hanh works as a day-laborer or catches snails and small fish to get by, earning about \$170 a month. "I can't do anything, I feel so sorry for myself," he adds, crying.

Others in the area are worried about what the coal plant will do to fish and coral reefs in the bay where water temperatures could rise due to the plant's runoff. Like many of the 20 or so coal plants already operating in Vietnam, the bulk of the funding for the yet-to-be-built Van Phong plant is external. The Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) last month approved a \$1.2 billion loan for the project, which is sponsored by the Sumitomo Corporation of Japan and is set to come online in 2023.

Sumitomo says assessments were conducted to measure the environmental, social and health impacts



VAN PHONG BAY, Vietnam: This photograph taken on April 21, 2019 shows 99-year-old Pham Thi Ca resting in a hammock in her makeshift shelter. —AFP

of the project which were "managed and mitigated appropriately". It says consultation meetings were held with residents and that compensation and resettlement was "carried out under the responsibility of local authorities in accordance with the laws of Vietnam". Vietnamese officials did not reply to AFP's request for comment.

Covered in ash

Developing economies like Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia are particularly attractive for investors from Japan, South Korea and China as the developed world turns away from coal in search of clean energy. Foreign investment has skewed Vietnam's energy strategy, locking it "into expensive and dirty power for decades," warns Julien Vincent, executive director at Market Forces, a non-governmental energy investment watchdog. But for power-hungry Vietnam coal is for now cheaper, more reliable and more familiar than renewables, which currently provide less than one percent of the country's power generation.

That number will inch upward to 2.3 percent by next year, according to Vietnam's power plan, with private investment already rushing to fund wind and solar projects. But renewables alone cannot meet Vietnam's insatiable appetite for power. "Wind and solar are environmentally friendly but very unstable... we cannot just use renewable energy to supplement our big energy needs," says Bui Van Thinh, the director of Phu Lac wind farm in Binh Thuan province.

Still, many are pushing for renewables to be favored over the 30 or so coal plants slated to come online by 2030. "After 2020 we don't need to build new coal power plants," argues Nguyen Thi Hang, the head of the clean air and water program at Vietnamese NGO GreenID. "Energy efficiency and renewable energy should be prioritized, gas can be considered as a midterm bridge." Just down the road from the coastal perch of Thinh's 24-MW wind farm sits one of Vietnam's largest coal plants, the sprawling 6,200-MW capacity Vinh Tan complex.

The enormous site in a once-sleepy fishing village has for locals come at a price. "It used to be nice, clean and pure here," recalls resident Nguyen Tai Tien. "Now there is smoke... and every morning and afternoon we have to sweep our house and the roads because of all the ash," he adds. —AFP

Never mind the war: Kabul fears surge in crime

KABUL: In central Kabul last month, two men stabbed a teenager and left him for dead before escaping on a motorcycle - a brazen attack amid a rising tide of killings and kidnappings as war-scarred residents complain of increasing lawlessness. The brutal mugging happened near the green zone, home to many of the Afghan capital's foreign diplomats, but numerous armed guards posted along the street did not try to help the victim, thanks to arcane local liability laws and restrictions. The attackers fled after snatching the boy's mobile phone and camera. He survived, but it took about an hour for authorities to arrive and take him to hospital.

Officials and stressed-out residents say crime is surging in Kabul, where police are already pushed to their limits attempting to prevent insurgent attacks by the Taliban and other groups including Islamic State. Jan Aqa Naweed, spokesman for Afghanistan's chamber of commerce, said crime has grown so bad that business people and entrepreneurs were fleeing the country for fear they could be targeted. "The increase in the crime rate, the killing and kidnapping of businessmen - this has forced many traders to leave the country," he told AFP. "Some of them take their families and money to countries such as Turkey and Uzbekistan. The crime in the city has negatively affected investment."

Authorities have started to take note. On Saturday, the interior ministry sacked Mohammad Salim Almas, the head of Kabul's criminal investigation department, because of what officials called a "dramatic increase" in crime. The rise is hard to quantify. The interior ministry this month said it had recorded 100,000 crimes over a five-year period, but did not provide a breakdown.

Abdul Khaliq Zazai Watandost, a member of Kabul's provincial council who helps monitor crime rates, told AFP that criminals have killed 70 people in the capital and its surrounding areas in the past two months, with dozens more locals kidnapped. "Crime has become a bigger problem than terrorism for Kabul residents," Watandost said. "Terrorism is a big phenomenon - but at least we should be able to control the crime."

Aside from murder and kidnappings, car thefts are common, the narcotics trade is booming and criminal gangs sometimes target foes by slapping "sticky bombs" under their cars. Shamsuddin, a shopkeeper who only wanted to give his first name, said when he goes into central Kabul to buy groceries, he splits his cash in two. "I give some to my son and keep some with myself," he told AFP. "This is because if criminals find out you have a good amount of money on you, they will kill you and take your money." Residents are changing their routes to work, while carrying guns and keeping weapons at home are also common.

Taxi drivers are wary of driving after dark for fear of being attacked by a passenger or having their car stolen. "I don't care about myself, but I am scared of losing the car because I am working for someone else and it is not my car," taxi driver Mohammad Omar told AFP. "Nowadays every Afghan is so worried." Deputy interior minister General Khoshal Sadat acknowledged the psychological toll crime is taking. "It is threatening the physical and mental security of people in the city," Sadat said. Kabul's crime came to the fore again this month when former journalist Mena Mangal was murdered in broad daylight on a busy street. —AFP

Analysis

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

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Boy or girl? HK at centre of banned China gender test

Shady middle-men are openly advertising on Chinese social media to smuggle blood samples of pregnant women to Hong Kong (HK) to skirt the mainland's ban on gender testing, an AFP investigation has found. The business thrives on a well-organized underground network that serves the huge demand for illicit sex-selective abortion in mainland China - driven by limits on family size and an entrenched cultural preference for sons. Chinese authorities vowed to crack down on the trade in 2015.

But dozens of blood smuggling agents are openly advertising services on the Twitter-like platform Weibo and on websites, despite China's proven ability to scrub digital content. Gender testing - except on medical grounds - is outlawed in China, where sex-selective abortions have helped create a surplus of about 31.6 million men, with some 115 boys born for every 100 girls last year. A long-standing one-child policy was eased to permit two children in 2016 but gender testing continues, with many parents of daughters trying for a son the second time around.

Gender testing is legal in Hong Kong, with some clinics apparently turning a blind eye to the origins of the smuggled samples. Three agents contacted by an AFP reporter posing as a customer offered to arrange in-person appointments with medical testing labs or transport blood samples to Hong Kong for around US\$580, promising results starting from six weeks into pregnancy. Upon payment of a deposit, the agent sends a testing kit to the client through a delivery service. One advised using an app to hire a nurse who could come to the patient's home in mainland China to extract blood.

'Nothing will go wrong'

The client sends the blood sample to Shenzhen from where it is smuggled across the border to Hong Kong. The agents did not directly address questions about how the samples would be transported, but assured the reporter they would arrive safely at their destination. "They will be taken to the lab in a designated vehicle, the samples can be safely sent over for testing, nothing will go wrong," one representative said, adding that results would be sent out in one working day. Other agents use human smugglers. In February, a 12-year-old girl headed to Hong Kong was caught at the Shenzhen border carrying 142 vials of blood samples from pregnant women in her backpack.

The tests analyze small fragments of foetal DNA in a pregnant woman's blood and can detect the presence of a Y chromosome. They are also used to screen for chromosomal disorders such as Down's syndrome. They can often accurately predict the gender of a foetus weeks before doctors can see the sex organs in an ultrasound. Some mainlanders take the legal option of travelling directly to Hong Kong for gender testing. "I have three daughters already. To be honest I want a son," a 39-year-old man surnamed Wang told AFP outside a lab in Kowloon where his wife was getting her blood tested.

Wang, who circumvented the one-child policy as many well-connected or wealthy Chinese families do, said he was under intense parental pressure to produce a male heir and had made the journey from the southern province of Guizhou. "Chinese people still want to have a son to carry on the ancestral line, this is an antiquated way of thinking, but back home there are lots of people who think this way," he explained. He added he and his wife would terminate the pregnancy in China if it turned out to be a girl. "Right now she's only about 50 days along, so it can be solved by taking some medicine," he said.

'Ethically unacceptable'

The trade raises questions over the willingness of Hong Kong labs to ignore their own rules. According to industry guidelines, laboratory technicians should not test blood without a patient referral from a local doctor, and risk losing their licence if they do. It is illegal to mail or transport blood samples out of China without a permit, but Hong Kong only outlaws importing blood samples if a person has reason to suspect that it contains an infectious agent.

The city's Department of Health told AFP the number of cases it investigated every year has tripled since 2016 but none was prosecuted due to insufficient evidence. A lab that one agent claimed to be working with told AFP it does not perform tests on couriered samples and denied working with mainland middle-men.

Multiple Chinese government departments did not respond to requests for comment. Hong Kong lawmaker Kwok Ka-ki, who is also a doctor, called on the territory's government to work with mainland authorities to take down the networks. "Ethically this is completely unacceptable because this will only encourage more people to perform gender selection," he said. — AFP

All articles appearing on this page are the personal opinion of the writers. Kuwait Times takes no responsibility for views expressed therein.



Photo shows an Air China Boeing 737 MAX 8 plane (back center) as a China Southern Airlines Boeing 787 (top) lands at Beijing Capital Airport in Beijing, China's three biggest airlines have filed claims seeking compensation from Boeing over the grounding and delayed delivery of 737 MAX 8 aircraft following two deadly crashes, Chinese state media reported yesterday. — AFP

Will FAA's plan for 737 MAX fly outside US?

Getting Boeing's top-selling 737 MAX back in the skies faces a critical test this week as the company and US regulators each seek to restore their reputations after two deadly crashes. The US Federal Aviation Administration convened a summit of global aviation regulators to walk through the steps taken to address concerns with the MAX following criticism the agency dragged its feet on the decision to ground the jets.

Most agencies around the world have said little or nothing about the situation since the 737 MAX was grounded following the March 10 Ethiopian Airlines crash, which together with a Lion Air crash in October, claimed 346 lives. So the gathering in Fort Worth, Texas is expected to provide clues as to whether the aviation safety authorities will be willing to set aside any skepticism about the FAA, which has not yet given the green light for the 737 MAX to fly again.

Regulators "are going to want a lot of explanation," said Richard Abouafala of the Teal Group. "We're going to learn a lot." The FAA would prefer to have other agencies quickly follow its lead-which previously would have been likely-but several aviation experts think that is improbable.

Europe and Canada could follow the US by weeks in allowing the MAX jets to return to the skies.

China is a wildcard. It was the first country to order the planes grounded in March, and has been sparring with the US for months over trade policy. China's three largest airlines filed claims seeking compensation from Boeing over the grounding and delayed delivery of the jets, state media reported yesterday.

Still the 'gold standard'?

The FAA said 57 agencies from 33 countries will attend the summit, including China, France, Germany, Britain, India, Indonesia and Ethiopia, as well as the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the United Nations' International Civil Aviation Organization. The meeting comes after Boeing announced on May 16 that it completed a software update to address a problem with the flight handling program known as the Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System.

In both of the MAX crashes, the MCAS pointed the plane sharply downward based on a faulty sensor reading, hindering the pilot's effort to control the aircraft after

takeoff, according to preliminary crash investigations. Boeing CEO Dennis Muilenburg has said repeatedly that there was no design flaw in the 737 MAX, and has described changes to the MCAS system as an "update" rather than a fix. Still, the company's reputation has taken a hit amid reports it knew of the issue before the Ethiopia Airlines crash, and received complaints from US pilots.

Boeing said it is providing additional information to the FAA in anticipation of a certification test flight, a key step in winning regulatory approval. Long considered a "gold standard" internationally, the FAA's reputation has suffered, amid scrutiny of the oversight process and reports it allowed Boeing to effectively self-certify some features of the MAX. US lawmakers last week once again castigated acting FAA Administrator Daniel Elwell for lagging behind virtually all other regulators in grounding the planes, acting only after seeing data linking the two crashes.

"So the opposite of data is common sense," bellowed Representative Steve Cohen, a Tennessee Democrat, belatedly during a hearing. "Data is fine but it's something that's right before your eyes," he said, noting that non-US regulators reacted with appropriate urgency. — AFP



An Indian election officer marks the toe of a physically challenged voter at a polling centre in Indore during the 7th and final phase of India's general election. — AFP

India decides: Counting world's largest ballot

India's enormous election took six weeks to hold, but organizers have allotted just one day to count all the ballots cast by some of the 900 million eligible voters. The use of electronic voting machines means the count itself, set for today, should be simple enough. But with claims of fraud already surfacing in some quarters, it could equally be a laborious affair that could delay the announcement of the final result. More than 67 percent of the electorate turned out to use the machines during seven rounds of voting. Here is how their votes will be counted:

Guarded strongrooms

Armed police stand outside the strongrooms where the voting machines are kept to ensure no one touches them until the count starts. Representatives of competing political parties can join the guards in the 24-hour vigil or watch a CCTV feed from cameras monitoring the area. Representatives of the candidates can also inspect the machines when they are taken to the counting room where each is put on a table.

Sudeep Jain, a deputy election commissioner with the national poll body, said an official then presses a button to get a readout of the votes cast for each candidate. One round of counting including tabulation takes between 20 and 25 minutes, he said. The count is not final until all candidates, or their representatives, and electoral delegates are satisfied with the accuracy of the results. Jain said

the tally from machines around the country is expected to be ready in about eight hours.

Paper trails

India is using a system where the electronic machine results are checked against paper tickets given out with each vote. India's Supreme Court ordered officials to randomly match paper ballots against the machine results at 20,600 out of the total 1.3 million polling stations. Jain said candidates could also demand a check if there were doubts about a machine result. The checks could delay the announcement of the final result by several hours, he added. Every counting table must have a blue ballpoint pen and a paper knife to break open the seals on the electronic voting machines. Teams are also on hand to seal the machines with wax and a safety tag with a serial number as soon as the count is completed to ensure their integrity if a result is contested.

No memory loss

Postal ballot papers are counted first. India's rules allow security and other officials on election duty to cast their votes by post or electronically. The counting of electronic votes will begin 30 minutes after the postal ballot count is finished. Candidates have 45 days to contest a result. If a court orders a recount, a machine's memory can be reactivated by reconnecting the battery so it displays the result stored in its memory. When the final result sheet is ready, a returning officer in each constituency must pause for two minutes during which a candidate or his agent can ask for a recount. The officer can reject any request that is considered unreasonable or frivolous. When disputes are resolved, the result is announced and the candidate's agents sign the final document to be reported to the election commission. — AFP

India's election: Insulting affair

India's mammoth election, the biggest in the world, was a frequently bad-tempered affair and awash with insults. Ahead of the vote counting and results due today, AFP looks back at the worst of the mud-slinging during almost six weeks of campaigning.

Thief vs prince

Prime Minister Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and his main challenger, the Congress Party's Rahul Gandhi, led the way. Modi, 68, dismissed Gandhi - scion of the hugely influential Nehru-Gandhi political dynasty - as a privileged "shehzada" (prince) in contrast with his own humble origins. Gandhi, 48, called Modi a "liar" over an allegedly corrupt French defence deal, and coined the slogan "chowkidar chor hai" (the watchman is the thief). But Modi deftly turned the tables by changing his Twitter handle to "Chowkidar" (watchman) Narendra Modi, using it to bolster his image as the only candidate who can defend India.

Dig at dad

For many, Modi went below the belt when he attacked Gandhi's father-former premier Rajiv Gandhi, who was assassinated in 1991 - as "corrupt number 1". "Narendra Modi used hate and we used love and I think love is about to win (this election)," Gandhi responded. However, some of Modi's other opponents showed no such restraint. Mamata Banerjee, the formidable leader of the key eastern battleground state of West Bengal, called Modi and the president of the BJP, Amit Shah, "top goons". She then compared the duo to Duryodhan and Dushshasan, the main villain and his younger brother in the Hindu epic Mahabharata, before threatening Modi with a "slap... of democracy".

Shah, who compared illegal immigrants in parts of India to "termites", had vowed: "We will remove every single infiltrator from the country, except Buddha, Hindus and Sikhs." Derek O'Brian, an Anglo-Indian party colleague of Banerjee, went further. He called Shah "puke-worthy" and a "lowlife". And Mayawati, the charismatic head of a key regional party in India's Uttar Pradesh state, took a dig at Modi separating from his wife decades ago. "How can he (Modi) respect others' sisters and wives when he left his own innocent wife for political gains," she asked.

Khaki underwear

The Election Commission attempted to make matters more civilized. Azam Khan, a party leader in Uttar Pradesh, was banned from campaigning for three days after he claimed his rival-BJP candidate and former Bollywood actress Jaya Prada-wore khaki underwear. Khaki is the colour associated with the uniform of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), a hardline Hindu group from which the BJP originated.

Yogi Adityanath, the Hindu monk and firebrand BJP chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, was briefly banned when he compared the election to a battle between Ali, a figure in Islam, and the Hindu god Hanuman. Twitter reportedly also removed a tweet by Adityanath saying Congress was infected with a "green virus", the color associated with Muslims in South Asia. Maneka Gandhi, widow of Gandhi's uncle Sanjay, received a 48-hour ban for appearing to tell Muslims not to expect any favors if they didn't vote for her.

Enter Adolf

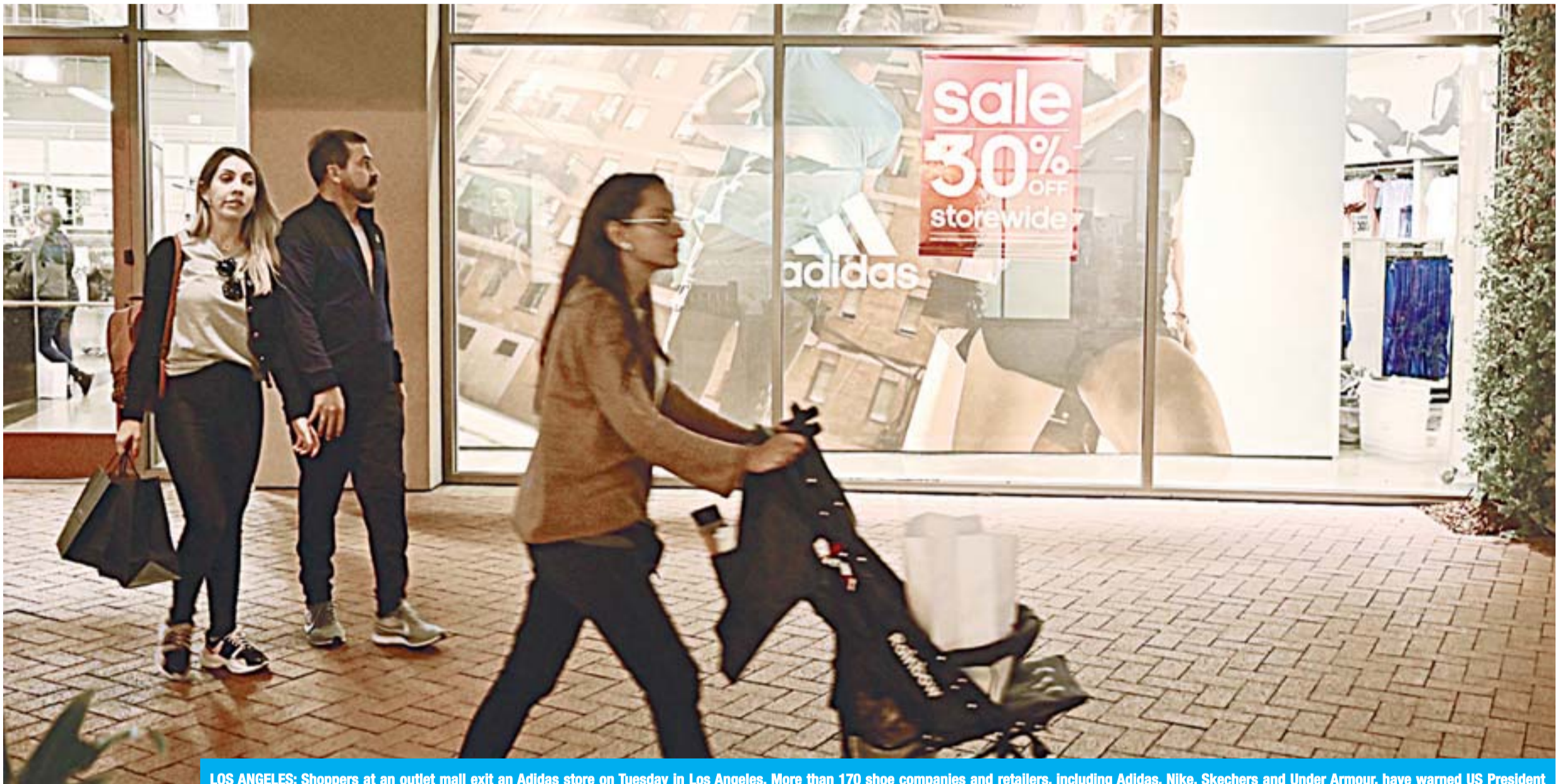
There was worse. Raj Thackeray, a fiery local politician in the western state of Maharashtra, likened Modi to Hitler. "What Adolf Hitler did to Germany in 1930s is going to be replicated in India if Modi and Shah return to power," he told a rally. Vaiko, the head of a regional party in Tamil Nadu in the south, added another World War II dictator to the mix: "Why is Modi talking in the language of Hitler and Mussolini?" Former Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi called Modi an "executioner" and one of the "insects of the gutter". And Satpal Singh Satti, head of the BJP in Himachal Pradesh state, called Gandhi a "motherfucker" at a public rally.

Karma killer

But perhaps the election's top prize in this category goes to Pragya Singh Thakur who-despite facing terrorism charges over a deadly 2008 bomb attack outside a mosque-is the BJP candidate in Bhopal. Thakur said the former anti-terrorist squad chief who arrested her deserved to die in the 2008 Mumbai attacks. "He falsely implicated me and treated me very badly. I told him that his entire dynasty will be wiped out and he died of karma," she said. Last week she went too far even for Modi. She said the killer of independence hero Mahatma Gandhi "was, is, and will remain a patriot". "People who call him a terrorist should search their soul. They will get the answers this election," she added. She later apologized. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, MAY 23, 2019

12 KUFPEC subsidiary signs new exploration deals in Pakistan**13** Japan exports fall again as US trade policy threatens outlook**14** Toyota bags two prestigious titles at Middle East Car of Year awards 2019

LOS ANGELES: Shoppers at an outlet mall exit an Adidas store on Tuesday in Los Angeles. More than 170 shoe companies and retailers, including Adidas, Nike, Skechers and Under Armour, have warned US President Donald Trump against a trade war with China, warning of the "catastrophic" effects his proposed 25 percent tariffs will have on the US economy, consumers and companies. —AFP

China must prepare for difficult times: Xi

Mobile carriers delay launch of Huawei handset; US firms face retaliation

BEIJING/WASHINGTON: China must prepare for difficult times as the international situation is increasingly complex, President Xi Jinping said in comments carried by state media yesterday, as the US-China trade war took a mounting toll on tech giant Huawei.

The world's two largest economies have escalated tariff increases on each other's imports after talks broke down to resolve their dispute, and the acrimony has intensified since Washington last week blacklisted Chinese telecom equipment company Huawei Technologies Co Ltd.

The listing, which curbs Huawei's access to US-made components, is a potentially devastating blow for the company that has rattled technology supply chains and investors, and saw several mobile carriers yesterday delay the launch of new Huawei smartphone handsets.

During a three-day trip this week to the southern province of Jiangxi, a cradle of China's Communist revolution, Xi urged people to learn the lessons of the hardships of the past. "Today, on the new Long March, we must overcome various major risks and challenges from home and abroad," state news agency Xinhua paraphrased Xi as saying, referring to the 1934-36 trek of Communist Party members fleeing a civil war to a remote rural base, from where they re-grouped and eventually took power in 1949.

"Our country is still in a period of important strategic opportunities for development, but the international situation is increasingly complicated," he said.

"We must be conscious of the long-term and complex nature of various unfavorable factors at home and abroad, and appropriately prepare for various difficult situations."

The report did not elaborate on those difficulties, and did not directly mention the trade war or of the United States. No further trade talks between top Chinese and US negotiators have been scheduled since the last round ended on May 10, the same day President Donald Trump increased tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods and took steps to levy duties on all remaining Chinese imports.

Negotiations between the United States and China have stalled since early May, when Chinese officials sought major changes to the text of a proposed deal that the Trump administration says had been largely agreed.

However, Chinese Ambassador to the United States Cui Tiankai, speaking to the Fox News Channel, said on Tuesday that Beijing was still open for talks. Repercussions of the blacklisting mounted for Huawei, with some mobile operators, including the Ymobile unit of Japan's Softbank Corp and rival KDDI Corp putting launch plans for

Huawei's new P30 Lite smartphone on hold.

Another big Chinese tech firm, video surveillance equipment maker Hikvision Digital Technology Co Ltd, could also face limits on its ability to buy US technology, the New York Times reported, citing people familiar with the matter, sending the firm's Shenzhen-listed shares down 5.54 percent.

Retaliation

While China has not said whether or how it may retaliate to the measures against Huawei, state media have taken an increasingly strident and nationalistic tone. US firms said in a survey released yesterday they were facing retaliation in China over the trade war. The American Chamber of Commerce of China and its sister body in Shanghai, said members reported that they faced increased obstacles such as government inspections, slower customs clearances and slower approval for licensing and other applications.

It also said that 40.7 percent of respondents were considering or had relocated manufacturing facilities outside China. Of the almost 250 respondents to the survey, which was conducted after China and the United States both raised tariffs on each other's imports this month, almost three-quarters said the impact of tariffs was hurting their competitiveness.

To cope, about one third said they were increasingly focusing their China operations on producing for Chinese customers and not for export, while one third said they were delaying and cancelling investment decisions.

Long considered a solid cornerstone in a relationship fraught with geopolitical frictions, the US business community has in recent years advocated a harder line on what it sees as discriminatory Chinese trade policies.

The United States is seeking sweeping changes to trade and economic policies, including an end to forced technology transfers and theft of US trade secrets. Washington also wants curbs on subsidies for Chinese state-owned enterprises and increased access for US firms in Chinese markets.

China for years has blocked major US tech firms, including Google and Facebook, from fully operating in its market. Those and other restrictions have fueled calls from within the US business community for Washington to pursue more reciprocal policies. Cui told Fox News Channel that US restrictions on Huawei "are without any foundation and evidence" and could undermine the normal functioning of markets. "Everybody knows Huawei is a privately owned company. It is just a normal Chinese private company," Cui said. "So all the action taken against Huawei are politically motivated." —Reuters

China's big three airlines seek Boeing compensation over 737 MAX grounding

BEIJING: China's three biggest airlines have asked US planemaker Boeing Co to compensate them for losses caused by the grounding and delayed deliveries of 737 MAX jets, just as regulators gather to discuss design changes for the troubled aircraft.

The triple compensation requests come at a sensitive time in Sino-US relations, with a string of tit-for-tat import tariffs culminating in Washington accusing Beijing of backtracking on almost all aspects of a proposed trade deal.

The US administration's latest tariff increase on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports - and hints of more - has prompted fear that China could retaliate against US companies.

Yesterday, Air China Ltd and China Southern Airlines Co Ltd told Reuters the pair have added their voices to a compensation request from China Eastern Airlines Corp Ltd announced a day earlier.

The latest requests were first reported by Chinese state TV. China was the first country to ground the 737 MAX two months ago after a crash in Ethiopia killed 157 people in March, in the second such incident for Boeing's newest aircraft.

"China has grounded 96 aircraft, which is about 4 percent of its airplanes. The grounding causes huge losses for Chinese airlines," China aviation expert Li Xiaojin told Reuters.

Daily losses are likely to be at least 100,000 yuan (\$14,469.90) per aircraft for each airline, Li estimated.

"The potential costs are huge too. Slower growth in passenger volume across China's major airports for March and April was largely due to the grounding of 737 MAX jets, according to my calculations," Li said. China's state-asset regulator put the number of 737 MAX jets operated by the three biggest Chinese carriers at 53.

Outside of China, carriers that have requested

compensation include Turkish Airlines, United Airlines, Ryanair and Flydubai.

Coordinated effort

Bloomberg last week reported the big Chinese airlines were considering teaming up to seek compensation. On Tuesday, state newspaper People's Daily said China Eastern had not communicated with the other carriers on the topic before making its request. China Eastern confirmed the content of that report to Reuters. Yesterday, however, widely read tabloid Global Times reported that the action appeared to be a "concerted effort".

"China seems to be ready now to put more pressure on Boeing as the company happens to have a genuine safety issue, and the trade friction between the US and China started to go into a downward spiral," Global Times quoted Shen Yuxin, a partner at law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, as saying.

The latest compensation requests also come a day before the US Federal Aviation Administration hosts global regulators in Dallas to review 737 MAX software and training proposals from Boeing before regulators decide whether to end the grounding.



RENTON: A Boeing 737 MAX 8 for China Southern Airlines is pictured at the Boeing Renton Factory in Renton, Washington. —AFP

China and the European Union each have their own aerospace industries and so are likely to determine their own conditions for allowing 737 MAX flights to resume, analysts said. The International Air Transport Association has also convened a meeting of airlines with grounded 737 MAX jets today in Montreal. —Reuters

Business

KUFPEC subsidiary signs new exploration deals in Pakistan

Sheikh Saud Al-Sabah and Mian Hayaud ink agreements

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company's (KUFPEC) Pakistan subsidiary Kirthar Pakistan BV (KPBV) yesterday signed petroleum exploration license and petroleum concession agreements for Makhad block in Pakistan, a press release said.

The Makhad block No 3371-19 covers an area of approximately 1,560 square kilometers. It is located in the Attock, Chakwal and Mianwali districts of the Punjab province and in the Kohat district of the

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Sheikh Nawaf Saud Nasir Al-Sabah, KUFPEC's Chief Executive Officer, signed the agreements on behalf of KPBV. Mian Asad Hayaud Din of the Federal Secretary, Petroleum Division signed the agreements on behalf of Pakistan in the presence of Pakistan's Minister of Petroleum Omer Ayub Khan, the release said.

At the signing ceremony, Sheikh Nawaf said, "KUFPEC is proud of its strong strategic partnership with Pakistan which is reflected by our successful investments exceeding \$1 billion in Pakistan since 1987." He said the Makhad Block will be the third asset operated by a KUFPEC subsidiary in Pakistan and the first in the Punjab province.

KPBV plans to work closely with Pakistan's national oil companies and the provincial holding company of Punjab in relation to KPBV's operations in the Makhad Block. At this stage, KPBV anticipates acquiring seismic data and drilling one exploration well. KUFPEC is an international upstream company engaged in exploration, development and production of crude oil and natural gas outside Kuwait and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, the release added. Sheikh Saud Al-Sabah was scheduled to call on Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan at his office later yesterday.



ISLAMABAD: Sheikh Nawaf Saud Nasir Al-Sabah and Mian Asad Hayaud Din sign the agreements.

Philippines exempts gold sales to CB from taxes to boost foreign reserves

MANILA: The Philippines has passed a law exempting gold sales by small-scale miners to the central bank from excise and income taxes to beef up the country's foreign exchange reserves and prevent smuggling, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said yesterday.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte signed the law into effect on March 29, the central bank said in a statement. By law, all gold produced by small miners in the Philippines should be sold to the central bank at around world market prices. However, miners have circumvented taxes introduced in 2011 by selling gold on the black market. Gold sold to the central bank fell 99 percent to 10,000 fine troy ounces this year from more than 900,000 fine troy ounces in 2010 because of taxes imposed in 2011, government data showed.

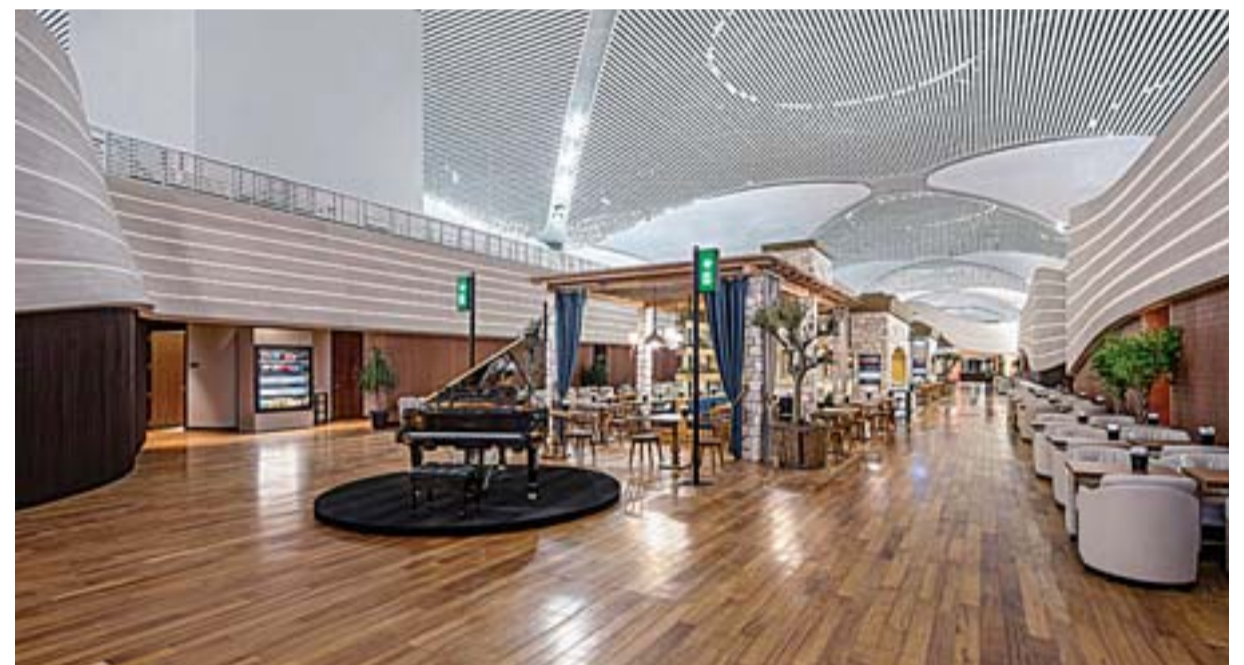
An increase in the country's gross international reserves will improve the country's economic standing and lower the government and the private sector's cost of funding, the central bank said as a reason for the exemption. This should more than offset the 35 million pesos (\$666.793) the government expects to lose annually in foregone revenues from the tax exemptions. The tax exemption also includes the sale of gold by small-scale miners to accredited traders, which then sell the precious metal to the central bank. Gold accounted for nearly 10 percent of the country's gross international reserves of \$83.96 billion at end April. —Reuters

Turkish Airlines to open five lounges at new Istanbul Airport

KUWAIT: With the completion of "Great Move" to its brand new home base, Istanbul Airport, one of the most significant cornerstones of the Turkish aviation history, Turkish Airlines will open five passenger lounges available for Business Class, Miles & Smiles Elite Plus & Elite, Star Alliance Gold and Corporate Club passengers. There are currently three lounges open - the Turkish Airlines Business Lounge, Miles & Smiles Lounge and Domestic Lounge. The Exclusive Lounge and Arrival Lounge are planned to open in Summer 2019.

The Turkish Airlines Business Lounge has an approximate area of over 60,000 square feet, seats 765 guests and features 13 private suites with showers. Turkish Airlines also designed a 130 square foot museum in here collaborating with the arts and cultural institution Istanbul Modern.

The Turkish Airlines Miles & Smiles Lounge is also over 60,000 square feet seating 765 guests, and offers 11 private suites with showers and space where guests can rest on comfortable couches, savor delicious and exclusive treats from Turkey along with international cuisine, or enjoy mobile masseur services. A console gaming experience, golf simulators and large children's play area provide entertainment, while a technology



center with 3D glasses and virtual reality is planned. The two lounges also provide meeting rooms, a library and prayer room.

The Turkish Airlines Domestic Lounge is accessible through a special entrance gate located outside the terminal so passengers can complete check-in procedures and transfer directly to the aircraft via buses. Lounge amenities include comfortable couches, Turkish cuisine, a large children's play area, media wall with multiple TV screens and a prayer room.

The overall design concept of the Business Class

and Miles & Smiles Lounges reflect an Aegean theme, including designs depicting breezes from the Aegean region. The Ribbon wall, which is the most special figure in Turkish Airlines' lounges and inspired by a flow motif, consists of solid wood panels that undulate through all lounges. Panels circulating in the halls have amorphous movements expressing the flow.

Turkish Airlines passengers gain access to the lounges by presenting their business class tickets or Miles & Smiles Elite Plus & Elite, Star Alliance Gold and Corporate Club membership cards.

British inflation climbs on rising energy costs

LONDON: British annual inflation climbed to 2.1 percent in April, in part owing to higher energy prices, official data showed yesterday. "The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) 12-month rate was... up from 1.9 percent in March," the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement. "Rising energy prices and air fares, which were influenced by the timing of Easter, produced the largest upward contributions to change in the rate between March and April 2019," the ONS added. Analysts' consensus forecast had been for a jump to 2.2 percent in April.

While April's figure is back above the Bank of England's 2.0-percent target, the latest data is not expected to cause the BoE's Monetary Policy Committee to raise interest rates any time soon, especially since inflation rose less than forecast. The climb "still puts further pressure on consumer purchasing power following a falling back in earning growth in March", noted Howard Archer, chief economic advisor at the EY ITEM Club.

However, "it is unlikely to prompt the Monetary Policy Committee into hiking interest rates in the near term given ongoing Brexit uncertainties and a fraught domestic political environment," Archer added. "The recent relapse in consumer purchasing power is a blow to growth hopes as the UK economy faces being hampered by prolonged Brexit uncertainties as well as a fraught domestic political situation and a challenging global economic environment." The Bank of England's main interest rate stands at 0.75 percent. —AFP



EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.900
Euro	341.790
Sterling Pound	388.600
Canadian dollar	228.300
Turkish lira	50.610
Swiss Franc	303.230
US Dollar Buying	296.700

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.762
Indian Rupees	4.384
Pakistani Rupees	2.189
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.728
Nepali Rupees	2.732
Singapore Dollar	222.230
Hongkong Dollar	38.846
Bangladesh Taka	3.599
Philippine Peso	5.823
Thai Baht	9.565
Malaysian ringgit	77.980

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.361
Qatari Riyal	83.798
Omani Riyal	792.463
Bahraini Dinar	810.150
UAE Dirham	83.068

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	20.750
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.845

Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.225
Tunisian Dinar	105.140
Jordanian Dinar	430.710
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.299

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.540
Canadian Dollar	227.730
Sterling Pound	388.305
Euro	341.175
Swiss Frank	309.720
Bahrain Dinar	809.885
UAE Dirhams	83.320
Qatari Riyals	84.555
Saudi Riyals	82.105
Jordanian Dinar	430.820
Egyptian Pound	17.900
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.727
Indian Rupees	4.369
Pakistani Rupees	2.018
Bangladesh Taka	3.607
Philippines Peso	5.808
Cyprus pound	18.115
Japanese Yen	3.755
Syrian Pound	1.595
Nepalese Rupees	2.738
Malaysian Ringgit	73.590
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.515
Thai Bhat	10.500

Turkish Lira	50.525
Singapore dollars	223.632

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.380108	0.394008
Czech Korune	0.005166	0.014466
Danish Krone	0.041423	0.046423
Euro	0.332274	0.345974
Georgian Lari	0.109110	0.109110
Hungarian 0.000950	0.001140	0.001140
Norwegian Krone	0.030675	0.036875
Romanian Leu	0.054348	0.071196
Russian ruble	0.004721	0.004721
Slovakia	0.009123	0.019123
Swedish Krona	0.032493	0.032493
Swiss Franc	0.294667	0.305667
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.201198	0.213198
New Zealand Dollar	0.191563	0.201063
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.221761	0.230761
US Dollars	0.300800	0.306100
US Dollars Mint	0.301300	0.306100
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003013	0.003814

Chinese Yuan	0.042587	0.046087
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036754	0.039504
Indian Rupee	0.003712	0.004484
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002675	0.002855
Korean Won	0.000245	0.000260
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069125	0.075125
Nepalese Rupee	0.002683	0.003023
Pakistani Rupee	0.001480	0.002250
Philippine Peso	0.005747	0.006047
Singapore Dollar	0.215307	0.226307
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001378	0.001968
Taiwan	0.009541	0.009721
Thai Baht	0.009243	0.009793
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.794183	0.810683
Egyptian Pound	0.017605	0.020205
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000210	0.000270
Jordanian Dinar	0.425139	0.434139
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Dollar	0.000051	0.000051
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020535	0.044536
Omani Riyal	0.785630	0.791310
Qatar Riyal	0.079458	0.084398
Saudi Riyal	0.080220	0.081520
Syrian Pound	0.001293	0.001513
Tunisian Dinar	0.097511	0.105511
Turkish Lira	0.044126	0.053971
UAE Dirhams	0.081588	0.083288
Yemeni Riyal	0.000991	0.001071

Business

Japan's exports fall as Trump's trade policy threatens outlook

Global slowdown, trade war hit exports

TOKYO: Japanese exports contracted for the fifth month in April due to a slump in shipments of chip-making equipment to China, underlining the growing threat to the world's third-biggest economy from a bruising Sino-US trade war.

Data also showed Japan's trade surplus with the United States rose for a second month as auto exports accelerated, which could draw US President Donald Trump's ire before US-Japan trade negotiations begin this week followed by a leaders' summit a few days later. Trump's government is trying to renegotiate trade agreements with major economies to lower the US trade deficit and address what it considers to be unfair trade practices.

That approach has set-off an intensifying tariff dispute between the United States and China - two major trading partners of Japan - in a blow to global businesses, trade and overall growth.

Washington's stance is doubly harmful to Japan because it has slammed the breaks on exports to neighboring China and exposes the trade-reliant economy to curbs on its shipments of cars to the United States. "Some Japanese companies are still optimistic about a resolution to recent trade friction, but the implications are quite serious," said Hiroshi Miyazaki, senior economist at Mitsubishi UFJ Morgan Stanley Securities.

"On one hand, we may reach a point where Japanese companies shift production from China or other places. On the other hand, Japanese policymakers need to make sure US-Japan trade stays out of the spotlight." Ministry of Finance (MOF) data showed on Wednesday Japan's exports fell 2.4 percent in April from a year earlier, down for a fifth straight month. That compared with a 1.8 percent drop seen by analysts in a Reuters poll, and a similar 2.4 percent decline in March.

Exports to China fell 6.3 percent in April from a year earlier, down for the second consecutive month.

The data also showed Japan's trade surplus with the United States rose 17.7 percent in April from a year earlier to 723.2 billion yen (\$6.55 billion), partly led by an 8.3 percent increase in auto exports.

US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer will visit Japan on May 24 to meet Economy Minister Toshimitsu Motegi to accelerate trade talks ahead of a leaders' summit a few days later, according to two sources with direct knowledge of the plan.

Trump threat

Trump angered foreign automakers by declaring that some imported vehicles and parts posed a national security threat, and Tokyo fears the US government could attempt to set a quota on Japanese car imports. The specter of a drawn-out trade war comes at a delicate time for Japan's economy.

Gross domestic product (GDP) data out Monday showed Japan's growth unexpectedly accelerated in January-March because imports fell more than exports, suggesting domestic consumption was weakening at the same time external demand had turned down. Indeed, the GDP data showed declines in consumer and business spending, a bigger source of concern as companies worried about the future. Last month, imports rose 6.4 percent on-year from a 1.2 percent gain in March, thanks to increases in oil and related purchases. Faltering overseas demand and weak consumer spending could keep policymakers under pressure to forego a twice-delayed tax hike in October, although a rebound in manufacturers' confidence may ease some fears of a recession in the world's third-largest economy.

Japanese manufacturers' morale improved in May



RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA: Brand new Subaru cars sit in a lot at Auto Warehousing Company near the Port of Richmond in Richmond, California. US President Donald Trump says he will hold off on applying new tariffs on cars and auto parts for up to six months as negotiations on trade deals continue with Japan and the European Union. —AFP

for the first time in seven months, a Reuters poll showed yesterday.

However, two-thirds of companies surveyed expect economic growth to remain flat in the second quarter, while 82 percent of firms believe Japan's economy is not fully prepared for a planned tax hike, a Reuters

monthly poll showed. Investors are closely watching the government's monthly report due later this week for a possible downgrading of its view that the economy is in a gradual recovery, which would rekindle speculation about a tax hike delay. To be sure, there are some positive signs for Japan's economy. —Reuters

British Steel collapses, costing thousands of jobs

LONDON: British Steel collapsed yesterday after the government said last-ditch talks with its owners failed to secure a financial rescue. The High Court in London ordered British Steel Limited into compulsory liquidation, a statement said. "British Steel Limited was wound-up in the High Court" yesterday, meaning its assets would be sold to help pay debts. "The government has worked tirelessly with British Steel, its owner Greybull Capital, and lenders to explore all potential options to secure a solution for British Steel," said Business Secretary Greg Clark. "We have shown our willingness to act, having already provided the company" recently with funds.

Tim Roache, general secretary of the GMB union, described the collapse of Britain's second-biggest steelmaker as "devastating news for the thousands of workers" in the UK. Some 5,000 people

are employed by British Steel and an estimated 20,000 more have links to the firm's supply chain. Greybull has blamed Brexit strains for its financial collapse, while the steel sector faces other uncertainties. "While Greybull cannot be allowed to walk away scot-free and must be held to account for its stewardship of Britain's second largest steelmaker, ministers cannot wash their hands of the Brexit farce and ongoing uncertainty that has placed the company in difficulty," Steve Turner, assistant general secretary of the Unite union, said yesterday.

"To do so would be a betrayal of a loyal workforce that has made great sacrifices to make British Steel a success and send economic shockwaves throughout the steel industry, UK manufacturing and the households of 20,000 workers in the supply chain who rely on the steelmaker for their livelihoods." There are clouds also over the future of Tata Steel's main European operations based in the UK after German industrial conglomerate Thyssenkrupp recently scrapped merger plans with the Indian giant.

A deal was seen as positive for Tata's Port Talbot plant in Wales that employs more than 4,000 staff. Following the



LINCOLNSHIRE: A man rides a bicycle as he leaves from British Steel's Scunthorpe plant, at the time of a shift-change, in north Lincolnshire, north east England yesterday. —AFP

merger collapse, Thyssenkrupp said it would slash 6,000 jobs worldwide in a structural shakeup. British Steel is owned by investment firm Greybull Capital, who founded the long steel products maker in 2016 after snapping up assets from Tata

Steel. Long steel products include plates, rails for railways, sections used in construction, and wire rod. The latter can be used as steel rope for infrastructure like suspension bridges or filaments for car tyres to give rigidity. —AFP

SAS, Airbus to research electric aircraft infrastructure

STOCKHOLM: Scandinavian airline SAS and aircraft maker Airbus said yesterday they were partnering to research eco-system and infrastructure requirements for hybrid and electric aircrafts. The partnership would involve a joint research project where the two companies work together to investigate challenges "regarding operations and infrastructure linked to large scale introduction of hybrid and electric aircraft in commercial traffic," according to a statement published

by SAS. "We are proud of our ambitious sustainability work and are now pleased that Airbus has chosen SAS to partner up with us for this future project. If this becomes a reality, it will revolutionize emissions," Rickard Gustafson, CEO of SAS, said in a statement.

According to a separate statement the collaboration between the two companies would start in June 2019 and continue until the end of 2020 and would "focus on analysing the impact of ground infrastructure and charging on range, resources, time and availability at airports". The project also included a plan to involve a renewable energy supplier and aimed "to address the entire aircraft operations ecosystem in order to better support the aviation industry's transition to sustainable energy". —AFP

Fed may cut rates if inflation keeps disappointing, says Bullard

HONG KONG: Further weakness in inflation could prompt the U.S. Federal Reserve to cut interest rates, even if economic growth maintains its momentum, James Bullard, President of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, said yesterday.

The risk of the Fed missing its 2 percent inflation target and the trade war were two key macro-economic challenges to the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC), he said in a presentation prepared for an audience at the Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC) in Hong Kong. The Fed held interest rates steady earlier in May, when Chairman Jerome Powell said there was "no strong case" for either a cut or hike in interest

rates. But Bullard said yesterday "a downward policy rate adjustment even with relatively good real economic performance may help maintain the credibility of the FOMC's inflation target going forward." "A policy rate move of this sort may become a more attractive option if inflation data continue to disappoint," he said.

Bullard and Chicago Fed's Charles Evans, both voting members of the FOMC, have in recent days expressed concerns over the Fed's failure to meet its target. Bullard said on Wednesday that another "low-side miss" is on the horizon in 2019. Bullard said any policy adjustment going forward would be in response to incoming data, and not a continuation of the rate normalization process which has stopped earlier this year after 225 basis points worth of hikes from near zero levels.

He remained upbeat about growth prospects. Bullard drew comparisons with 2-1/2 decades ago when rates were increased by 300 basis points between early 1994 and early 1995, and the economy still boomed during the second half of the 1990s-to stress that rate normalization can be accomplished without damaging prospects for an extended period of growth. —Reuters

M&S logs mixed annual profits amid overhaul

LONDON: British clothing-to-food retailer Marks & Spencer posted mixed annual profits and sagging sales yesterday, weighed down by challenging market conditions and an ongoing overhaul. Bottom-line profit after taxation jumped by almost a third to £33.5 million in the group's financial year to March 31, M&S said in a statement. However, pre-tax profit before exceptional items sank almost 10 percent to £523.2 million, while total sales slid three percent to almost £10.4 billion. Marks and Spencer is in the process of shutting more than 100 underperforming stores by 2022, in a restructuring launched a year ago.

"We are deep into the first phase of our transformation program and contin-

ue to make good progress," said chief executive Steve Rowe in the earnings release yesterday. "We remain on track with our transformation and are now well on the road to making M&S special again," he added. The group also announced yesterday a £601-million rights issue, or sale of new shares, to fund its new joint venture with online supermarket Ocado to deliver M&S food direct to homes. M&S, which already sells its clothing online, revealed in February that it will buy 50 percent of Ocado's UK retail business.

The company's branded food products will be sold online by September 2020 following the termination of Ocado's current such deal with UK supermarket group Waitrose. In early morning deals, M&S shares sank 3.6 percent to 261.40 pence on London's benchmark FTSE 100 index, which was 0.41 percent higher overall. "The results give proof, if it were needed, that M&S required a significant shot in the arm to give it relevance in the modern day," noted analyst Richard



LONDON: Pedestrians walk past a Marks and Spencer (M&S) shop in central London. —AFP

Hunter at online brokerage Interactive Investor. "Unappealing and older stores

have long been a drag on both revenues and indeed the company's image." —AFP

US firms rethink China presence because of trade war: Survey

BEIJING: Most US businesses in China are hurting from the tariffs war between the two countries, forcing some companies to relocate abroad or refocus their business, a survey showed yesterday. The recent poll by the American Chamber of Commerce in China and its sister organization in Shanghai paints a gloomy picture of the business environment for American companies. Three-quarters of the 250 respondents said increases in US and Chinese tariffs are having a "negative impact" on their business as orders were drying up owing to rising manufacturing costs and prices.

Nearly half said they have experienced non-tariff retaliatory measures in China since last year, with one in five reporting increased inspections and a similar amount enduring slower customs clearance. And 14 percent complained of other complications from increased bureaucratic oversight and regulatory scrutiny.

The United States and China have so far exchanged tariffs on more than \$360 billion in two-way trade. The poll was conducted from May 16 to May 20, days after the United States more than doubled duties on \$200 billion in Chinese goods and Beijing retaliated with higher duties on \$60 billion in American products. The poll showed that 35 percent of companies would adopt an "in China for China" strategy-sourcing within China and targeting the domestic market-as a result of tariffs. But more than 40 percent said they were "considering or have relocated" production facilities outside China, with Mexico and Southeast Asia the preferred alternatives for manufacturing.

Fewer than six percent said they have moved or are considering moving their factories to the United States, undercutting President Donald Trump's hopes of seeing American companies move production back home. Trump launched the trade war last year to extract profound economic reforms from Beijing, accusing China of seeking to forge global industrial dominance through massive state intervention in markets and the theft of US technology.

'Structural issues'

Despite the pain, more than half of respondents said they favor protracted trade talks to continue in order to address "structural issues allowing them to operate on a more level playing field". Others wanted a quick deal and a return to the "pre-tariff predictability and stability" that existed before the world's two biggest economies locked horns. After talks ended in Washington this month China's top trade negotiator Liu He said another round would take place in Beijing, but neither side has announced a date. Trump has left open the door for reconciliation, saying he expected a "fruitful" meeting next month with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping at a Group of 20 summit in Japan.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said at a regular press briefing that he had not seen the survey. But, Lu added, "even when the US threatens to impose tariffs on China, the enthusiasm for foreign investment in China has not diminished and continues to increase." Lu said China has "no intention" to take retaliatory action against US companies because of the trade war. "We are still committed to providing a fair, reasonable, transparent, non-discriminatory and predictable business environment for enterprises investing in China," he said. —AFP

Business

Toyota bags two prestigious titles at Middle East Car of Year awards 2019

Yaris scooped 'Best Sub-compact Sedan' award • Camry crowned 'Best Midsize Sedan'



KUWAIT: Underlining the exceptional quality of its vehicles and their enduring appeal among the region's drivers, Toyota has once again achieved success at the 2019 Middle East Car of the Year (MECOTY) awards. The Toyota Yaris claimed the title of 'Best Sub-compact Sedan,' while the Toyota Camry was crowned 'Best Midsize Sedan' at the regional automotive sector's biggest and most prestigious awards ceremony, which took place in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Now in its sixth edition, the annual MECOTY awards are renowned as the Middle East's most authoritative industry honors program. The judging panel, which comprised 19 highly respected independent senior editors from leading automotive publications in the region, selected the two vehicles based on a rigorous set of ten criteria including design and quality (exterior and interior); emotional appeal and driver satisfaction; handling and drivability; value for money (new purchase and resale); safety and durability; comfort and practicality; performance and capability; environmental friendliness; technological innovation; and regional appeal.

Yugo Miyamoto, Chief Representative of Middle East & Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, said: "We are proud to be recognized again at one of the region's biggest and most prestigious awards program for the automotive sector. These coveted titles are a true testimonial for the outstanding design and craftsmanship of our Toyota Yaris and Toyota Camry models. The new Yaris delivers great fuel economy, optimal performance, and fun driving experience and also sets fresh benchmarks for compact sedans, while the all-new Camry's emotional design, refined interior and cutting-edge technology place it at the forefront of the midsize sedan market." Miyamoto added: "These awards repre-



sent a ringing endorsement of our approach to building class-leading vehicles that exceed the expectations of our customers, whose loyal support remains at the heart of Toyota's ongoing success story. We would like to thank them for continually inspiring us on every step of our journey to develop ever-better cars."

The Toyota Yaris was launched in the region in February last year with a choice of 1.3-liter and 1.5-liter engines and is available with a Multidrive 7S transmission to offer a smooth driving experience and outstanding fuel efficiency. Designed to appeal to those who seek out the latest trends and innovations, the Yaris' stylish exterior and spacious cabin couple superior comfort with uncompromising levels of quality and durability.

Meanwhile, the Toyota Camry sets new standards for the midsize sedan segment in design, performance, and comfort. The all-new Camry was launched in January 2018 and has created a whole new value proposition while ensuring seamless fun and excitement for drivers and passengers alike. The vehicle delivers superior handling and comes with three powertrain options: a 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine mated to a six-speed automatic transmission, a 3.5-liter V6 mated to an eight-speed automatic transmission; and a new electrified hybrid system that combines a petrol engine with two electric motors and exemplifies Toyota's continuous commitment to providing environmentally friendly vehicles.



The Camry's refined interior features a distinctive design that provides comfort and convenience with an additional layer of luxury. In addition, the vehicle incorporates several cutting-edge technologies that offer an interesting and interactive driving experience and provide customers with the opportunity to explore new levels of power and entertainment through the latest technologies in its cars. As with all Toyota models, safety remains a top prior-

ity for the Yaris and the Camry. Both vehicles come with a comprehensive array of advanced safety features to provide unparalleled protection for drivers and their passengers, including SRS airbags, Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Anti-lock Braking Systems (ABS), Electronic Brake Force Distribution (EBD), Brake Assist (BA), Hill-start Assist Control (HAC), and enhanced body and platform structures, among many others.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds announces summer offers

KUWAIT: This summer, witness a huge collection of gold and diamond jewelry at Malabar Gold & Diamonds and win exciting prizes

- Participating outlets- All outlets in the Kuwait
- Unveiled latest collection of jewelry in gold, diamonds and precious gems.
- Offers in Kuwait:
- Customers get one raffle coupon for every gold and diamond jewelry purchase worth KD 40
- Win 100 gram gold each through raffle draw
- Free one gram gold coin on every diamond purchase of KD 250
- Unveiled latest collection of jewelry specially designed for the season in gold and diamonds

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the largest



jewelry retailers globally with a strong retail network of 250 outlets spread across the globe has unveiled the details of the campaign to celebrate the onset of summer. This Campaign will run at all Malabar Gold & Diamonds outlets located in the Kuwait until 6th July, 2019. To celebrate this season, Malabar Gold & Diamonds showcases the latest collection of gold, dia-

mond and precious gems jewelry in their outlets. This summer season, Malabar Gold & Diamonds gives their customers an exclusive chance to win gold bars with purchase of gold and diamond jewelry. With every purchase of gold and diamond jewelry worth KD 40, customers get a chance to enter raffle draws to win 100 gram of gold each in 10 raffle draws. Adding to the above, customers also get one gram gold coin on every KD 250 worth diamond jewelry purchase.

To add more glitter to this season, they have also unveiled the latest collection of jewelry in gold, diamonds and precious gems to suit the tastes of their multicultural and multinational customers. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has incorporated these designs as a part of various brands presented at Malabar Gold & Diamonds' namely Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewelry, Era - Uncut Diamond Jewelry, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Divine- Indian Heritage Jewelry, Precia - Gem Jewelry and Starlet - Kids jewelry. This holiday season, Malabar Gold & Diamonds provides customers with the most attractive offers, definitely not worth a miss. Their mesmerizing collection and exclusive offers can be availed in all outlets of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Kuwait.

Ooredoo launches 'Shamel Control' hybrid plan for first time in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Shamel Control is the first hybrid tariff plan of its kind in Kuwait that has both the behavior of a postpaid plan and a prepaid plan. This plan will help customers keep their monthly bill fixed to a controllable cost with the possibility of freezing and transferring the contract. The Shamel Control plan is based on a postpaid bundle with fixed benefits, in which the plan can be topped up and after it is recharged, customers can subscribe for special Shamel Control add-ons or bundles or even use the prepaid balance as PAYGO for making call.

This plan is ideal for prepaid customers that want to enjoy the luxury of having a postpaid line while having the best affordable option, as well as customers or sponsors that would like to provide lines for their children, drivers or house workers while avoiding any unexpected costs that might occur from excessive charges.

Shamel control subscribers can recharge their lines using the available prepaid recharge methods. The postpaid bundle will provide the subscribers with 7GB of internet and 150 minutes of local calls, if there is a commitment with the plan customers will receive a one-time 100 international minutes that they can use during their commitment. Customers who sign up for the 24 months commitment will be able to select and add an iPhone, Samsung or Huawei device.



Huawei and Forms Syntron release open banking service solution

KUWAIT: Huawei and Forms Syntron have jointly released a distributed open platform solution "Fincube" for the global financial industry. Fincube will help banks to better meet the challenges of the "Bank 4.0" era, reduce innovation costs, optimize technologies, and continuously improve service openness capabilities that enhance the experience of bank customers.

The focus of the "Bank4.0" era is experience-oriented banking services; an open banking model based on distributed architecture. The online digital world and the offline physical world are converging rapidly, and in this way the business model of the modern bank is being transformed.

Huawei has continued to work with top financial institutions, research institutes, and independent software developers worldwide to accelerate the transformation of financial institutions. Huawei currently serves more than 1000 financial institutions, including 20 of the world's top 50 banks.

The Forms Syntron solution is built on Huawei's high-density integrated distributed technology solution FusionCube. Based on the advanced computing, net-

work, and storage capabilities provided by FusionCube, the Forms Syntron Universe Analytics Platform uses FusionCube as the basic unit of the distributed architecture and bears platform management and control capabilities. The BaaS (Banking as a Service) capability library consisting of thousands of microservices enables customers to quickly innovate based on standard versions and continuously integrate and deliver new services.

Zhou Zhiquan, chairman and general manager of Forms Syntron, said: "We are very honored to form a global partnership with Huawei. These products enable financial institutions to achieve strategic transformation based on the Fincube product system, and fully prepare for the challenges facing banking services in the new era. At the same time, we will work with Huawei to bring the innovative achievements of the Chinese financial industry over the past decade to the global market."

"The financial industry solution jointly released by Huawei and Forms Syntron is based on the open capabilities of Huawei FusionCube hyper-converged infrastructure and a deep understanding of the financial industry," said by Cao Chong, President of Huawei's EBG Financial Services Business. "It can meet users' diversified requirements for mobile banking services and Internet financial services, eliminate performance bottlenecks, while flexibly expanding capacity to help commercial banks quickly build digital cores and reconstruct core competitiveness in the mobile era."

Huawei Enterprise's "Platform + AI + Ecosystem" strategy focuses on cooperation with partners to provide ubiquitous



connectivity and pervasive intelligence. Currently, more than 700 cities around the world, and 211 of the Fortune Global 500 companies, including 48 of the top 100, have selected Huawei Enterprise as their partner in digital transformation.

Huawei FusionCube will provide the following new support capabilities in the Fincube solution:

The CubeCenter API is released to partners for the first time so that the management capabilities of hardware and IaaS technologies can be better integrated into the upper-layer architecture management

and control and automatic O&M system to achieve more efficient and accurate management and control and further improve the service continuity of financial services.

The latest FusionStorage technology is upgraded to provide better and reliable storage capabilities. Data reliability and data access performance are the most critical technical features of financial institutions. With the integration of the Universe Analytics Platform with FusionStorage and the integration of mature technologies of Huawei PaaS, Fincube can deliver a brand-new experience to financial institutions.

What's On



Universal American School graduation ceremony for academic year 2018/2019

NBK is committed to supporting students and all educational activities

The Universal American School's Class of 2019 attended their graduation ceremony at the Regency Hotel, on May 16, 2019. Robed in ceremonial blue, happy seniors marched up the catwalk to the stately strains of the UAS band. Proud parents and teachers admired their charges at this formal milestone in their young lives. Inspiring speeches were given by the guest speaker, Mrs Shaikha Al Bahar, NBK's Deputy GCEO. The Valedictorian, Abdulwahab Al Mutawa and the Salutatorian, Moustafa Alrefaei Well-deserved awards were presented to a gratifying number of seniors.

In her speech, Ms Shaikha Al Bahar highlighted her believe in graduate students distinguished capabilities and the great potential they have to carry the torch and lead the way towards Kuwait's future development, blessed with the help and support of well-established corporations that have the capability to invest in their promising future and provide them with adequate career opportunities. Al Bahar expressed her pleasure to be among this unique gathering. She congratulated all students on their graduation and confirmed that the long road to success is paved with numerous challenges as they will forge ahead to reach the top which requires dedication, diligence and perseverance.

"We at NBK attach great importance to supporting students and all their educational and training activities to further boost their enlightening experience. We take to heart all the needs required to achieve and attain their goals, which ultimately support the development and progress of our beloved country, Kuwait". Al Bahar Said.

Al Bahar added "In line with our CSR initiatives and our focused commitment on the educational sector, the main force driving development in today's societies, we welcome undergrads and graduates from schools and universities throughout the year to visit us at NBK. We organize site visits to introduce them to our environment, familiarize them with the banking industry and open the door for prospective future engagement within this vital sector that plays an essential role in our economy".

Al Bahar highlighted that NBK striving to give the utmost priority to youth to guarantee achieving a prosperous future. Confirmed that it is NBK national duty to invest in their future, therefore, the bank offer a wide range of specialized activities aimed at developing national capital resources seeking a brighter future. Al Bahar emphasized that Kuwait needs the student's energies, minds and creativity to achieve the goals of Vision 2035, the aim of which is to develop the country into a cultural center, a financial hub, a world's leading manufacturer of petrochemicals, a focal point for foreign investment, and a place for knowledge transfer in renewable energy



and IT by 2035.

Al Bahar advises the students to focus on absorbing as much knowledge as possible and be passionate about attaining even further education. Especially with what major changes labor market is facing in the midst of a fourth industrial revolution. That would require innovators and highly talented individuals to fulfill such unique positions. Therefore, they need to wisely choose non-traditional disciplines that cater to the technological revolution we are currently experiencing.

She referred in the speech to recent report issued by McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) and the World Economic Forum estimates that adapting currently

demonstrated technology has the technical potential to automate roughly 50% of the world's current work activities, thus leading to the layoff of the human element. Technological development over the next 10 years will affect about 800 million people, forcing as many as 375 million individuals to change their careers and learn new skills in order to cope with this dramatic change.

Al Bahar advised the students to carefully plan and choose between the various areas where they can excel and demonstrate their creativity and innovation in their prospective career. "There are truly no limits to achieving your dreams unleash your creative energies, you are the hope and the future of this country.

Through your success, we look forward to a brighter future for our beloved country Kuwait". Al Bahar said. Al Bahar concluded her speech confirmed that it is time for parents to teach young people early on that our diversity is strength and they should accept different opinions, different cultures, different religions, and different nationalities.



Health & Science

Washington first US state to legalize human composting

LOS ANGELES: Washington on Tuesday became the first US state to legalize human composting after its eco-friendly governor signed a bill to that effect in a bid to cut carbon emissions from burials and cremations. Under the new law that will go into effect in May of next year, people who die in the state will have the option to have their bodies transformed into soil suitable for use in gardening in a process called repositioning.

"Recomposition offers an alternative to embalming and burial or cremation that is natural, safe, sustainable, and will result in significant savings in carbon emissions and land usage," said Katrina Spade, who lobbied for the law and is the founder of Recompose, a Seattle-based company set to be the first to offer the service. "The idea of returning to nature so directly and being folded back into the cycle of life and death is actually pretty beautiful," Spade added in a statement sent to AFP.

She said she became interested in the process about 10 years ago after turning 30 and thinking more about her own mortality. Spade then began examining the technical aspects of creating an environmentally friendly "third option" that could compete with the \$20-billion US funeral industry, which offers conventional burial and

cremation. Her approach - developed with Washington State University, which did clinical trials with donor bodies - calls for a dead person to be placed in an hexagonal steel container filled with wood chips, alfalfa and straw.

The container is then shut and the body is decomposed by microbes within 30 days. The end product is a dry, fluffy nutrient-rich soil resembling what one would buy at a local nursery and suitable for vegetable gardens. "Everything - including bones and teeth - is recomposed," Spade said. "That's because our system creates the perfect environment for thermophilic (ie heat-loving) microbes and beneficial bacteria to break everything down quite quickly." The process used by Recompose is the same as that used for decades with farm animals and the clinical trials carried out by the university in Washington found that it was also safe for use with humans.

'Socially acceptable materials'

"We have found that the essential methods that we use for livestock mortality composting are also effective for human disposition," said Dr Lynne Carpenter-Boggs, a professor of soil science at Washington State University. "We have substantially changed the materials used, to be

socially acceptable, but the basic principles that we have learned from livestock mortality composting are very effective for the human research subjects that we used." According to statistics, more than one in two Americans opt for cremation. In Washington state, nearly 75 percent of people choose that option.

Spade expects her company to charge some \$5,500 for a "natural organic reduction," an amount a little bit over the price of cremation but less than the price of burial in a casket. Her innovation comes as so-called "green" or earth-friendly burials are gaining traction in the United States, where companies are now offering organic caskets or a burial in which the body is wrapped in a simple shroud in towns that allow it.

The actor Luke Perry, star of the hit-series "Beverly Hills 90210" who died in March, was buried in a biodegradable suit made partly out of mushrooms, as he requested. The so-called "mushroom suit" was developed by Coeio, a California startup, that said the attire helps the body decompose, neutralizes toxins found in the body and transfers nutrients to plant life. But not everyone is enthusiastic about turning bodies into garden-variety soil, notably the Catholic church, which has denounced repositioning as undignified and questioned its environmental impact. — AFP

Singapore's solution for cigarette puffers

SINGAPORE: Smokers in Singapore will no longer have to sneak a drag on the street, with the launch of the city-state's first air-conditioned "smoking cabin", but the experience won't be as simple as lighting up yesterday. The city-state has some of the world's strictest anti-tobacco laws and smoking is banned in most public places, with a fine of up to Sg\$1,000 (\$725) if caught. E-cigarettes are also banned outright.

The new cabins, which are fitted with a Danish filtration system that can purify cigarette smoke before it is released into the air, can reportedly fit up to 10 people

at a time. But tobacco enthusiasts appeared unimpressed, with many choosing to light up at a nearby open-air smoking corner instead. "The atmosphere in there is stifling, honestly. Because it's so small and squeeze, I feel a bit like a second-class citizen smoking in there," e-commerce executive Azfar Zain said after using the cabin. "There are no seats, either. I'm not comfortable with smoking there unless they make the room bigger."

Office worker Rama Dass said he preferred to smoke outside, adding, "sometimes I just need a bit of fresh air". Singapore-based Southern Globe Corporation, which launched the cabin on Tuesday, said it planned to deploy 60 such structures by the end of the year. Singapore first introduced anti-tobacco laws in the 1970s as part of a national effort to reduce smoking. It has since expanded the number of public places where lighting up is prohibited, including university campuses, common areas around apartment blocks, and inside private cars with the windows down. — AFP

CLINIC

PAGE





248 33 199





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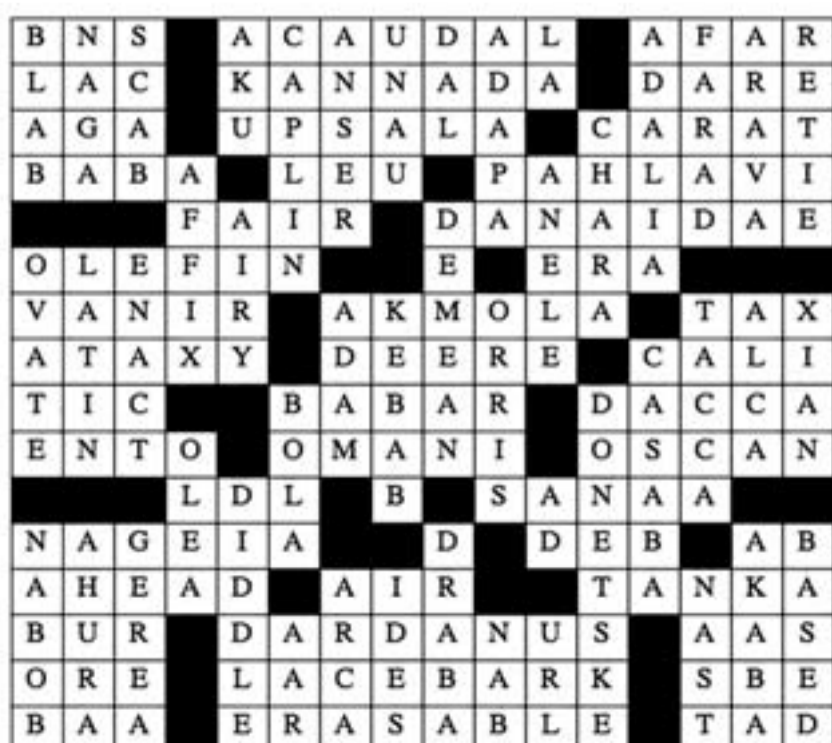
ACROSS

1. Relating to a recently developed fashion or style.
4. The first of the Old Testament patriarchs and the father of Isaac.
11. Made from residue of grapes or apples after pressing.
15. A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
16. Colorless gas found in natural gas and petroleum.
17. A state in the western United States.
18. Colony of the United Kingdom located on a limestone promontory at the southern tip of Spain.
20. A special situation.
21. Stable gear consisting of either of two curved supports that are attached to the collar of a draft horse and that hold the traces.
22. A dull persistent (usually moderately intense) pain.
25. Mostly black African weaverbird.
27. A deep bow.
29. Wading birds of warm regions having long slender down-curved bills.
31. German statesman who served as chancellor of Germany (born in 1918).
35. Cause to grow thin or weak.
39. The largest continent with 60% of the earth's population.
40. Relating to principles of right and wrong.
41. (used of count nouns) Every one considered individually.
44. An Iranian language spoken in Afghanistan.
45. A port city in southern Kenya on a coral island in a bay of the Indian Ocean.
47. Informal terms for a meal.
49. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
50. The compass point midway between east and southeast.
51. Being one hundred more than three hundred.
52. Genus of tropical plants with creeping rootstocks and small umbellate flowers.
54. Small genus of mediterranean shrubs.
60. One of a family of granular intrusive rocks.
61. United States writer of poems and plays about racial conflict (born in 1934).
65. An ancient upright stone slab bearing markings.
68. Hinge joint between the forearm and upper arm and the corresponding joint in the forelimb of a quadruped.
70. A crystalline rock that can be cut and polished for jewelry.
71. A member of the Mongolian people of central Asia who invaded Russia in the 13th century.
73. A workplace for the conduct of scientific research.
74. Wild sheep of northern Africa.
75. 1/1000 gram.
76. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
77. (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
78. Arranged in a sequence of grades or ranks.
79. A small cake leavened with yeast.

DOWN

1. Long-tailed brilliantly colored parrot of Central and South America.
2. Any of various herbaceous plants of the genus *Atriplex* that thrive in deserts and salt marshes.
3. A city in north-central India.
4. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
5. A nonmetallic largely pentavalent heavy volatile corrosive dark brown liquid element belonging to the halogens.
6. (Roman Catholic Church) The supreme ecclesiastical tribunal for cases appealed to the Holy See from diocesan courts.
7. Type genus of the Aphididae.
8. A member of a seafaring group of North American Indians who lived on the Pacific coast of British Columbia and southwestern Alaska.
9. Reports of the work of a society or learned body etc.
10. The number that is represented as a one followed by 6 zeros.
11. Leader of Black Muslims who campaigned for independence for Black Americans (1897-1975).
12. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
13. Avatar of Vishnu.
14. A professional cook.
19. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
23. One of the two main branches of orthodox Islam.
24. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
26. A promontory in northern Morocco opposite the Rock of Gibraltar.
28. (informal) Of the highest quality.
30. The function or position properly or customarily occupied or served by another.
32. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
33. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
34. Long-tailed arboreal mustelid of Central and South America.
36. Large northern deer with enormous flattened antlers in the male.
37. A medieval helmet with a visor and a neck guard.
38. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
42. A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
43. A pilgrim who journeys to Mecca.
46. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
48. Of a pale yellow color like straw.
53. A port in southwestern Scotland.
55. (Greek mythology) One of the three Graces.
56. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
57. Small space in a tissue or part such as the area between veins on a leaf or an insect's wing.
58. A republic in central Europe.
59. On a ship, train, plane or other vehicle.
62. 100 agorot equal 1 shekel.
63. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
64. Naked freshwater or marine or parasitic protozoa that form temporary pseudopods for feeding and locomotion.
66. A village in eastern Ireland (northwest of Dublin).
67. Small ornamental ladies' bag for small articles.
69. (Scottish) Bluish-black or gray-blue.
72. An ancient Hebrew unit of capacity equal to 10 baths or 10 ephahs.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may feel smothered in your career now. You still have an enormous desire to study the world and what makes it run. People are a mystery too. You're thinking more and more of educating yourself for another occupation. If you don't do that now, then work may explode on you shortly. Make up your mind, as to what you want to do in life and make that your next goal. Your tastes are changing and so is your thoughts on work. Take the time to think about your life, then make the change. Watch out that other items in your life aren't next to go unless you want that course of action. Yearning is a teaching tool.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This is a good time for you because you can see your own best qualities, examine them and see how to use them in your money-making context. Be careful that you don't mistake admiration for love with an older person in authority. Take your time to reconcile how you feel and then make your move if you think it reciprocated. Right now, your introverted self needs time to think over all that you desire including that which is involved with love. A lover means more to you now. You want someone you can play with and with whom you can laugh and talk. Love is coming if you don't already have it.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Problem solving comes easily to you today but don't make any important decisions regarding anything of consequence. That choice may be challenged tomorrow and have to be implemented in another manner then. Today you may find that your sensitivity level is not what it generally is. Sympathy is for those who really need it, you think. Even one shade of disingenuous behavior has you on the warpath, without a shred of compassion. You're quieter now but it's because you have things to do such as reorganize your office and think. At home you'll be in the same mode. Go out to celebrate with friends and family tonight. Try to enjoy.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You and Clyde the Camel enjoy this hump day today while you work to your heart's content. Things are exciting even when they appear mundane and boring to others. Your quick wit and intelligent mind drives you on while your coworkers appear lackadaisical and ready to quit. The ability to see the light at the end of the tunnel brings you all you want in what drives you on. Big and real breakthroughs in your work ethic can bring great results now. One of your coworkers may blindside you with an issue they have concern for which they feel you don't. Be gentle when you answer them. You may need their help tomorrow. Enjoy your evening.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

This is a time that others find you enticing like the Pied Piper. You can do almost anything and people are right by your side. The only problem with this time is that you may not make choices that are right for you in the future. Maybe you've gotten a little big-headed with your confidence being as high as it is at this point. In social situations you're the life of the party. Everyone has their ear turned to you, whether you're the host or not. Good conversation has others eating out of your hand even your coworkers. Make the right choices and you'll feel better about yourself tomorrow rather than wishing you'd been quiet.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This is a time of using that mental clarity you have to your best interest. You have intellectual clarity and can see what you're working on in a creative light. Furthermore, you look at investing, not as a gamble, but as a certainty, you think, with your being able to note the workings of stock and how to make your money increase there. Take your time to study this creative idea successfully before you invest. Feeling too good about self where you become frivolous can lead to some bad decisions. A lover or a child may play a very important part in your life at this time. This may even be your father. Take note.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Being mentally depressed restricts you in your mental clarity now. Don't make any decisions, large or otherwise. Those choices may have to be rethought and worked through again tomorrow. Pushing yourself only makes this condition worse. About the only thing you can do to make sense of this day is to appreciate the times you're able to work with an unrestricted mind. Sex is another thing that does really excite you and that you may be good at now. Go home to your lover and enjoy, at least part of this day. Tomorrow should be better or so you hope.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You feel a strong urge to be out an about with friends now. Too bad work gets in the way. Later tonight you can make that a realization. Now you have to work, which you don't mind, but getting it over with is on your mind too. This is the time to be with someone special you love. Talking and romancing has you trying to get your work done quickly now. Someone knows you've worked hard lately and may send you home to deal with those pressing other items rather than working late as you generally do. Keep the romance going. Have fun.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may find yourself assisting someone younger in work and his or her personal life. You know a little about everything and can convey the right message to help this young person. This kindness will be remembered for some time to come showing up in the future to reward you for your help. Because you help this younger person, you're in the mood to celebrate by remembering your own life and how you got to where you are now. Smile. You've done well so far. You take the initiative today to get items you need done. Taking the time to help another is a good thing.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You've started noticing that time is marching on. In some manner, that's kind of scary especially when you want to get your life settled in a materialist manner. You find yourself more serious natured now in all aspects of your life from work to emotional status. Being too strict on yourself is part of your challenge too. Back off as much as possible. While in this mode you'll surprise yourself when you take on creative solutions to some of your problems. Most often you feel compelled to be traditional in your methods but may find yourself varying that to some degree. Using a novel approach is not beyond you now.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Keep your opinions to yourself where work is concerned now. You're thinking is great. It's your communication skills that are lacking. Coming up with answers to problems is easily done. Telling coworkers how to fix it leaves something to be desired. Either they don't understand, or they're not really listening. The frustration could drive you crazy today. As the old saying goes, "Drop back forty yards and punt," is the way to handle this day. Working in the manner you want and leaving others alone may be best for you.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Work and rest, after the storm, both have you tired. The storm you cycled into yesterday is still working on your brain so that the tired you feel is mental. Work, today, may be done in a mundane manner without any need to discuss new work projects or even appreciate having to be on the job at all. You're putting up a good front though, Pisces. Coworkers and friends come to you with their issues knowing you can help them out now. Someone makes you happy to spend time with them today. That's the only bright spot in your day today.

Wordsearch Puzzle

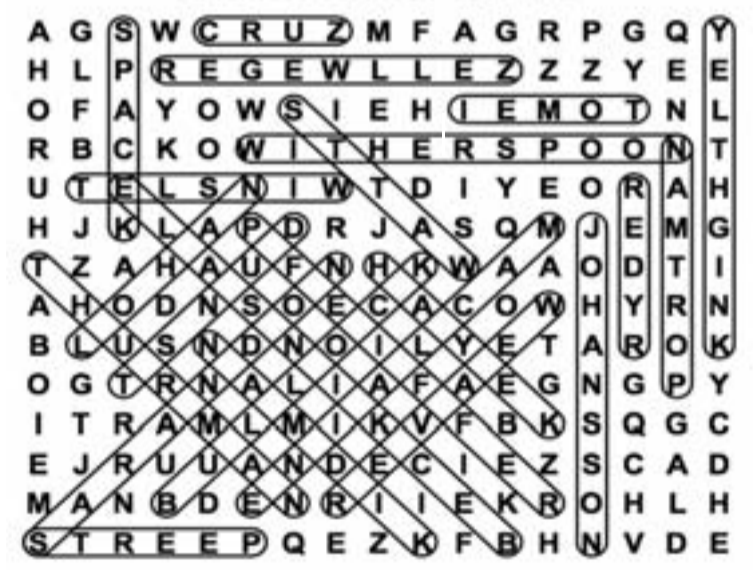
Movie Actresses 2 - Word Search



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| ALBA ANISTON | FANNING FOSTER | PALTROW PAQUIN |
| BARRYMORE | HATHAWAY | RICCI |
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| BLANCHETT | LANGE | STREISAND |
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| DENCH | MCDORMAND | THERON |
| DIAZ | MIRREN | |

Yesterday's Solution

Movie Actresses 1 - Solution

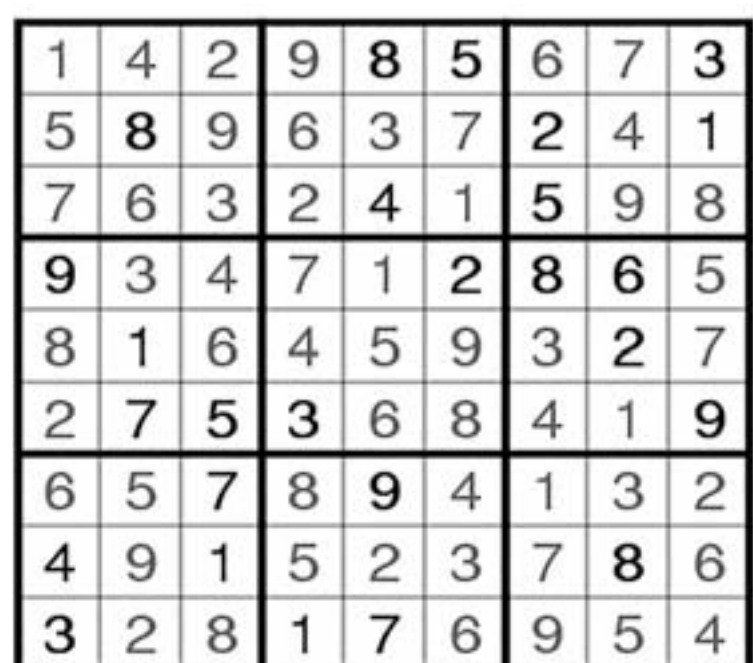


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| BULLOCK | MACLAINE | TOMEI |
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| KNIGHTLEY | STREEP | |

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, MAY 23, 2019



A picture shows the paddle steamer 'Italie' of the Compagnie Generale de Navigation sur le lac Lemman, commonly abbreviated to CGN, sailing on Lake Geneva past a giant fork sculpture designed by Switzerland's artist Jean-Pierre Zaugg. — AFP

Omani writer wins Man Booker literature prize

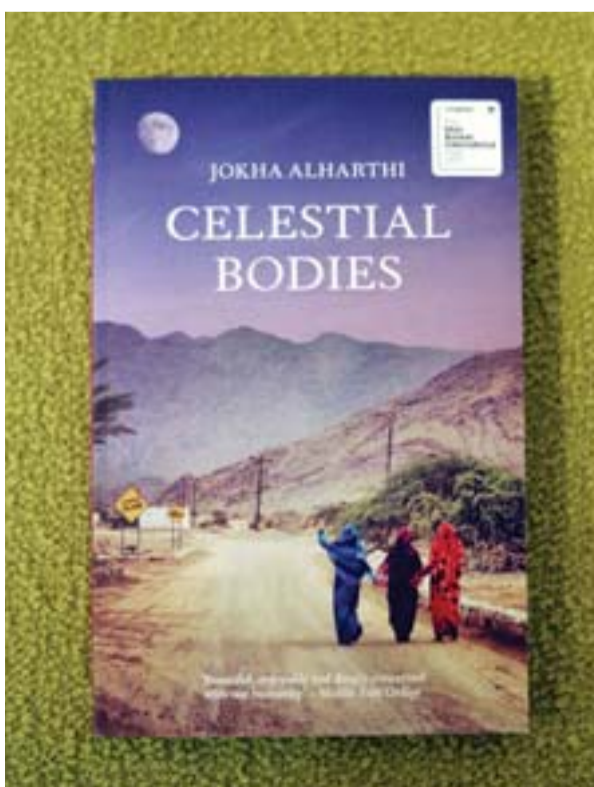
Jokha Alharthi on Tuesday became the first Arabic author to win the Man Booker International prize for her novel "Celestial Bodies" which reveals her Omani homeland's post-colonial transformation. "I am thrilled that a window has been opened to the rich Arabic culture," Alharthi, 40, told reporters after the ceremony at the Roundhouse in London. Alharthi is the author of two previous collections of short fiction, a children's book and three novels in Arabic. She studied classical Arabic poetry at Edinburgh University and teaches at Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat.

"Oman inspired me but I think international readers can relate to the human values in the book—freedom and love," she said. The prestigious 50,000-pound (57,000 euro, \$64,000) prize, which celebrates translated fiction from around the world, is divided equally between the author and the translator. Alharthi's translator was US academic Marilyn Booth, who teaches Arabic literature at Oxford University. The judges said Celestial Bodies was "a richly imagined, engaging and poetic insight into a society in transition and into lives previously obscured".

It is set in the village of al-Awafi in Oman where we encounter three sisters: Mayya, who marries Abdallah

after a heartbreak; Asma, who marries from a sense of duty; and Khawla, who is waiting for her beloved who has emigrated to Canada. The three sisters witness Oman's evolution from a traditional, slave-owning society. "It touches the subject of slavery. I think literature is the best platform to have this dialogue," Alharthi said. The jury said: "Elegantly structured and taut, it tells of Oman's coming-of-age through the prism of one family's losses and loves".

The Guardian said it offers "glimpses into a culture relatively little known in the west" and The National said it signalled "the arrival of a major literary talent", calling the book "a densely woven, deeply imagined tour de force". Jury chair Bettany Hughes said the novel showed "delicate artistry and disturbing aspects of our shared history". "The style is a metaphor for the subject, subtly resisting clichés of race, slavery and gender," she said. Alharthi was up against five other shortlisted authors: France's Annie Ernaux, Germany's Marion Poschmann, Poland's Olga Tokarczuk, Colombia's Juan Gabriel Vasquez and Chile's Alia Trabucco Zerán. — AFP



A copy of 'Celestial Bodies' by Arabic author Jokha Alharthi, translated by Marilyn Booth, which has won the Booker International Prize in London. — AFP photos



Arabic author Jokha Alharthi poses after winning the Man Booker International Prize for the book "Celestial Bodies".

Wingmoms: How bonobo mothers help their sons find love

Anyone who's experienced a mother pushing them to get a move on and produce grandkids might just sympathize with this. A new study has described the outsized role bonobo moms play in their sons' sex lives: from pulling rank to ensure their male offspring get to meet attractive ovulating females, to interfering with male rivals' attempts to mate. The paper was published Monday in the journal Current Biology and found that bonobo males whose mothers were alive and remained in their group were three times more likely to father children.

And the authors credited the success of the "wingmoms" on the nature of bonobos' female-dominant societies, which have long been known for their altruistic and peaceful character, in contrast to more violent and patriarchal chimpanzees. "This is the first time that we can show the impact of the mother's presence on a very important male fitness trait, which is their fertility," co-author Martin Surbeck, a primatologist at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany said in a statement.

"We were surprised to see that the mothers have such a strong, direct influence on the number of grandchildren they get." For the study, Surbeck and colleagues observed wild bonobo populations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as wild populations of chimpanzees in Ivory Coast, Tanzania, and Uganda. To verify paternity, they collected the primates' droppings for DNA analysis.

Gynecocratic communities

They found that while both bonobo and chimpanzee mothers attempted to assist their sons, bonobos were far more successful because their communities' highest ranks are dominated by females. Chimpanzee communities on the other hand are dominated by males who compete for alpha status. The two species together are humans' closest relatives in the animal kingdom and share about 99 percent of our DNA. "The bonobo moms act a bit like social passports," Surbeck told AFP.

"The sons, in close proximity to their moms, are also very central in the group and access positions in the group that allow them to interact more with other females including copulation." "If there's a female who's very attractive, you see moms stick around them, and in the shadow of their moms are the males," he added. By contrast, they found that if a mother lost her high rank, her son also fell in rank and was subsequently less successful in his mating attempts. In addition to intervening in their sons' rivals attempt to mate, bonobo mothers also protected their own sons from the efforts of rivals to disrupt courting and sex.

Grandmother hypothesis

Interestingly, bonobo mothers did not go the extra mile for their daughters, nor did they help their daughters raise offspring. Surbeck believes that, since bonobo daughters leave the community and males remain behind, it may simply not be worth the mothers' time and efforts from an evolutionary perspective. One thing the team believes they may now have tentative evidence for is the so-called "grandmother hypothesis": that a post-reproductive female can increase her own lifespan and continue her genes by ensuring her offspring's reproductive success.



In this photo a young juvenile male bonobo is groomed by his mom in the Kokolopori Bonobo Reserve in Djolu Territory of Tshuapa District in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. — AFP

It is an idea that anthropologists have applied to humans and Surbeck believes it could also be the case for bonobo populations. "The interesting thing now is in bonobos we have such a mechanism, apparently allowing the females to do that, but intriguingly not through their daughters but their sons," he told AFP. Moving forward, Surbeck said he would like to confirm through more long-term research the benefits of the behavior on the longevity of mothers, and find out whether mothers exhibit welcoming behavior to new female arrivals in the community who go on to become their sons' mates.

More broadly, he said, studying the differences between gender egalitarian and largely peaceful bonobo societies, in which members practice both heterosexual and homosexual sex to strengthen social bonds; versus alpha-male led chimpanzee societies, could yield clues about our own evolutionary past. "One has to be clear—we did not evolve from bonobos or chimpanzees but we share with them a common ancestry," said Surbeck. "Comparing us with our closest living relatives might give some idea about traits which could evolve under selective pressures." — AFP



STARS OF DISNEY'S LIVE-ACTION 'ALADDIN' RETURN TO JORDAN AS PART OF FILM'S ONGOING MAGIC CARPET WORLD TOUR

'Aladdin opens in Middle East theaters today'

The stars of Disney's live-action adaptation "Aladdin," including Will Smith, Mena Massoud, Naomi Scott and director Guy Ritchie, returned to Jordan—where portions of the film were shot— as part of the ongoing Magic Carpet World Tour. The group attended a VIP screening of the film under Royal Patronage and hosted by Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein at Abdali Mall Prime Cinema and participated in a press conference organized by and located at the Royal Film Commission - Jordan. "Aladdin" opens in US theaters May 24, 2019 and in Jordan May 23, 2019.

On the heels of Paris, London and Berlin, Jordan is the fourth stop on the film's Magic Carpet World Tour and the continuation of a partnership that began several years ago. The "Aladdin" production was in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for several weeks in November 2017 to capture the natural beauty of the stunning desert vistas for the big screen. The production resulted in the hiring of 150 locals to supplement the existing UK crew. The RFC provided invaluable support during filming, including comprehensive production services and assistance in facilitating logistics with local authorities.

"Jordan did not only provide the amazing landscape needed for such a beautiful story, but also all the support needed to make it a success," says Princess Rym Ali, managing director by interim of the Royal Film Commission - Jordan. "The Royal Film Commission is committed to helping good stories materialize on screen. And this goes beyond offering production services. Local professional crew are available. We care about training as well as building an audience appreciative of quality movies." Producers

Dan Lin and Jonathan Eirich, director Guy Ritchie and executive producer Kevin de la Noy looked at a number of different countries in the Middle East and North Africa before deciding on Jordan.

It was the region's aesthetic beauty and the benefits afforded the production through the RFC that helped cement their decision. Over the past 10 years, the film industry has created close to 95,000 job placement opportunities in Jordan. Recent productions to have shot in the country include "The Martian," "Dune" and "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker." The RFC is focused on training and capacity building to enhance local available talent for production support and has an incentives package to help entice other productions to come film in Jordan. They are currently in the process of designing a soundstage for post-production work.

About 'Aladdin':

A thrilling and vibrant live-action adaptation of Disney's animated classic, "Aladdin" is the exciting tale of the charming street rat Aladdin, the courageous and self-determined Princess Jasmine and the Genie who may be the key to their future. Directed by Guy Ritchie ("Sherlock Holmes," "The Man from U.N.C.L.E."), who brings his singular flair for fast-paced, visceral action to the fictitious port city of Agrabah, "Aladdin" is written by John August ("Dark Shadows," "Big Fish") and Ritchie based on Disney's "Aladdin." The film stars Will Smith ("Ali," "Men in Black") as the larger-than-life Genie, Mena Massoud ("Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan") as the charming scoundrel



Aladdin: Naomi Scott ("Power Rangers") as Jasmine, the beautiful, self-determined princess; Marwan Kenzari ("Murder on the Orient Express") as Jafar, the powerful sorcerer, Navid Negahban ("Legion") as the Sultan concerned with his daughter's future, Nasim Pedrad ("Saturday Night Live") as Dalia, Princess Jasmine's free-spirited best friend and confidante; Billy Magnussen ("Into the Woods") as the handsome and arrogant suitor Prince Anders and Numan Acar ("The Great Wall") as Hakim, Jafar's right-hand man and captain of the palace guards.

"Aladdin" is produced by Dan Lin, p.g.a., ("Sherlock Holmes") and Jonathan Eirich, p.g.a., ("Death Note") with Oscar nominee and Golden Globe winner Marc Platt ("La La Land") and Kevin De La Noy ("The Dark Knight Rises") serving as executive producers. Eight-time Academy Award-winning composer Alan Menken ("Beauty and the Beast," "The Little Mermaid") provides the score, which includes new recordings of the original songs written by Menken and Oscar-winning lyricists Howard

Ashman ("Little Shop of Horrors") and Tim Rice ("The Lion King") and includes two new songs written by Menken and Oscar and Tony Award-winning songwriters Benj Pasek and Justin Paul ("La La Land," "Dear Evan Hansen"). The film, which was shot on practical stages in London and on location amidst the stunning desert vistas of Jordan, has a talented creative team helping to bring Agrabah to life, including: director of photography Alan Stewart ("The Commuter"), production designer Gemma Jackson ("Game of Thrones") and costume designer Michael Wilkinson ("American Hustle").

The 1992 animated film starred Robin Williams and featured such memorable songs as the Oscar-winning "A Whole New World" and "Friend like Me." The film grossed more than \$502 million at the global box office, which led to successful stage productions on Broadway and abroad as well as a North American touring company. "Aladdin" opens in Middle East theaters today.



Handwritten wills purportedly found at Aretha Franklin's home

Three handwritten documents purportedly prepared and signed by Aretha Franklin appear to give instructions on the fate of the late queen of soul's estate, contradicting the belief she had left no will. The documents obtained and published by the Detroit Free-Press newspaper Tuesday were discovered in a spiral notebook under couch cushions in her living room, as well as in a locked cabinet that had previously been inaccessible. The 16 pages of difficult to read, hand-scrabbled papers dated between 2010 and 2014 appear to distribute assets including real estate, jewelry, furs, stereo equipment and music royalties to her family members.

In the document dated June 21, 2010, the iconic singer declares herself of sound mind and health, except for "high blood pressure" and "a mass on the pancreas." The indomitable Franklin died at age 76 in August 2018 after a long battle with pancreatic cancer, triggering an outpouring of grief. Her death also raised questions over the future of her assets, with her family that includes four sons—with her niece Sabrina Owens appointed as the estate's personal representative—believing she had left no will. Franklin's long-time lawyer David Bennett filed the documents in Michigan's Oakland County probate court, saying he was unsure whether they were valid according to the Midwestern state's law. A hearing is scheduled for June 12.

"The heirs, through their counsel, have been unable to reach a resolution with each other as to the admission, validity, and dispositive provisions" of the apparent wills, the court documents read. Rules in Michigan dictate that if no will is

declared legal, the estate, reportedly valued at some \$80 million, will be divided equally among her four sons.

In April a Michigan probate court judge approved a plan for hired experts to appraise Franklin's estate, which according to local media says it has paid at least \$3 million in back taxes to the Internal Revenue Service since she died. In December the US tax agency filed court documents saying the singer owned more than \$6 million in back taxes and some \$1.5 million in penalties. Franklin's death in Detroit closed the curtain on a glittering six-decade career that spanned gospel, R&B, jazz, blues and even classical music. — AFP



Aretha Franklin

American picked to design vast car-free garden at Eiffel Tower

The city of Paris has chosen an American landscape architect to re-design a huge area surrounding the Eiffel Tower, a project that will banish almost all vehicle traffic near the immensely popular monument. "We can create the biggest garden in Paris... with much more biodiversity, much more ecology," Kathryn Gustafson said after Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo presented the plan late Tuesday. Gustafson has studied in France, where she has designed several parks and squares, but is best well known internationally for her memorial fountain for Britain's Princess Diana in Hyde Park, London.

A total of 54 hectares (133 acres), currently crisscrossed by several roads including two major thoroughfares on each side of the Seine river, will be largely turned over to pedestrians and "low-impact transportation" such as bus and bike lanes. In particular, the heavily used car lanes on the Lena bridge which spans the Right and Left Banks underneath the Eiffel Tower will also be given over to lawns and rows of trees, according to a video rendering of the project.

"We're going to have an extraordinary garden where we'll hear birds singing once again," Hidalgo said. That will be music to the ears of the estimated 150,000 people who visit the site every day during the summer high season, including the 20,000 to 30,000 who climb the tower itself. Overall, seven million people visit the tower each year.

The expansive garden will stretch from the Ecole Militaire, a military academy dating from the 18th century, to the modernist Trocadero esplanade and its Chaillot Palace, built for the 1937 International Expo. The project also calls for an overhaul of the vast lawns on the Champ de Mars, the site of dozens of major public events each year, such as concerts or mass viewings of sporting events like the World Cup. The bulk of the work, expected to cost 72 million euros (\$80 million), is scheduled to be finished before the start of the 2024 Summer Olympic Games in Paris. "The Tower will find itself at the centre of a vast park that will make Parisians want to come and visit," said Jean-Louis Missika, the city's deputy mayor in charge of urbanism. Currently there are "too many cars, too much mass tourism, too many coaches," he said. — AFP



Rodrigo Sanchez (right) and Gabriela Quintero of the Mexican duo Rodrigo y Gabriela pose during a photo session before a concert at the McKittrick Hotel in New York City. — AFP

World famous Mexican guitarists Rodrigo y Gabriela take meditative turn

Headlines have given little love to guitar heroes in recent years, as streaming tastes favor rap and instruments of the greats are celebrated less onstage and more in museums. But more than a decade after soaring to global fame Rodrigo y Gabriela—the Mexican classical guitar duo that draws inspiration as much from prog and thrash metal as flamenco and folk—is still going strong, recently releasing their first studio album in five years, "Meltavolution," to rave reviews and embarking on a global tour.

Disenchanted by the rock scene in their native Mexico, Rodrigo y Gabriela moved to Europe in the late 1990s, settling in Dublin where they began busking and playing local pubs with their fusion of metal with Latin sounds. It wasn't long before the pair—which uses only nylon-stringed acoustic guitars to create their unique, frenetic style heavy on power chords and percussive elements—began winning legions of fans stateside as well as Europe and Latin America.

After the whirlwind success of their eponymous album in 2006 they quickly ascended to a global stage, playing every-

where from top festivals to Barack Obama's White House. Their latest work is a more melodic album than past recordings, a sound they achieved by first writing songs complete with lyrics before stripping away the words in a bid to help their fans meditate exclusively to the guitars.

"When we were kids we didn't know what anxiety was," said Rodrigo Sanchez backstage before the pair played an intimate show at Manhattan's McKittrick Hotel, days after rocking New York's larger Beacon Theatre. "It wasn't until literally a few years ago that we started to understand more... about the effects of meditation, things that could actually help to deal with these emotions," the acoustic rocker with hair dyed electric blue told AFP.

Sanchez said the album evokes the pair's recent "shift in consciousness"—both in their mid-forties, the metalheads are now vegan and have turned their interests to Buddhism and spiritual evolution—that helped them realize "playing music is not something we just do because we like it." "I think it's a service for people," Sanchez said. "It's when we get in touch, really, with our deepest side of ourselves." —AFP



(From left) US actor Leonardo DiCaprio, US film director Quentin Tarantino and his wife Israeli singer Daniella Pick, British film producer David Heyman, US producer Shannon McIntosh, Australian actress Margot Robbie, US actor Brad Pitt and the chairman of Sony Pictures Motion Picture Group Thomas Rothman pose as they arrive for the screening of the film "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.



US actor Brad Pitt (left) arrives with US actor Leonardo DiCaprio for the screening of the film "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP photos

Pitt and DiCaprio: Hollywood heartthrobs who push their limits

The stars were aligned for Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio to put their dashing good looks to use on big-budget films, but both Hollywood golden boys have instead taken on more idiosyncratic career paths—especially in working with Quentin Tarantino. And now for the first time, the actors are starring side by side in Tarantino's "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood", which the American director screened on Tuesday to rapturous reviews at the Cannes film festival. Both men have already starred in past Tarantino films—the 55-year-old Pitt in "Inglourious Basterds" and DiCaprio, 44, in "Django Unchained".

The consummate urbanite DiCaprio was born and raised in Los Angeles, the son of New Yorkers. As a pre-teen, he began pushing to do what he loved: act. Pitt on the other hand grew up in rural Missouri in a family of devout Baptists. To his community's shock, he took off alone one day and drove to Los Angeles, two weeks before receiving an undergraduate degree in journalism.

Despite the age gap between them, they both began making splashes in Hollywood in the early 1990s. Pitt set tongues wagging in 1991 with "Thelma and Louise" and DiCaprio hit the big time in 1993 with "This Boy's Life" and "What's Eating Gilbert Grape," the latter earning him an Oscar nomination.

Dashing leading men

The two men belong to a timeworn class of dapper A-listers including Paul Newman, Robert Redford and Steve McQueen, who have enchanted audiences with their features and charisma. "People at (the University of) Missouri were really surprised when they found out what Brad was doing," Pitt's friend Chris Schudy told Rolling Stone magazine in 1994.

"But he's always been so charming that it made some sense. The first time my mom met him, she called him a little Roman god." Pitt says that his reputation as a pretty face was something he "used to wrestle with a lot", telling television personality Charlie Rose in 2004 that today, "I accept it pretty much for what it is." Soon after their big breaks, both Pitt and DiCaprio quickly climbed through the ranks thanks to their acting chops and movie



(From left) US actor Brad Pitt, US actor Leonardo DiCaprio and US film director Quentin Tarantino arrive for the screening of the film "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood".



(From left) Australian actress Margot Robbie, US actor Leonardo DiCaprio and US actor Brad Pitt pose as they arrive for the screening of the film "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood".

star looks—but like Johnny Depp before them, they weren't afraid of subverting their mega-watt stardom.

Far from blockbusters

Even before the theatrical release of "This Boy's Life", Disney had offered DiCaprio a major role. "I don't know where I got those little balls at 16 years old to say: 'No, I'm going to wait it out because I want to audition for this other film,'" he said in 2014 as part of a SAG-AFTRA event. "If there's one thing that I'm really proud of in my entire career, it's that moment." The role in that "other film" was the mentally disabled adolescent in "What's Eating Gilbert Grape", a role director Lasse Hallstrom initially thought DiCaprio was too cute for before taking the actor on.

The film didn't make more than \$10 million but scored the 19-year-old his first Academy Award nomi-

nation, for best supporting actor. Pitt said it was with 1993's gritty "Kalifornia"—several months after "Thelma and Louise"—that marked "the first time I tried to do something away from where I was headed, take a right turn." For both actors, it was the beginning of a meandering trajectory far from blockbusters, even if DiCaprio became a global star thanks to "Titanic", a role that continues to define his career.

Going rogue

The pair have never shied away from danger or playing the bad guys, with Pitt doing so in "Kalifornia" and DiCaprio going rogue in "Django Unchained". Pitt has worked with boundary-pushers like the Coen brothers, Terrence Malick, Terry Gilliam, Steven Soderbergh and Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu—who heads the Cannes jury this year. DiCaprio has also worked with the Mexican

director as well as the likes of Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg and Clint Eastwood.

It took decades for both men to get their Oscar due, after always falling short despite multiple nominations. DiCaprio finally won best actor in 2016 for Inarritu's "The Revenant" while Pitt took home the statuette in 2014 as a co-producer of best picture "12 Years a Slave". After more than three decades in the limelight, the pair finally teamed up in front of the camera for Tarantino, who won the coveted Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1994 for "Pulp Fiction". "I'm looking for someone with an interesting point of view and a strong voice," Pitt said after working on "Inglourious Basterds". "And that certainly would sum up" Tarantino, the actor said. — AFP

All dressed up but no film to show: Bollywood 'needs new take' at Cannes



Indian actress Deepika Padukone poses as she arrives for the screening of the film "Dolor Y Gloria (Pain and Glory)" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP photos



Danish-born Indian model Deepika Padukone poses as she arrives for the screening of the film "Rocketman".



Indian actress Huma Qureshi gets ready before attending the screening of the film "A Hidden Life" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes.

It may be bold and booming but Bollywood needs a fresh approach if it wants to gain traction at the world's top film festival in Cannes, a leading Indian actress says. Although Bollywood's beauties maybe turning heads with their extravagant sartorial statements on the red carpet at Cannes, Indian movies have been glaringly absent from this year's lineup. Since the festival began in 1946, Indian pictures have walked away with several major prizes. But it has been decades since the last one was shown in the main competition. And of the 1,845 feature films submitted for the official selection this year, not a single Indian movie made the cut.

Which is a shame, says 32-year-old actress Huma Qureshi, who believes it is time to start pushing the boundaries of cinema in India, which last year churned out more than 1,800 films—more than any other country on Earth. "It's unfortunate that we don't have an Indian film at Cannes this year," she told AFP as she donned an elaborate ruffled silver-grey gown by designer Gaurav Gupta for the red-carpet premiere of Terrence Malick's "A Hidden Life". "The kind of films that come to Cannes are very niche in India, because it's not the quintessential Bollywood film."

Although there have been a lot of Bollywood films competing over the years, Indian cinema's main focus

has been on big-budget hits rather than the more nuanced, art-house pictures that tend to gain traction at Cannes and other international festivals. "We're so obsessed with box office numbers that it will be a long time before that will really change," said Qureshi, who was born to a Muslim family in New Delhi and who first came to Cannes in 2012 with her debut feature "The Gangs of Wasseypur". "I don't think we have the budgets or the willingness for people to actually invest in these kinds of films. We are still more interested in making the quintessential Bollywood film—that's essentially where the market is right now."

High fashion, luxury and film

But that needs to change, she says. "We have to create a space for small independent films to thrive and grow, and until that happens, we cannot sit back and say: 'We didn't have a film this year'. Because where are the films we're producing that are actually going to have a shot at Cannes or Venice or any of these kinds of festivals?" With so many mainstream Bollywood actresses heading to Cannes, the annual 12-day extravaganza creates a real buzz in the Indian media with its heady mix of high fashion, luxury brands and excellence in film. And as more popular actors and producers have been going to the festival,

things have started to shift. "With the spotlight on Cannes, there's a definite interest. And there's a big movement that's emerging in India, a new wave of people who are looking at different films and a different kind of content," she said. "These are very interesting times."

A Netflix debut

And she should know. Next month, Netflix releases a six-part Indian thriller called "Leila", in which Qureshi plays a mother desperately searching for her daughter in a dystopian future world obsessed with purity, where people are segregated according to caste, class and religion. "I'm somebody who tries to pick interesting characters and I like to sink my teeth into these intense roles," she grins. "It's such a specific India story, which is, of course, fictional, but I feel it will find an audience and resonance the world over."

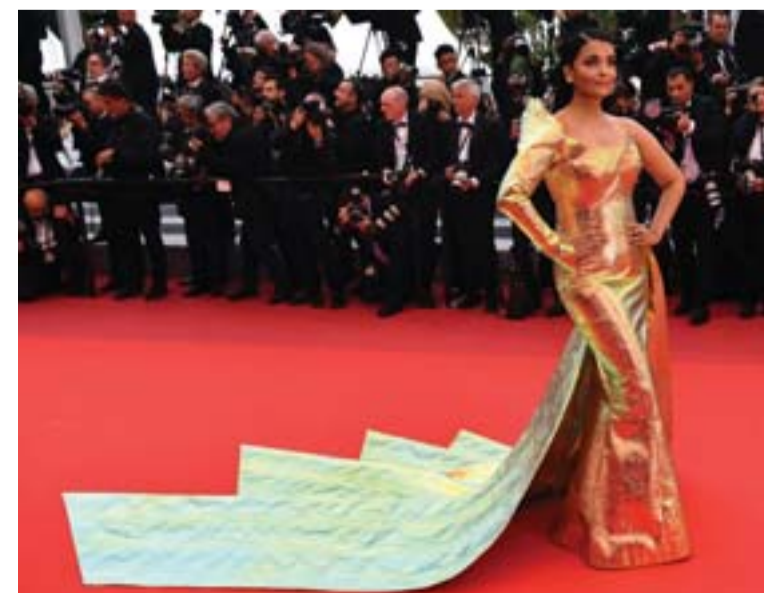
For now, though, the small screen can wait. "The first time I saw myself on the big screen was in a theatre over here which is why I love Cannes," she says, recalling her first visit nine years ago. "First films are special and your first film to come to Cannes is even more special." — AFP



Indian TV actress Hina Khan arrives for the screening of the film "Bacurau" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.



Indian actress and model Priyanka Chopra arrives for the screening of the film "Rocketman".



Indian actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan poses as she arrives for the screening of the film "A Hidden Life" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.



Abu Hayder, an Iraqi ecotourism guide, navigates a canoe in the marshes of the southern district of Chibayish in Dhi Qar province, about 120 kilometers northwest of the southern city of Basra. — AFP photos



Tourists sitting inside a floating palm reed-woven house.



A tourist sketches a drawing of a palm reed-woven house.

Iraqis turn to budding ecotourism to save marshes

Thirty years after Saddam Hussein starved them of water, Iraq's southern marshes are blossoming once more thanks to a wave of ecotourists picnicking and paddling down their replenished river bends. A one-room homemade of elaborately woven palm reeds floats on the river surface. Near it, a soft plume of smoke curls up from a firepit where carp is being grilled, Iraqi-style. A few canoes drift by, carrying couples and groups of friends singing to the beat of drums. "I didn't think I would find somewhere so beautiful, and such a body of water in Iraq," said Habib Al-Jurani.



A floating palm reed-woven house for tourists.

He left Iraq in 1990 for the United States, and was back in his ancestral homeland for a family visit. "Most people don't know what Iraq is really like—they think it's the world's most dangerous place, with nothing but killings and terrorism," he said. Looking around the lush marshes, declared in 2016 to be Iraq's fifth UNESCO World Heritage site, Jurani added: "There are some mesmerizing places." Straddling Iraq's famous Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the Mesopotamian marshes are a rare aquatic ecosystem in a country nearly half of which is covered in cracked desert. Legend has it, they were home to the biblical Garden of Eden.

But they were also a haven for political opposition to dictator Saddam Hussein, who cut off water to the site in retaliation for the south's uprising against him in 1991. Around 90 percent of the once-expansive marshes were drained, and the area's 250,000 residents dwindled down to just 30,000. In the ensuing years, severe droughts and decreased water flows from the twin rivers' source countries—Turkey and Iran—shrank the marshes' surface from some 15,000 square kilometers (5,792 square miles) to less than half that.

Turtles and tourists

It all culminated with a particularly dry winter last year that left the "ahwar", as they are known in Arabic, painfully parched. But heavier rains this year have filled more than 80 percent of the marshes' surface area, according to the United Nations, compared to just 27 percent last year. That has resurrected the ancient lifestyle that dominated this area for more than 5,000 years. "The water returned, and with it normal life," said 35-year-old Mehdi Al-Mayali, who raises water buffalo and sells their milk, used to make rich cream served at Iraqi breakfasts. Wildlife including the vulnerable smooth-coated otter, Euphrates softshell turtles, and Basra reed warbler have returned to the marshlands—along with the pickiest of all species: tourists.

"Ecotourism has revived the 'ahwar'. There are Iraqis from different provinces and some foreigners," Mayali said. A day in the marshes typically involves hiring a resident to paddle a large reed raft down the river for around \$25 — not a cheap fare for Iraq. Then, lunch in a "mud-hif" or guesthouse, also run by locals. "Ecotourism is an important source of revenue for those native to the marshes," said Jassim Al-Assadi, who heads Nature Iraq.

The environmental activist group has long advocated for the marshes to be better protected and for authorities to develop a long-term ecotourism plan for the area. "It's a much more sustainable activity than the hydrocarbon and petroleum industry," said Assadi, referring to the dominant industry that provides Iraq with about 90 percent of state revenues.



Tourists sit in a canoe as they are shown around the marshes of the southern Iraqi district of Chibayish.

Long way to row

The numbers have steadily gone up in recent years, according to Assaad Al-Qarghoul, tourism chief in Iraq's southern province of Dhi Qar. "We had 10,000 tourists in 2016, then 12,000 in 2017 and 18,000 in 2018," he told AFP. But there is virtually no infrastructure to accommodate them. "There are no tourist centers or hotels, because the state budget was sucked up by war the last few years," Qarghoul told AFP. Indeed, the Islamic State group overran swathes of Iraq in 2014, prompting the government to direct its full attention—and the bulk of its resources—to fighting it back. Iraq's government declared victory in late 2017 and has slowly begun reallocating resources to infrastructure projects.

Qarghoul said the marshes should be a priority, and called on the government to build "a hotel complex and touristic eco-village inside the marshes." Peak season for tourists is between September and April, avoiding the summer months of Iraq when temperatures can reach a stifling 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit). But without a long-term government plan, residents worry that water levels will be hostage to fluctuating yearly rainfalls and shortages caused by Iranian and Turkish dams. These dynamics have already damaged the marshes' fragile ecosystem, with high levels of salination last year killing fish and forcing other wildlife to migrate. Jurani, the returning expatriate, has an idea of the solution. "Adventurers and nature-lovers," he said, hopefully. — AFP



Jassim Al-Assadi, director of Nature Iraq, an environmental activist group advocating for long-term ecotourism planning better protection for the Iraqi marshes, sits at his office.



An Iraqi boy pets cattle by the marshes of the southern district of Chibayish in Dhi Qar province.



Abu Hayder, an Iraqi ecotourism guide, poses for a picture with his wife in the southern district of Chibayish in Dhi Qar province.



An Iraqi tourist grills fish.



Members of the Iraqi security forces ride in and navigate a motorboat in the marshes of the southern district of Chibayish in Dhi Qar province.



Iraqi tourists prepare to grill fish by the marshes of the southern district of Chibayish in Dhi Qar province.

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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 12 - 45 km/h with a chance for rising dust.

BY NIGHT: Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 22/05/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	38 °C	30 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	41 °C	25 °C			
ABDALY	41 °C	26 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	41 °C	27 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	37 °C	27 °C			
SALMIYAH	32 °C	29 °C			
AHMADI	32 °C	29 °C			
NUWAISIB	38 °C	27 °C			
WAFRA	39 °C	24 °C			
SALMY	39 °C	23 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	05/23	Hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	42 °C	27 °C	NW	12 - 42 km/h
Friday	05/24	Hot + rising dust	42 °C	27 °C	NW	20 - 50 km/h
Saturday	05/25	Hot	43 °C	28 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 35 km/h
Sunday	05/26	Hot	44 °C	29 °C	VRB-SE	12 - 38 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:21
Sunrise	04:52
Zuhr	11:45
Asr	15:20
Sunset	18:37
Isha	20:06

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	40 °C
MIN. Temp.	25 °C
MAX. RH	56 %
MIN. RH	17 %
MAX. Wind	NE 68 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	42 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

LOST

It is notified for the information that my original (qualifying certificate/mark statement and migration certificate) senior secondary examination of year 2015 and Rollno. 9103562 issued by CBSE had been actually lost. Name of the candidate - Jawaheer Junaid, Tel: 67799330. (C 5535) 23-5-2019

dent near chuna bhatti, rajtal-ab, banswara (Raj.) solemnly declare. (C 5534)

I, Razak Bawa Petkar Ashfaq Abdul, holder of Indian Passport No. R2311158, hereby wish to correct my name from Razak Bawa Petkar Ashfaq Abdul to Given Name: Ashfaq Abdul Razak and Surname: Petkar. Hereafter in all my documents my name will appear as Ashfaq Abdul Razak Petkar. (C 5533) 21-5-2019

CHANGE OF NAME

MOHAMMED ANAS KAYUM AHMED (new name) S/o KAYUM AHMED previously called MOHAMMED ANAS (old name) S/o KAYUM AHMED resi-

I, DIANA VALERIAN FERNANDES would like to change my father's name Cosmos Xavier Fernandes to Cosme Xavier Cornelo Cipriano Fernandes as per his birth certificate. (C 5532) 17-5-2019

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Indian Airlines	22456700



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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 23/5/2019				Departure Flights on Thursday 23/5/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	MSR	611	Cairo	13:45
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	THY	767	Istanbul	14:00
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	IRA	600	Tehran	14:00
KAC	102	London	00:50	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:10
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
RJA	642	Amman	01:20	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:00
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	FDB	5060	Dubai	15:05
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	JZR	103	Bahrain	15:15
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:50	QTR	1079	Doha	15:15
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
PGT	828	Istanbul	02:00	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	563	Amman	16:00
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	KAC	775	Riyadh	16:05
KAC	156	Istanbul	02:35	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:10
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:15
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	PGT	829	Jeddah	16:20
JZR	406	Kochi	03:05	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	16:20
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KLM	446	Amsterdam	16:20
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	UAE	854	Dubai	16:25
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	16:25
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	OMA	644	Muscat	16:25
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	QTR	1087	Doha	16:55
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	MSR	613	Cairo	17:10
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	LMU	511	Cairo	17:35
MSR	0516	Cairo	04:25	IGO	1752	Chennai	17:40
DHX	170	Bahrain	04:30	KAC	303	Mumbai	17:40
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:30	QTR	1077	Doha	17:40
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	JZR	1219	Jeddah	17:45
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	MSR	0517	Mumbai	17:50
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	THY	771	Istanbul	17:50
KAC	552	Cairo	05:50	GFA	212	Bahrain	18:00
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	RJA	643	Amman	18:00
KAC	362	Colombo	06:05	KAC	167	Paris	18:00
BAW	157	London	06:10	BAW	156	London	18:15
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	KAC	173	Munich	18:20
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	KAC	413	Bangkok	18:25
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	JZR	211	Jeddah	18:30
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	IGO	1756	CNN	18:40
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	KAC	163	MXP	18:40
QTR	8511	Doha	07:05	KAC	501	Beirut	18:40
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	07:05	KAC	545	Cairo	18:40
IGO	1755	CNN	07:10	KAC	561	Amman	18:40
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:00	KAC	613	Bahrain	18:40
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	KAC	117	New York	18:40
KAC	352	Kochi	08:05	QTR	8512	Doha	18:40
IRA	601	Tehran	08:10	KAC	791	Madinah	18:40
JZR	702	Asyut	08:25	IRA	666	Esfahan	18:40
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	KAC	671	Dubai	18:40
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC	787	Jeddah	18:40
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	KAC	773	Riyadh	18:40
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	ABY	126	Sharjah	18:40
KAC	384	Delhi	09:45	JZR	731	Cairo	18:40
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	18:40
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	10:00	KAC	101	London	18:40
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	JZR	301	Istanbul	18:40
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	KAC	617	Doha	18:40
JZR	1220	Jeddah	10:55	QTR	1071	Doha	18:40
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	18:40
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	SVA	513	Riyadh	18:40
JZR	410	Delhi	11:50	IAW	158A	Al Najaf	18:40
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	GFA	214	Bahrain	18:40
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	MEA	405	Beirut	18:40
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	SYR	342	Damascus	18:40
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:30	JZR	213	Jeddah	18:40
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	QTR	1075	Doha	18:40
MSR	610	Cairo	12:45	JZR	221	Riyadh	18:40
IRA	667	Esfahan	13:00	JZR	123	Dubai	18:40
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:10	IAW	158	Al Najaf	18:40
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:35	JZR	115	Doha	18:40
				SAW	702	Damascus	18:40



NARATHIWAT: Muslim devotees offer special Taraweeh prayer in a mosque during the holy month of Ramadan in Narathiwat. — AFP

Pope denounces 'hardships and trials' facing Catholics in China

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis paid tribute yesterday to Chinese Catholics for holding on to their faith despite "hardships and trials", an apparent reference to Beijing's restrictions on religion. His comments to tens of thousands of people gathered in St Peter's Square for his weekly general audience came as the Vatican and China are still in the implementation phase of a landmark deal, signed last September, on the appointment of bishops.

The deal has split Catholics in China and around the world, with some critics of the pope saying he has caved in to the Communist government. The deal's most outspoken critic has been Cardinal Joseph Zen, the former archbishop of Hong Kong. Francis noted that this Friday would mark a feast day particularly celebrated by Catholics at the shrine of Our Lady of Sheshan, near Shanghai.

"This happy occasion allows me to express

special closeness and affection to all the Catholics in China, who, among daily hardships and trials, continue to believe, to hope and to love," he said. Francis also urged Catholics in China to "always remain united in communion with the universal Church".

China's constitution guarantees religious freedom, but since President Xi Jinping took office six years ago, the government has tightened restrictions on religions seen as a challenge to the authority of the ruling Communist Party. The government has cracked down on underground churches, both Protestant and Catholic, even as it seeks to improve relations with the Vatican. China has been following a policy it calls the "Sinicisation" of religion, trying to root out foreign influences and enforce obedience to the Communist Party.

Restrictions on religion in China have attracted particular concern in the United

States. In March, during a visit to Hong Kong, the US ambassador for religious freedom called on Beijing to end religious persecution. Also in March, a senior Chinese official accused Western forces of trying to use Christianity to influence China's society and even "subvert" the government, warning that Chinese Christians need to follow a Chinese model of the religion.

The pope has defended the Vatican deal with China on the appointment of bishops, saying he, and not the Beijing government, will have the final say on who is named. China's approximately 12 million Catholics have been split between an underground church swearing loyalty to the Vatican and the state-supervised Catholic Patriotic Association. The Vatican has said the absence of a deal could have led to a schism between Chinese Catholics that would have been difficult to heal. — Reuters



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis delivers his message to pilgrims gathered in St Peter's square during his weekly general audience at the Vatican yesterday. — AFP

Maid's body flown to the Philippines...

Continued from Page 1

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is in charge, so once the report by forensic experts (comprising of MoI and MoH experts) is issued, it will be channeled to MFA, and MFA will hand it over to the embassy. As we speak, we haven't got the complete report yet," he explained.

Dayag's next of kin want her remains to be sent back to Manila so they can file for a second autopsy in Philippines. "What I heard is that the next of kin want a second autopsy to be conducted by our National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) in Manila. There is nothing wrong with that. Probably the family of Dayag wants to make sure there is no foul play in the death of their loved one. So that is the right thing to do, which the embassy also supports," he added.

India launches world's fastest...

Continued from Page 1

BrahMos could start being introduced to the air force from 2020. BrahMos is a joint venture between India

and Russia and officials from the enterprise have said at recent international air shows that discussions on sales are being held with a number of countries. Media reports have said Southeast Asian countries have expressed particular interest, which could worry China. India and Russia are reported to be preparing plans for a longer range version of the missile which could fly at up to Mach 5, or 6,125 kilometers (3,800 miles) per hour. BrahMos is named for the Brahmaputra and Moskva rivers of India and Russia respectively. — AFP

Lomondot said they were informed by authorities in Kuwait that they invited and questioned the employer of Dayag, and the employer informed them that he was surprised by the death of his domestic helper inside her room. "The male employer was summoned and questioned about the death of her housemaid. He is an elderly and sickly man in a wheelchair, so how could a sexual assault be present in this case - we don't know.

The authorities have not slapped any charges against the employer. What is clear is that Dayag was found dead inside her room with blood oozing from her nose," he said. Sources said investigations by detectives showed the relationship between the maid and her sponsor and his sons was good and there were no problems between them.

Last year, Kuwait and the Philippines signed a memorandum of agreement to provide greater protection for Filipino domestic workers in Kuwait. Manila set the agreement with Kuwait as a condition to end its deployment ban, a move triggered by a string of deaths of Philippine migrant workers in the state, including Joanna Demafelis, whose body was found in a freezer.

and Russia and officials from the enterprise have said at recent international air shows that discussions on sales are being held with a number of countries. Media reports have said Southeast Asian countries have expressed particular interest, which could worry China. India and Russia are reported to be preparing plans for a longer range version of the missile which could fly at up to Mach 5, or 6,125 kilometers (3,800 miles) per hour. BrahMos is named for the Brahmaputra and Moskva rivers of India and Russia respectively. — AFP

something sinful or to sever ties of kinship, God grants it to him in one of three ways: either He will hasten to answer his supplication, or He will grant him the like of it of good, or He will turn away from him the like of it of evil." Someone said, "O Messenger of Allah, and if we increase (our supplication)?" He replied, "(With) Allah is more." (Al-Abani rated it as Saheeh in Sharh At-Tahawiya # 462)

(C) Overindulgence: We are also encouraged to maintain and develop a devout frame of mind in that we don't over-indulge in something that is permissible to the extent that we ignore acts of worship. Umar bin Al-Khattab (RA) said, "With devotion that prevents one from what Allah prohibited, Allah (SWT) will accept one's supplication and glorification." (See Ja'miul-UloomWal-Hikam 1/258)

(D) Supplicating to Allah (SWT) only when in adversity: An Arab poet said: "We invoke our Lord whenever suffering from calamities, but forget Him when relieved." Allah (SWT) tells us what can be translated as: "And hasten to 'attain' forgiveness from your Lord - and a Garden 'in Paradise,' whose breadth is 'as' the heavens and the earth, prepared 'only' for the God-fearing. The ones who spend 'in charity', in 'times' of prosperity and adversity 'alike.'" (Al-Imraan 3: 133 - 134)

US says robust military action...

Continued from Page 1

United Arab Emirates as well as drone strikes on a crude pipeline in Saudi Arabia, although he stopped short of giving a definitive conclusion. Yemen's Houthis rebels, who are allied with Iran and are being hit hard by US-backed Saudi air strikes, claimed responsibility last week for a drone strike on a major east-west pipeline in the kingdom, which was forced to shut down temporarily.

Representative Michael McCaul, the top Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said the administration made a convincing case that Iran and its proxies were behind numerous attacks - including a rocket that landed Sunday near the US embassy in Baghdad, which has been evacuated. But McCaul also cast the US response as deterrence, telling reporters: "It was made very clear... there is no intention to go to war."

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif warned that the United States was "playing a very, very dangerous game" with military deployments, saying that some actors were "interested in accidents" - a likely allusion to its regional rivals such as Saudi Arabia. "There will be painful consequences for everybody (if) there is an escalation against Iran, that's for sure," he said, Zarif told CNN.

Trump last year pulled out of a multinational agreement negotiated under his predecessor Barack Obama under which Tehran drastically scaled back its nuclear work in return for promises of sanctions relief. The administration, which is closely allied with Riyadh, instead vowed "maximum pressure" to weaken Iran's regional influence, including by trying to stop all oil sales by Tehran.

Democrats, while criticizing Iran, said its actions were

Advisor defends expats against...

Continued from Page 1

"Expatriates are human beings who came to Kuwait to work for salaries after obtaining official work permits" Saleh said.

A number of MPs, led by MP Hashem, writers and social media activists have recently increased their criticism of expatriates, using racist remarks in some cases, and blaming them for almost all the problems in the country. Some MPs have demanded a gradual deportation of expatriates, who number some 3.3 million, to bring their numbers down to be equal with Kuwaitis who make just 1.4 million.

Meanwhile, a number of lawmakers have submitted a

predicted responses to Trump's actions and vowed to hold the White House to account after the debacle over the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Senator Bernie Sanders, an independent leftist who is seeking the Democratic presidential nomination, said that both the Iraq and Vietnam wars were based on lies. "I worry very much that, intentionally or unintentionally, we can create a situation in which a war will take place," Sanders told reporters.

"I believe that a war with Iran would be an absolute disaster, far worse than the war with Iraq," Sanders said. Representative Adam Smith, a Democrat who leads the House Armed Services Committee, said that Pompeo in the briefing gave "a very lengthy political argument" explaining "all the terrible things Iran has done" until the Democratic lawmaker said he cut him off and asked to hear about US policy. "I think there's a risk of miscalculation on both sides. And that remains my biggest concern," Smith said.

Numerous Republicans have been clamoring for a tough stance on Iran that includes military options. Senator Lindsey Graham, a longtime hawk who is close to Trump, called the classified briefing a "game-changer." "The appeasement strategy against Iran is over," he declared after the briefing. But Trump has sent mixed signals, on Sunday warning by tweet that the United States could obliterate Iran while also calling for talks. He similarly threatened North Korea before his historic meetings with its leader Kim Jong Un, although few expect Iran's leadership - for whom anti-Americanism is a cardinal tenet of the 1979 Islamic revolution - to meet Trump.

But Zarif has proposed a swap of prisoners, a step some observers say could offer a path to resume at least low-level dialogue to ease tensions. Pompeo, in a radio interview with conservative host Hugh Hewitt, said without further explanation that there had been "just a hint" that Iran was moving to release imprisoned US citizens. "Even a small confidence-building measure is a good thing, so it's absolutely the case that were they to release these Americans who are wrongfully held, it would be a good thing," Pompeo said. — AFP

motion calling to allocate two hours in the next session to study the government's security and defense preparations in the wake of rising tensions in the region. MP Safa Al-Hashem said through the two-hour debate, MPs want to assess the readiness of the government agencies, especially the security agencies, in case of any escalation in the region in light of the US-Iran tension.

She said that lawmakers want to know specifically the readiness of the police force, the army and the national guard in securing the country and vital installations in case a regional war breaks out. The National Assembly held a special debate last Thursday during which MPs heard presentations by senior government ministers on the regional developments.

After the session, Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said that based on the briefings by the ministers, the chances of a regional war breaking out were very high. MP Mohammad Al-Dallal said that during that session, MPs were not briefed on the readiness of the security and defense agencies.

Sports

Kohli's India boast firepower to make World Cup charge

Wrist spinners to add variety to India's attack

NEW DELHI: India boast the game's undoubted superstar batsman in Virat Kohli but their bowling attack could hold the key to their hopes of World Cup glory. Despite their status as the game's global powerhouse, India have only won the showpiece tournament twice, in 1983 and 2011. But Kohli's men, second behind England in the one-day international rankings, will start the tournament in England and Wales among the favourites alongside the host nation and defending champions Australia.

For all the focus on captain Kohli, the number one batsman in the world in the 50-over format and Test cricket, the ability of India's seamers to exploit the conditions could be the most important factor. Jasprit Bumrah, the top-ranked ODI bowler in the world, leads the pace battery alongside Mohammed Shami, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Hardik Pandya.

Wrist spinners Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal add variety to India's attack. Former India skipper Rahul Dravid believes the tournament could be a high-scoring affair. "I believe, having experienced some of the conditions in England last year with the A-team tour, it would be a high-scoring World Cup," he told Star Sports.

"And in a high-scoring World Cup, having bowlers who can take wickets in the middle will be very important. I think India is lucky in that regard. People like (Jasprit) Bumrah, Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal... (India have) got bowlers who can take wickets."

The 25-year-old Bumrah, with his ability to bowl yorkers at the death, has picked up 85 wickets in 49 ODI matches since making his international debut in January 2016. Yadav and Chahal did not have a great

Indian Premier League season but have played an important role in India's recent successes.

And former India batsman Sanjay Manjrekar told AFP that the spin twins could have a crucial role to play for India, who kick off their World Cup campaign against South Africa in Southampton on June 5.

"In T20 cricket if you don't have anything in the pitch for these spinners then the batsmen, by slogging them, have a tendency to get the better of these guys," he said. "In the 50-over World Cup, in the middle stages, that kind of pressure won't be there on these two guys."

KOHLI FACTOR

Kohli, 30, has scored more than 19,000 runs across all formats of the international game and shone during India's tour of England last year, despite defeats in the Test and ODI series for the visitors.

But the rest of the batting line-up appears far from settled, with Lokesh Rahul and all-rounder Vijay Shankar vying for the number four spot after Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan and Kohli in the top three positions.

Kedar Jadhav and M.S. Dhoni are expected to form the core of the middle order. "I don't think the Indian batting looks settled. Virat Kohli is the only guy that gets me very excited," said Manjrekar, who admitted Dhoni's IPL form had been good.

All-rounders Pandya and Shankar will also be crucial to India's chances of making the final four in the round-robin event. An attacking middle-order batsman, a medium-fast bowler and quick in the field, Pandya has the ability to turn games single-handedly.

The 25-year-old Pandya, who earlier this year was



HYDERABAD: In this file photo taken on March 01, 2019 Indian cricket team captain Virat Kohli (C) talks to his team members during a practice session ahead of the first one day international (ODI) cricket match between India and Australia at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Hyderabad. —AFP

suspended over sexist remarks on a TV chat show, is fresh from winning the IPL title with Mumbai Indians and keen to focus his energies on his first 50-over World

Cup. "There is no one even close to Hardik Pandya's talent with both bat and ball," former India opener Virender Sehwag told cricketnext website. — AFP

Olympic swim champion retires at 22 after missing doping tests

VILNIUS: Lithuanian swimmer Ruta Meilutyte announced her retirement yesterday at the age of 22 after missing three doping tests, ending a career in which she became Olympic and world champion.

Lithuania's swimming federation said earlier this month that Meilutyte faced a suspension of up to two years for missing three drug tests, meaning she would be ruled out of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

"The swimmer took full responsibility for missing all tests," the federation said, adding that Meilutyte had failed to properly inform international anti-doping authorities about her whereabouts.

Lithuania's anti-doping chief Kristina Jagminiene described it as an "unfortunate mistake". Meilutyte, who has never failed a doping test, was a star of the 2012 London Games, where as a 15-year-old she won the 100 metres breaststroke event.

She also won the gold at the world championships in Barcelona a year later. "I am ready to start a new chapter of my life. Thank you all who supported me on this road", she said in a statement. Meilutyte said she wanted to return to her studies and "experience simple things, to grow, to better understand myself and the world". Last year, Meilutyte admitted she was suffering from depression. During her swimming career, she won 20 gold medals in top international competitions, according to Lithuania's



Ruta Meilutyte

swimming federation.

Her last event was the World Championships in China last December where she failed to qualify for the finals. — AFP

Indian runner Gomathi failed dope test after winning Asian title

NEW DELHI: Indian runner Gomathi Marimuthu failed a dope test immediately after winning the Asian 800 metres title last month and has been suspended, the national governing body said yesterday. The 30-year-old tested positive for anabolic steroids after her win at the Asian championships in Doha last month, a spokesman for the Athletics Federation of India told AFP.

"She has been provisionally suspended until her 'B' sample is tested after which she faces a maximum ban of four years," the official added. "India will lose the gold if the second sample also returns positive."

The International Association of Athletics Federations' athletics integrity unit reported failed tests by Gomathi and Bahrain's long distance runner Eunice Jepkiriui Kirwa on social media late Tuesday.

The statement on Twitter said Gomathi had tested positive for norandrosterone, a type of anabolic steroid. Gomathi, who hails from the southern state of Tamil Nadu, surprised observers with her winning time of 2min 27secs at the Asian championships where India won three gold, seven silver and seven bronze medals.

Gomathi told Indian media she was "shocked" by the failed test and would seek analysis of the B sample. Media reports said however that Gomathi may

have failed a test at a domestic meeting in March but the national doping watchdog did not immediately report the result to the Indian federation.

Meanwhile, Bahrain's Olympic women's marathon silver medallist Eunice Kirwa has been provisionally suspended after failing a doping test, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) said in a statement. Kenyan-born Kirwa, who switched allegiance to Bahrain in 2013 and finished second at the Rio Olympics in 2016, tested positive for erythropoietin (EPO), a banned blood-boosting hormone that improves endurance.

"The AIU confirms (a) provisional suspension against... Bahraini long-distance runner Eunice Jepkiriui Kirwa... for a violation of the IAAF's (International Association of Athletics Federations') Anti-Doping Rules," AIU said in a statement.

Kirwa becomes the second women's marathon podium finisher at Rio to test positive for the same substance after Kenyan gold medallist Jemima Sumgong, who was suspended for four years by her country's anti-doping agency (ADAK) in 2017. Sumgong's ban was doubled to eight years by the AIU after the IAAF found her guilty of providing false information while defending herself against the initial sanction but was allowed to keep her gold medal as she tested positive in April 2017. — Agencies



Gomathi Marimuthu

S Africa confront World Cup demons

JOHANNESBURG: For South Africans, there is no escape from the reality of the country's bitter history of painful failure in World Cup knockout games. "People will highlight the baggage-it's like a big mirror that is always in front of you," said South African captain Faf du Plessis before departing for England.

England was the scene of South Africa's most spectacular implosion, 20 years ago, when the World Cup was last played there. With the scores tied in a semi-final against Australia at Edgbaston, Lance Klusener and last man Allan Donald were involved in a near-farcical run-out that enabled Australia to go through to the final.

South Africa have reached the semi-finals in four of their seven World Cup campaigns but have yet to reach a final. They have won only one of seven knockout matches, against Sri Lanka in the quarter-finals in 2015.

That rare victory was followed by a dramatic semi-final against New Zealand in Auckland, which ended with South African-born New Zealander Grant Elliott hitting Dale Steyn for a winning six off the penultimate ball.

Despite the frustrating history, Du Plessis believes the past has no relevance, other than providing a lesson that his team should trust their ability and play without a fear of failure if they reach the semi-finals this time.

"In previous World Cups, we wanted to do 'Superman' things. We thought we had to be more special, we had to do something more than we usually do, and we did not do what was good enough before," Du Plessis said.

South Africa will go into this World Cup without the burden of

being among the favourites, despite having won all five of the one-day international series they have played in the past year.

DESTRUCTIVE POWER

In a tournament expected to be dominated by batsmen, it is South Africa's bowlers who will carry the country's hopes-provided they are fully fit. Kagiso Rabada, Steyn and Lungi Ngidi are a potentially potent pace trio who will be backed by the leg-spin of Imran Tahir, the leading wicket-taker in this year's Indian Premier League.

Du Plessis said this quartet were a crucial part of his team's 'Plan A', even though it means South Africa could have a long tail as none of the specialist bowlers is a reliable batsman. It will put a big responsibility on the top six in the batting order, although there will be a batting all-rounder, either Andile Phehlukwayo or Dwaine Pretorius, at number seven.

South Africa will also be without their former star batsman and talisman AB de Villiers, who retired from international cricket last year after a stunning career. The team's approach might have to change, however, if one or more of the bowlers is injured, with all three fast bowlers having recent injury concerns.

Ngidi missed the IPL because of a side strain, while both Rabada and Steyn returned early from India because of back and shoulder injuries. Steyn had yet to bowl at full pace when the team left home and is a doubt for the tournament's first match against England at The Oval on May 30.

Opening batsman Quinton de Kock will be a key player with his ability to score quickly from the start of an innings, while fellow left-handers David Miller and JP Duminy can unleash destructive power if they have been provided with a solid foundation.

Du Plessis and two of Hashim Amla, Aiden Markram and Rassie van der Dussen will be expected to provide stability. "It's a long, long tournament," said Du Plessis. "It's not about how you get to the semi-finals, you just have to get there and then any team can win." — AFP

Bangladesh aim to break new ground at W Cup

DHAKA: Bangladesh have set their sights on capping a remarkable rise by reaching the World Cup semi-finals for the first time. Mashrafe Mortaza's arrival in England confident of making the last four on the back of impressive form that marks them as a serious threat to the established order.

Bangladesh showed they can compete with cricket's elite nations when they advanced to the Champions Trophy semi-finals two years ago from a strong group featuring England, Australia and New Zealand.

Significantly for their hopes in this edition of the World Cup, that memorable campaign came in England. It was also further proof of their emergence following a maiden World Cup quarter-final berth in 2015.

Bangladesh's group stage win against England four years ago proved to be a catalyst for the side, boosting their belief and triggering a sustained spell of success. Between April 2015 and October 2016, Bangladesh won five one-day international series in a row against Pakistan, India, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Afghanistan.

All of those series were played at home but it was still a huge sign of progress for a Bangladesh team considered as international whipping boys not so long ago. The series wins helped Bangladesh climb the rankings, earning them automatic qualification for the Champions Trophy and the World Cup.

They maintained that consistency with 13 wins from their 20 one-day internationals in 2018 and are currently ranked seventh. Bangladesh will carry plenty of experience into the tournament in the form of captain Mashrafe, vice-captain Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim.

'NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE'

The solid performances in recent years, combined with the presence of the veterans, has created expectations of success for Bangladesh that were unheard of in the team's five previous World Cups dating back to 1999.

Mashrafe says a semi-final place is their goal, but he admits it will be tough to get that far given the round-robin nature of the first stage of the 10-team tournament. "At the moment I think going to the semi-finals will be big challenge, but nothing is impossible," Mashrafe said before leaving Dhaka for England.

"Of course it is possible, difficult though. In the past a win over one big team in the group stage might have been enough, it would have made a comeback difficult for them. But here we have nine games.

"Those who are expecting to play in the semi-finals they will have plenty of opportunities to come back. We have to be careful about it." While Bangladesh's biggest strength is their team unity, they have weaknesses that might hurt them on the big occasion. In an era when sides often chase down targets well in excess of 300 runs with ease, Bangladesh may lack enough big hitters to do that. So far, Bangladesh have successfully chased a 300-plus target only twice, against low-ranked Zimbabwe and Scotland, a record Mashrafe concedes they must improve on in this World Cup. — AFP

Sports

Verlander strikes out 12 as Astros defeat White Sox 5-1

Twins overcome slow start to roll past Angels

HOUSTON: Justin Verlander carried a no-hitter into the seventh inning, and Michael Brantley keyed a four-run uprising in the fifth with an opposite-field double to left as the Houston Astros claimed a 5-1 victory over the visiting Chicago White Sox on Tuesday. Verlander (8-1) flirted with his third career no-hitter, dominating the White Sox with a season-high 12 strikeouts while allowing just one baserunner entering the top of the seventh. After Verlander recorded his 11th strikeout to open that frame, he lost his no-hitter and shutout when Jose Abreu drilled a first-pitch fastball for a homer to straightaway center field. Verlander gave up one run, one hit and one walk in eight innings. Houston's Yuli Gurriel hit a solo homer, and Michael Brantley had a two-run double.

CUBS 3, PHILLIES 2

Javier Baez ripped a pinch-hit, walk-off single in the bottom of the ninth inning to lift Chicago to a win over visiting Philadelphia. Before the game, Cubs manager Joe Maddon said Baez would be held out for the second consecutive day due to an injured heel and would undergo an MRI exam. However, after more than 3 1/2 hours on the bench, Baez delivered in the game's most critical moment. Albert Almora Jr. also had an RBI during a two-run ninth for Chicago. The Cubs bounced back after Andrew McCutchen ripped a two-out, two-run single in the seventh inning to put the Phillies ahead 2-1. Philadelphia's four-game winning streak ended.

YANKEES 11, ORIOLES 4

Clint Frazier homered twice and drove in five runs, and Gary Sanchez hit a three-run homer for the second straight night as New York prevailed at Baltimore. Frazier hit a two-run homer and a three-run shot. Sanchez belted his three-run homer in the first-after hitting a tiebreaking three-run homer in the ninth inning that gave New York a 10-7 victory on Monday night. The Yankees posted their 12th victory in 15 games. The Orioles have now allowed 100 home runs in just 48 games to set a dubious record. The 2000 Kansas City Royals (57 games) were the previous fastest team to serve up 100.

GIANTS 4, BRAVES 3

Joe Panik capped a three-run ninth inning with a two-out, two-strike, two-RBI single, rallying San Francisco to a win over visiting Atlanta. After Julio Teheran had made his fourth straight solid start, the Braves took a 3-1 lead into the last of the ninth. Atlanta got within one out of a win before Kevin Pillar stroked a

single to score Brandon Crawford, getting the Giants within one. After Pillar stole second and took third on Pablo Sandoval's pinch-hit, infield single, Mac Williamson pinch-ran for Sandoval and also stole second, putting the potential tying and winning runs in scoring position. That's when Panik, with a full count, poked a pitch from Luke Jackson (2-1) into right field, easily scoring the two baserunners for the walk-off win.

AS 5, INDIANS 3

Mark Canha belted a two-run homer among his two hits in place of injured slugger Khris Davis, lifting visiting Oakland past Cleveland. Jurickson Profar hit his second homer in as many games, and Matt Chapman ripped an RBI double for the Athletics, who have won a season-high five in a row. Francisco Lindor launched his 14th career leadoff homer, and Carlos Santana went deep for the third time in four contests for the Indians, who have lost four of five versus Oakland this season. Davis' return to the Athletics' lineup didn't last long as he was lifted in the third inning, with pinch hitter Canha going deep. Davis is dealing with the lingering effects of the left hip contusion he sustained after running into a wall at PNC Park in Pittsburgh on May 5, and he is headed to the injured list.

TWINS 8, ANGELS 3

Minnesota started slowly but put together big innings late in the game to rally past Los Angeles in Anaheim, Calif. Angels starting pitcher Trevor Cahill held the Twins hitless until the fifth inning before the Minnesota offense got rolling with three runs in the sixth and four more in the seventh, primarily against the Los Angeles bullpen. Minnesota got a big boost from the top of the lineup, as the first four hitters—Max Kepler, Jorge Polanco, Marwin Gonzalez and Eddie Rosario—combined for eight hits, six runs and seven RBIs to lead the Twins to their seventh victory in their past eight games.

PADRES 3, DIAMONDBACKS 2

Eric Hosmer capped a three-run sixth inning with a two-run, two-out opposite-field homer off Zack Greinke to give San Diego a victory over visiting Arizona. Arizona built a 2-0 lead against Padres starter Matt Strahm on solo homers by Eduardo Escobar (fourth inning) and John Ryan Murphy (fifth inning). Ian Kinsler started San Diego's sixth-inning rally with a one-out single to left, and he moved to second when Reyes grounded out to Greinke up the first base line. Manny



HOUSTON: Eloy Jimenez #74 of the Chicago White Sox makes a sliding catch on a line drive off the bat of Alex Bregman of the Houston Astros in the third inning at Minute Maid Park in Houston, Texas. —AFP

Machado drove in Kinsler with a single to center. Hosmer then drove Greinke's next pitch high to left, the drive just clearing the leap of Blake Swihart at the wall.

ROCKIES 5, PIRATES 0

German Marquez gave up three hits over eight shutout innings and added an RBI single as Colorado ended a four-game losing streak by winning at Pittsburgh. Marquez (5-2) walked one and struck out seven. Carlos Estevez stranded two runners in the ninth to complete the shutout. Charlie Blackmon (3-for-5 with a two-run triple) and Trevor Story (solo home run) led the Colorado offense. Pirates starter Chris Archer (1-4) went five innings, giving up four runs (three earned) on six hits with two walks and three strikeouts.

RANGERS 5, MARINERS 3

Lance Lynn struck out a season-high 11 in seven strong innings as Texas defeated Seattle in Arlington, Texas. Joey Gallo hit a two-run homer, and Nomar

Mazara went 3-for-4 with two doubles for the Rangers, who won their second straight game in the series and third in a row overall. Lynn (6-3) allowed two runs on five hits and a walk to defeat Seattle for the second time this season. Shawn Kelley earned his third save of the season despite giving up a solo home run to Omar Narvaez with two outs in the ninth.

DODGERS 7, RAYS 3

Clayton Kershaw took a shutout into the seventh inning, and Joc Pederson drove in two runs as Los Angeles earned an interleague victory against Tampa Bay in St. Petersburg, Fla. In his first career appearance at Tropicana Field, Kershaw (4-0) struck out eight, walked one and gave up six hits in 6 1/3 innings. The Dodgers improved to 7-0 in his starts this season and have won 15 consecutive times he has taken the mound going back to last season. Joc Pederson had two hits and two RBIs for the Dodgers. Tampa Bay's Austin Meadows went 2-for-5 and drove in a run. — Reuters

Crisis-hit boxing federation faces Tokyo verdict

LAUSANNE: The International Olympic Committee was poised to decide yesterday on whether to strip amateur boxing's crisis-hit governing body of the right to organise the event at Tokyo 2020. The verdict to be delivered by IOC president Thomas Bach comes after an investigation into the International Boxing Federation (IBF), which has faced allegations of serious mismanagement.

Formed in 1946, AIBA has overseen decades of signature Olympic moments, notably the 1960 gold medal win in Rome by Cassius Clay, later known as Muhammad Ali. But relations between AIBA and the IOC took a sharp downward turn following the 2016 Rio Games, when 36 officials and referees were suspended amid allegations of bout fixing.

An internal investigation by AIBA raised deeper questions about the judging in Rio, with particular suspicion falling on a French official. Then in 2017, AIBA executives forced out the body's president C.K. Wu, amid claims of multi-million dollar accounting fraud.

Wu, a Taiwanese national, denied wrongdoing and remains a member of

the IOC, an indication that he retains the support of senior Olympic officials. Wu was ultimately replaced by the controversial Uzbek businessman Gafur Rakhimov, who the US Treasury Department has linked to "transnational criminal organisations".

Rakhimov vehemently rejects such charges and insists the allegations against him are "politically motivated lies". Rakhimov stepped down in March, while the IOC audit into AIBA's affairs was ongoing.

He was replaced as interim president by Moroccan doctor Mohamed Moustahsane—the fourth head of AIBA in 18 months.

BOXING IN TOKYO?

Audit firm Deloitte, which led the AIBA probe on behalf of the IOC, submitted a list of 41 questions to the boxing federation, on subjects ranging from finances, governance and ethics to anti-doping, refereeing and judging.

AIBA's current leadership insists the organisation has met all the requirements stipulated by the IOC. The governing body's chief executive Tom



LAUSANNE: International Olympic Committee (IOC) members Denis Oswald (L) and Nenad Lalovic look on prior to a meeting of the IOC executive committee on boxing at the 2020 Olympic Games yesterday in Pully near Lausanne. — AFP

Virget told AFP this month that the organisation had "done everything that has been asked by the IOC".

"Every single document asked, we produced, every single requirement we have met, including our president self-suspending," he said, referring to Rakhimov's departure. Media reports have indicated that AIBA would sue if it is denied the right to organise boxing, including the qualifications, for the

Tokyo Games.

Asked on May 7 if AIBA planned to take the matter to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, Virget said the body planned to "explore" its options, but declined further comment. Bach has indicated that IOC would be capable of organising an alternative qualification process, independent of AIBA, as a means to ensure boxing is featured in Tokyo. — AFP

Hamilton heads into Monaco after loss of Lauda

MONACO: Barely 48 hours after the death of Niki Lauda, Lewis Hamilton approaches today's Monaco Grand Prix opening practice in sombre mood as he aims for only his third victory in the classic Mediterranean street race.

Lauda, the non-executive chairman of Mercedes who passed away on Tuesday morning, was instrumental in Hamilton's career-defining move from McLaren to the Silver Arrows team.

"My buddy, I'm struggling to believe you are gone," said Hamilton in his social media posts on Tuesday. "I will miss our conversations, our laughs, the big hugs after winning races together."

The Briton, who has won four of his five world titles at Mercedes, added: "It's truly been an honour working alongside you over these past seven years. I wouldn't have been in this team if it wasn't for you."

Lauda's death, following long-term health problems, will cast a shadow across a racing occasion known for glamorous parties, fabulous boats and celebrity visitors as major sponsors jockey for attention and deals.

But it is unlikely to affect the on-track concentration of the drivers, especially at Mercedes where his passing will be most keenly felt, as Hamilton bids to add another Monaco win to those in 2008 and 2016 — and register a triumphant tribute to the great three-time world champion Austrian.

As always, Hamilton will face a determined challenge from his Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas and both the Ferrari and Red Bull teams with Max Verstappen, in fine form this year, looking a likely threat to the continuing supremacy of Mercedes.

The Silver Arrows reeled off an unprecedented fifth consecutive season-opening one-two in Spain this month, Hamilton's triumph lifting him back to the top of the drivers' championship. "It's a race that I've not really won much and I struggle with that each year," said Hamilton.

"I'm quick there, but it's very hit and miss so I'm really hoping this year's on target because it's a great track to win at." He added that he felt the team's greater understanding of the performance of their longer wheelbase cars would give them a better chance this year, a view backed by Bottas.

"It's such a unique track, you need a really special car in terms of how it works mechanically, with all the warps and bumps and everything. I've actually never been on the podium there so it's something I really look forward to and something I will definitely focus on 100 per cent."

Many local residents of the Mediterranean principality will be keen to see Monegasque Charles

Leclerc challenging for Ferrari, if he can edge clear of team-mate and four-time champion Sebastian Vettel, but Red Bull's Verstappen is likely to be the major threat to Hamilton and Bottas.

"It's a street circuit with a lot of history and it's not been the best one for me over the last few years, but hopefully it's time to turn this around," said Verstappen, who has reeled off 10 top-four finishes in succession.

His former team-mate Daniel Ricciardo, now at Renault, won last year's race for Red Bull and his successor Pierre Gasly said he hopes his team has the performance to beat Ferrari and challenge Mercedes.

"Ferrari is really strong in the straights—we know they have the best engine at the moment — but in the corners we seem to be a bit more competitive than they are. So in Monaco, it suits the Red Bull car usually pretty well, and we know it's all about qualifying."

"It will be important to just manage the perfect lap on Saturday and I think we could have a chance to be in front of them." His Red Bull team boss Christian Horner was also optimistic, but wary of Mercedes all-round domination so far this year.

"Mercedes looked pretty mighty particularly in the last sector in Spain, but we've always run well in Monaco — and Max is due a bit of redemption there," he commented.

The opening two free practice sessions on one of Formula One's most demanding and unforgiving circuits are staged today rather than their usual Friday slot in the Principality. — AFP

Injury-hit Osaka heads to French Open after 'rocky' clay season

TOKYO: After pulling out of last week's Italian Open due to injury, World number one Naomi Osaka admitted she has had a "rocky" claycourt season heading into the French Open.

Osaka, who won the Australian Open in January to follow on from her dramatic victory over Serena Williams at the US Open in 2018, is looking to become just the 11th woman to claim a third consecutive Grand Slam title.

However, following the hand injury that forced her out of a quarter-final clash with Kiki Bertens in Rome and an abdominal injury suffered in Stuttgart last month, Osaka arrives in Paris with concerns over both her form and fitness.

The 21-year-old has proved herself a destructive and powerful hardcourt player with her two Grand Slam wins in the past year, but her record on clay is less impressive.

Osaka has never won a top level WTA event on the surface and has failed to progress past the third round previously at Roland Garros.

"I would describe (my clay season) as rocky," Osaka said in Rome.

"But I can't necessarily say it's been ups and downs because if I think about it, it's definitely been going up. Every match I've played I've learned a lot. I've tried to take what I've learned into the next match and I think I've done that well."

Anyone tempted to doubt Osaka ahead of the French Open, which begins next week, should consider her Grand Slam record.

Osaka saves her best performances for the biggest stage: she has won 76% of all of her Grand Slam matches. Her win ratio at other tournaments is in the 50s.

During a recent interview with the Financial Times, Osaka admitted to feeling the pressure that comes with being world number one.

"I've never been number one and a lot of people were talking about it and I think I let it get to my head a little bit," she said.

"When you're number one you're not really supposed to lose. At least, that's how I feel. Of course, people lose all the time. But I just felt like I should at least win a tournament every month or something."

Osaka's compatriot Kei Nishikori looks a far cry from the player who last reached the French Open quarter-finals in 2017.

The 29-year-old is still coming back from a wrist injury suffered in 2017, but did win his first title in three years at the Brisbane International in January. — Reuters

Sports

Blues KO Sharks in Game 6, reach first Final since '70

Blues dominated undermanned Sharks in the clincher

ST LOUIS: The worst team in the entire NHL, a few days into the new year completed an astounding turnaround Tuesday as the St. Louis Blues advanced to the Stanley Cup Final for the first time since 1970.

The team that fired its coach in November and sat dead last in the NHL when the sun rose on Jan. 3 dispatched the San Jose Sharks in a six-game Western Conference final, capped by a 5-1 home-ice victory on Tuesday. The Blues will meet the Boston Bruins in the championship round.

"A lot of us felt we were in games and close and couldn't find a way to win them," captain Alex Pietrangolo said. "We had some good honest conversations and knew we had to be better. We looked each other in the eye and we did it."

The Blues dominated the undermanned Sharks in the clincher. They now will open the Stanley Cup Final on Monday in Boston, and face the Bruins team they met the last time they went this far. That series was memorialized by Bobby Orr's winning overtime goal that he celebrated by going airborne.

David Perron collected a goal and an assist Tuesday, and Ryan O'Reilly posted three assists in the victory. "It was a special moment for all of us," said goalie Jordan Binnington, who stopped 25 shots. "We're excited and looking forward to the next round."

The Sharks, who are potentially facing major turnover before next season, were without a trio of key players. Forwards Joe Pavelski and Tomas Hertl were injured in Game 5, while defenseman Erik Karlsson was sidelined due to an apparent groin injury, and the hosts took advantage.

Perron opened the scoring just 92 seconds into the

clash and Vladimir Tarasenko netted a power-play goal with 3:44 remaining in the opening frame to stake St. Louis to a 2-0 lead. Dylan Gambrell—who drew into the San Jose lineup due to the injuries—scored his first NHL goal at the 6:40 mark of the second period to put the Sharks on the board and give them life.

However, St. Louis' Brayden Schenn quashed those hopes six minutes later when he buried a rebound for the power-play goal that snapped his goal drought at 13 games. Tyler Bozak and Ivan Barbashev iced the game with third-period goals.

St. Louis won the last three games in the series, all coming after their controversial Game 3 overtime loss in which the winning goal was scored despite an obvious hand-pass. That game appeared to galvanize the team, even if they outwardly shrugged it off at the time.

"My feeling was if we're going to win the next game we were going to win the series because we took that road," Perron said. "I'm glad we approached it that way." The Blues outscored the Sharks 12-2 in the final three games. "Their team is a hard team. I think the two hardest, heaviest teams are in the final," Sharks head coach Pete DeBoer said. "Everyone talks about skill and all the small players, and there is room for that, but I don't think it's an accident. They're heavy, hard and organized. There wasn't any room out there."

Certainly not any room for a Sharks comeback. "I was proud of our group tonight," DeBoer added. "I don't think the score reflected the work we put in. I know what the scoreboard said at the end of the night, but I felt we made them earn it. We showed up in tough circumstances and got efforts from everybody. That's all you can ask." — Reuters



ST LOUIS: Colton Parayko #55 of the St Louis Blues falls to the ice against the San Jose Sharks during the second period in Game Six of the Western Conference Finals during the 2019 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at Enterprise Center in St Louis, Missouri. — AFP

Bader Al-Mutawa wins best soccer player for '18-19

KUWAIT: Qadsiya SC player Bader Al-Mutawa won the Golden One award on Tuesday as the best local player for the 2018/2019 sports season, which was held under the patronage of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Bader Al-Mutawa, in a speech after receiving the award expressed his appreciation for the recognition. He stressed that this award is an incentive for the players to provide distinctive levels in the coming seasons, thanking everyone who nominated him whether the trainers, the public, or media figures. He believed that this win represents a win for all players and wished the award continued to promote local athletes in football. — KUNA



Bader Al-Mutawa (right) receives the Golden One award.

US Embassy holds free youth soccer clinic by professional coaches

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Public Affairs Section at the US Embassy in Kuwait held a free youth soccer clinic by professional US coaches at East Jahra football field on Tuesday. The clinic, for boys and girls between the ages of 8-21, featured three coaches from the United States who are visiting Kuwait as part of a Sports Diplomacy Program sponsored by the US Embassy in Kuwait.

Cultural Attache at the US Embassy Nelson Wen said: "The US Embassy offers a range of academic and cultural exchange programs to create bonds and understanding between the people of Kuwait and the United States. So we bring musicians, artists and others to share their experiences, including in the sports field, which promotes a healthy lifestyle and develops leadership and teamwork."

He added that the Sports Diplomacy Program is one of the exchange programs offered by the US Department of State that brings top athletes and coaches from the United States to share their knowledge and experiences with coach-

es and players from around the world. "We have organized a panel discussion on sports marketing at Kuwait Club which is open to the public, and anyone who has a sports business can join. We have another clinic at Kuwait Sports Club with Basma Al-Ayoub. Also, we will be participating in the women's football tournament today," Wen said.

Lisa Berg, who is a US soccer scout for the US women's youth national teams and coaching with Club Atletico Zacatepec and Academia Satelite Futsat in Mexico, said: "This one-week program is about connecting Americans with Kuwaiti coaches, where we came from the United States to share knowledge and experiences with coaches and players of Kuwait."

Sarah Huffman, former US women's national team player and a test analyst for Nike, affirmed that the program allows them to play football with boys and girls and talk with them about empowering women and the different opportunities that they may have. Huffman expressed her happiness to visit Kuwait, saying: "This is my first time in Kuwait. The people are very nice, welcoming and have a lot of energy."

"We have a two-year scholarship by the US embassy including entertainment and educational activities for students, in addition to learning English and cultural exchanges between the two countries. I see the students benefiting from the program, where they practice English with native speakers," said Khalid, an English teacher at Atlas Training Institute who is in charge of the program for Jahra students. Captain Suhail, Technical



A group photo. — Photos by Yasser Al Zayyat



Sarah Huffman training the boys.

Manager at Sporty Academy, revealed 18 boys are participating in the program. "We hope in the future to include girls," he added.

The athletes and coaches who visit other countries under the Sports Diplomacy Program are called sports

envoys. These envoys represent a variety of sports, from Olympic sports to adventure sports and sports for people with disabilities. Last year, the US Embassy brought a gold medal coach to train the wheelchair basketball team at the Kuwait Disabled Sports Club.

Kroos, Ter Stegen sit out Germany qualifiers

BERLIN: Injured La Liga pair Toni Kroos and Marc-Andre ter Stegen are the biggest names missing from the 22-man Germany squad named yesterday for next month's Euro 2020 qualifiers. Midfielder Kroos, who has just signed a new Real Madrid contract keeping him at the club until 2023, and Barcelona goalkeeper Ter Stegen sit out the qualifiers, away to Belarus on June 8 and then home to Estonia three days later in

Mainz, with leg injuries.

Germany are unbeaten in Group C and sit second behind leaders Northern Ireland after a 3-2 away win in their opening game against the Netherlands in March. Captain Manuel Neuer has been included "for now", say the German Football Association (DFB), but the Bayern Munich goalkeeper has been carrying a calf injury and missed the last five games of the German league season.

The Bavarians are hoping Neuer can play in the German Cup final in Berlin on Saturday against RB Leipzig with the newly-crowned Bundesliga champions hoping to clinch the domestic double.

Germany's 22-man squad for Euro 2020 qualifiers against Belarus and Estonia in June:

Goalkeepers: Manuel Neuer (Bayern Munich),

Bernd Leno (Arsenal/ENG), Kevin Trapp (Eintracht Frankfurt)

Defenders: Matthias Ginter (Borussia Moenchengladbach), Marcel Halstenberg (RB Leipzig), Jonas Hector (Cologne), Thilo Kehrer (Paris SG/FRA), Lukas Klostermann (RB Leipzig), Nico Schulz (Hoffenheim), Niklas Stark (Hertha Berlin), Niklas Sule (Bayern Munich), Jonathan Tah (Bayer Leverkusen)

Midfielders: Julian Brandt (Bayer Leverkusen), Julian Draxler (Paris SG/FRA), Serge Gnabry (Bayern Munich), Leon Goretzka (Bayern Munich), Ilkay Gundogan (Manchester City/ENG), Kai Havertz (Bayer Leverkusen), Joshua Kimmich (Bayern Munich), Marco Reus (Borussia Dortmund), Leroy Sane (Manchester City/ENG)

Forward: Timo Werner (RB Leipzig). — AFP

FIFA faces fan backlash over seating at women's WCup

PARIS: World soccer governing body FIFA is facing a backlash on social media from fans who bought multiple tickets for next month's women's World Cup in France only to discover that their seats were not together.

Supporters with tickets for the June 7-July 7 showpiece were allowed to download and print them on Monday and a number of parents have since complained that seats have been allocated in such a way that they cannot sit with their children.

The tournament organisers initially released a statement saying they could not change seat allocations except for parents with children under the age of 18 who were not seated together.

In a subsequent statement organisers said less than 1% of fans with tickets for the semi-finals and final were facing seat-allocation issues.

"The previous tweets regarding FIFA Women's World Cup tickets allocation were published without a full understanding of the situation and we apologise for that," organisers said in a statement <https://twitter.com/FIFAWWC/status/1130624973247328256> on Twitter.

"The issues were faced by less than 1% of fans requesting tickets for the semi-finals and the final. FIFA and the local organising committee are confident the problems will be solved and fans will be able to enjoy the matches as they envisaged."

The assurances did not calm supporters on social media, who suggested the problem was far more widespread and demanded organisers resolve the issue. Twitter user Gareth James complained he would have to sit separately from his two daughters and would not attend the game if their seats were not reallocated.

"How will (the problems) be solved? Me and my daughters aged 11 and 13 have tickets that are not together, so will not be able to attend," he tweeted <https://twitter.com/gisjames25/status/1130658364243886080>. A fan named Mike Swanson said he had been crushed to discover that his family of five, which includes three children, would be spread over three different rows.

"This was to be a family trip and we can't even sit together as a family," he said in a tweet. "What a disappointment. Not a happy customer."

FIFA released a statement later on Tuesday saying they were still working on a solution. "FIFA and the local organising committee are... doing everything they can to ensure that families will always be seated together at each and every match," the statement said.

"Of the 1.3 million tickets on sale for the tournament it is estimated that not having side-by-side seats will affect only a very small number of fans." The women's World Cup semi-finals and final will be held in Lyon. — Reuters

25 Olympic swim champion retires at 22 after missing doping tests



26 Crisis-hit boxing federation faces Tokyo verdict



27 Blues KO Sharks in Game 6, reach first Final since '70



TORONTO: Kawhi Leonard #2 of the Toronto Raptors handles the ball during the second half against the Milwaukee Bucks in game four of the NBA Eastern Conference Finals at Scotiabank Arena in Toronto, Canada. —AFP

Raptors down Bucks, level East finals

Lowry scores 18 points in the first half to set the tone

TORONTO: Kawhi Leonard carried the Toronto Raptors through most of the postseason. However, after Leonard played 52 minutes in Toronto's double-overtime win on Sunday and was noticeably favoring his left leg, Raptors guard Kyle Lowry said teammates knew Leonard was limited Tuesday and that the rest of them "had to step up."

The Raptors did, especially Lowry, who scored 18 points in the first half to set the tone and finished with 25 points as the Raptors defeated the visiting Milwaukee Bucks 120-102 to even the best-of-seven Eastern Conference finals at two games apiece.

Game 5 is Thursday in Milwaukee. The winner of the best-of-seven series will advance to meet the Golden State Warriors in the NBA Finals. "We have had to rely on (Leonard) so much, and when everybody steps up, it takes the load off him," Lowry said.

Raptors coach Nick Nurse added of Leonard's health, "I mean, yeah, we were concerned. I think (Leonard) is fine. I think he's—you know, he logged a lot of minutes. He's certainly tired, like a lot of guys in this

series are. You know, he looks OK to me.

"I think there's a number of guys out there that aren't 100 percent on both sides of the ball. But, again, he's got tremendous will. He's got tremendous desire, and there's one time I was trying to give him an extended rest there, and he didn't really want it. So he must be OK."

Leonard contributed 19 points and seven rebounds in 34 minutes. Norman Powell added 18 points off the bench for the Raptors. Serge Ibaka and Marc Gasol each scored 17 points, and Fred VanVleet had 13 points. Ibaka also grabbed 13 rebounds.

Powell, Ibaka and VanVleet led a strong showing by Toronto's bench that made the difference. "I'm going out there and trying to impact the game where I see that I can," Powell said. "Just take what the defense is giving me and just stay confident in my reads. Just try to follow the game flow. We're just playing for one another. We were talking to each other on different shots, different reads that are there."

Khris Middleton amassed 30 points, six rebounds

and seven assists for the Bucks. Giannis Antetokounmpo added 25 points and 10 rebounds, and Nikola Mirotic contributed 11 points.

"They did a great job on us defensively," Middleton said. "They took advantage of some of our defensive coverages and just made shots. For the most part, they got anything they wanted. We've got to be better."

The Raptors led by as many as 16 points during the third quarter and had a 13-point margin entering the fourth. "I think defensively, just tonight didn't feel like where we need to be defensively, as good as we need to be," Bucks coach Mike Budenholzer said. "They got to good spots. They shared the ball. They passed it. They made open shots. They made some high-degree-of-difficulty shots, so that's a bad combination. They're making open looks, and then they're making tough ones, too."

VanVleet sank a 3-pointer that bounced around the rim several times before dropping in, Ibaka knocked down a free throw, and Powell hit a one-footer to put Toronto ahead by 20 points with 8:35 to play in the

game. The Bucks crept within 14, but Lowry's layup had the lead at 21 with 3:50 to go. Ibaka's dunk bumped the lead to 25. The Raptors led 32-31 after one quarter, and they scored the first nine points of the second quarter to increase the margin to 10.

Middleton's 3-pointer with 7:08 remaining in the first half trimmed the deficit to five. George Hill made two free throws to reduce the margin to four with 3:08 left, but Toronto went up by nine on Powell's 3-pointer with 1:53 left.

The Raptors led 65-55 at halftime with Lowry scoring 18 points. Middleton had 16 first-half points for Milwaukee. The Raptors led by 13 early in the third quarter on Pascal Siakam's layup and free throw.

The Raptors had the lead as high as 14 before the Bucks went on a 7-0 surge to cut the gap in half. Toronto pulled away again, taking a 12-point lead on Leonard's step-back jumper with 3:15 remaining.

Lowry made two free throws with 1:17 to go, and Toronto led by 15. The Raptors were on top 94-81 after three quarters. — Reuters

Ex-Kenya athletics chief banned for 10 years

PARIS: Kenya's former athletics team manager Michael Rotich has been banned for 10 years for agreeing to provide advance notice to athletes of doping tests in exchange for money, the IAAF announced yesterday.

Rotich was exposed by two undercover journalists from the Sunday Times in an article published in August 2016 and was sent home in disgrace from the Olympic Games in Rio which were under way at the time.

He was also provisionally banned by the IAAF from his coaching job. In a statement yesterday an IAAF's Ethics Board panel said Rotich had offered to warn athletes of impending tests so they could flush

doping substances from their system in order to circumvent tests.

He also offered to provide excuses which athletes could use to avoid being penalised for missing tests. "The panel reiterates that the charges which it has found to be established are serious," the statement said.

"The conduct of Major Rotich was dishonest and corrupt. He sought to undermine anti-doping controls and to obtain a personal financial benefit in doing so." The two Sunday Times journalists posing as the sports manager and coach of a fictional British athletics team met Rotich three times in early 2016, according to the Ethics panel.

They were promised advance warning of doping tests in return for £10,000 (\$12,600, 11,300 euros). The statement said that it had found no evidence that Rotich did in fact provide advance notice of doping tests nor that he had ever received payments.

"However the panel has found that Major Rotich acted corruptly and in deliberate violation of core principles of the Code (of Ethics), it said. — AFP

Hughton 'hugely disappointed' by Brighton sacking

LONDON: Chris Hughton admits he was "hugely disappointed and surprised" to be sacked by Brighton. Hughton was axed despite keeping the club in the Premier League and leading them to the FA Cup semi-finals.

The 60-year-old's surprise dismissal came just one day after Brighton's final game of a season in which they finished 17th, two points ahead of third-bottom Cardiff.

"I was hugely disappointed and surprised by the decision that was made to end my time with

Brighton and Hove Albion FC," Hughton said in a statement released by the League Managers Association yesterday.

"I thoroughly enjoyed my four and a half years managing this special football club. I would like to put on record my gratitude to my coaching staff, the players, fans, everyone connected to the club and the wider community of Brighton & Hove and wish them luck for the future."

Hughton was appointed by the Seagulls in December 2014 and guided them to promotion to the Premier League in 2017, ending the club's 34-year wait to return to the top-flight. Brighton finished 15th in their first campaign in the Premier League, but Hughton paid the price for a difficult second season in which they won just three of their last 23 league games. Brighton have hired Graham Potter from Swansea to replace Hughton, who has been linked with the vacant manager's job at second-tier West Bromwich Albion. — AFP