



3 Kuwaiti serviceman dies as Coast Guard boat capsizes



24 World most expensive drug: Novartis \$2 m gene therapy



28 Hamilton snatches dramatic Monaco pole with record lap



Ramadan KAREEM

| | |
|--------|-------|
| IMSAK | 03:09 |
| Fajr | 03:19 |
| Dhur | 11:45 |
| Asr | 15:20 |
| Magrib | 18:39 |
| Isha | 20:09 |

Trump bypasses US Congress to sell arms to Saudi, UAE, Jordan

US orders new troops to Mideast to counter Iran 'threat'

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump, declaring a national emergency because of tensions with Iran, swept aside objections from Congress on Friday to complete the sale of over \$8 billion worth of weapons to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan. The Trump administration informed congressional committees that it will go ahead with 22 military sales to the Saudis, United Arab Emirates and Jordan, infuriating lawmakers by circumventing a long-standing precedent for congressional review of major weapons sales.

Members of Congress had been blocking sales of offensive military equipment to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for months, angry about the huge civilian toll from their air campaign in Yemen, as well as human rights abuses such as the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at a Saudi consulate in Turkey.

Lawmakers and congressional aides warned earlier this week that Trump, frustrated with Congress holding up weapons deals including the sale of bombs to Saudi Arabia, was considering using a loophole in arms control law to go ahead by declaring a national emergency. "President Trump is only using this loophole because he knows Congress would disapprove ... There is no new 'emergency' reason to sell bombs to the Saudis to drop in Yemen, and doing so only perpetuates the humanitarian

crisis there," said Senator Chris Murphy.

Murphy, a Democrat, made public on Twitter on Wednesday that Trump was considering the loophole in the Arms Control Export Act to clear the sales. Several of Trump's fellow Republicans, as well as Democrats, said they would object to such a plan, fearing that blowing through the "holds" process would eliminate Congress' ability to check not just Trump but future presidents from selling weapons where they liked.

Representative Mike McCaul, the top Republican on the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, said the administration's action was "unfortunate" and likely to damage future White House interactions with Congress. "I would have strongly preferred for the administration to utilize the long-established and codified arms sale review process," McCaul said in a statement.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement that US partners in the Middle East needed the contracts to be completed to help deter Iran, and that the decision to circumvent Congress was meant to be a "one-time event." It is not the first time Congress and Trump have clashed over policy in the region, or the division of powers between the White House and Capitol Hill. The House and Senate voted to end US military support for

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AT SEA: Photo shows an F/A-18F Super Hornet from the 'Jolly Rogers' of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 103 making an arrested landing on the flight deck of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) in the Gulf of Oman. - AFP



KUWAIT: Photo shows worshippers praying at the Grand Mosque yesterday morning. The 'qiyam' prayers began at mosques around Kuwait in the early hours of yesterday - marking the beginning of the last ten days of the holy month of Ramadan.

Tearful May quits after three years of Brexit turmoil

LONDON: Her voice breaking, Prime Minister Theresa May announced her resignation on Friday after three years of Brexit turmoil, dramatically increasing the likelihood of Britain crashing out of the EU within months. May, who took over in the aftermath of the 2016 Brexit referendum, was forced to make way following a Conservative mutiny over her ill-fated strategy to end Britain's near five-decade membership of the European Union.

"It is and will always remain a matter of deep regret to me that I have not been able to deliver Brexit," May said outside her Downing Street office, holding back tears. "It will be for my successor to seek a way forward that honors the result of the referendum."

May, 62, who will be among the country's shortest-serving post-WWII prime ministers remembered for presiding over one of the most chaotic periods in its modern political history, said she would step down as head of the Conservative Party on June 7. She will remain in Downing Street in a caretaker role until a



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May reacts as she announces her resignation outside 10 Downing Street in central London. — AFP

replacement is elected by the party before July 20. Any new leader of the party, which won the most votes in the last election, automatically becomes prime minister.

Gaffe-prone Brexit cheerleader Boris Johnson, who resigned as foreign secretary last summer over May's

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Ramadan Kareem

Ramadan - 'Then & Now' Kuwaiti style

By Mariam-Joyce DSouza

A brief into how the Holy month of Ramadan is celebrated and enjoyed in this part of the world. Ramadan in Kuwait has its own set of unique customs kept alive by the people. The Kuwaiti people conjure the past with all its beautiful details - from the traditional costumes and dishes, to the special Ramadan celebrations which have a delightful effect on the little ones and the not-so-little-ones alike. And throughout the past years, these Ramadan-related rituals have been maintained to retain their inherent traditional color. I found informative article online which explained some of these customs in great detail.

Ramadan in the past & today

Like elsewhere in the Muslim world, people in Kuwait fasted during the day and prayed during the night. They would recite the Quran and were proud of the number of times they completed reciting it during the holy month. Some of them would complete reading the whole Quran six or seven times, and they spent the nights praying Taraaweeh (voluntary night prayers). Even today, the Kuwaiti people exhibit their generous nature, as they spend large sums of money in charity by serving Iftar meals in the Masjids. During the nights of Ramadan, the markets become crowded with people, as all the shops open after prayer, and relatives and friends exchange visits.

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Ahead of women's WCup, female fans struggle in Mideast

DUBAI: Two weeks ahead of a potentially game-changing women's World Cup, football remains completely male-dominated in large parts of the Middle East and North Africa, where female fans are still battling for a level playing field. Women fans face obstacles in many parts of the region where rival powers

Iran and Saudi Arabia have traditionally enforced rules banning women from entering stadiums.

No countries from the region will be among the 24 teams taking part in the tournament in France from June 7, but at least there are signs of flexibility in the region toward a sport igniting more and more female interest across the globe.

In Iran, rules have been relaxed since the 1979 Islamic revolution and women are selectively allowed to attend some matches. But the fact that a ban has yet to be officially lifted indicates there is still disagreement over the issue among senior figures in the Islamic republic. Ultra-conservative Saudi Arabia allowed women into a football stadium

for the first time in January 2018 for a regular domestic football league match.

The move was part of reforms introduced by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman that included allowing women to drive and take part in other sporting and artistic events. However, the kingdom's strict brand of Islam still mandates separation of the sexes in public and women football fans are only admitted to special sections of stadiums and must wear full Islamic veils. Even so 15,000 women, penned in special sections, were among the 62,000 fans who attended the Italian Super Cup between Juventus and AC Milan played in Jeddah in January. — AFP

Oil slick spotted after Saudi tanker sabotaged

HELSINKI: A Saudi tanker damaged off the coast of the United Arab Emirates in mid-May appears to have leaked a trail of oil, satellite images released on Friday show. Radar satellites operated by the Finnish company Iceye photographed the vessel Amjad on May 14, two days after it and three other ships, including another Saudi tanker, were mysteriously sabotaged in the Sea of Oman.

Neither Saudi Arabia nor the UAE, both close allies of the United States, have yet given details on the exact nature of those attacks, which come amid heightened tensions between Washington and Riyadh's arch rival Tehran. "There is a trail of oil that is on the surface of the sea," Iceye's vice president Mikko Keranen said. "The trail is

linked to the vessel Amjad and we have had a third party verify that for us," Keranen said, adding that images taken by the European Space Agency Sentinel-2 also seem to confirm the presence of oil around the ship.

Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said after the attack there were no casualties or any oil spill from the tankers. The oil in the pictures could be fuel from the engine. The strikes on the ships were followed two days later by drone attacks on the key Saudi east-west oil pipeline, which Saudi Arabia denounced as an attack on the security of the world's oil supplies.

Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed responsibility for the strikes and said they were a response to "crimes" committed by Saudi Arabia and its allies dur-



FUJAIRAH: Photo shows Saudi oil tanker after it was damaged in alleged 'sabotage attacks' in the Gulf. — AFP

ing more than four years of war in support of the government. The Saudi cabinet called for "confronting terrorist entities which carry out such sabotage acts, including the Iran-backed Houthi militias

in Yemen." Saudi Arabia, the world's largest exporter of oil, currently pumps around 10 million barrels per day (bpd) of which around seven million bpd are exported. — AFP

Local

Amir hosts iftar banquet for Interior Ministry officials

Amir congratulates India's Modi on electoral victory

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Thursday at Dasman Palace Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Jarrah Al-Sabah, Advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister, retired Lieutenant General Suleiman Fahad Al-Fahad, Undersecretary of the Interior Ministry Lieutenant General Essam Al-Naham and senior officials of the Interior Ministry. His Highness the Amir held an iftar banquet in honor of the interior minister and other ministry officials. Deputy Commander of the National Guard Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also attended the meeting.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday to congratulate him on the victory notched up by his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the general elections. His Highness the Amir expressed his best wishes for Modi and the friendly people of India, voicing hope for even closer bonds between the two nations. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh

Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Prime Minister.

Separately, His Highness the Amir expressed condolences for Pakistan's President Arif Alvi for victims of a blast in a mosque in Quetta that killed two people and injured many others on Friday. His Highness the Amir, in a cable to Alvi, wished the wounded speedy recovery. His Highness the Crown Prince sent a cable to Alvi to express condolences for the victims of the blast and wished speedy recovery for the wounded. His Highness the Prime Minister sent a similar cable.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir expressed condolences for Afghanistan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani over victims of a blast in a mosque in Kabul which also wounded many people on Friday. His Highness the Amir, in a cable to Ghani, wished the wounded speedy recovery. His Highness the Crown Prince sent a cable to Ghani to express condolences for the victims of the blast and wished speedy recovery for the wounded. His Highness the Prime Minister sent a similar cable. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is seen with senior Interior Ministry officials during the ghabqa. — Amiri Diwan photo

Gulf Cooperation Council marks 38th anniversary

RIYADH: Since its establishment some 38 years ago, the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) had made it their mission to reinforce and solidify notions of stability, peace, and welfare in the region. On May 25, 1981, Gulf States' leaders vowed to look into the interests of their people and they focused on achieving welfare for the region and the world. Speaking on the occasion, undersecretary for legislative and legal affairs at the GCC Secretariat Ambassador Hamad Al-Marri said that despite all the challenges the council faced, Gulf countries focused on the security and welfare of the people. He added that the GCC's strong statute has organized the responsibilities of each department within the mainframe of the council, indicating that various legislations were passed in favor of bolstering cooperation among GCC countries.

The statute took into consideration the cultural, Islamic and unified vision linking all of the people in the region and thus the GCC continues to be an important player both regionally and internationally, affirmed Ambassador Marri. The GCC have experienced various challenges since it was established including the Iran-Iraq war, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and subsequent liberation efforts, the issue the three Emirati Islands occupied by Iran, in addition to other paramount happenings. The GCC also had to address a number of issues connected with the support of the unity of Iraq, Yemen, Syria, and Libya after years of war and conflict. The council had a strong stance in refusing the prosecution of Muslim minority in Myanmar.

Meanwhile, the GCC is keen on continuing dialogue with entities of similar stature, holding various meetings with UN members and other organizations on the sideline of the General Assemblies in New York. Through continuous dialogue, the GCC managed to come out with positive achievements connected with Arab and Muslim causes and it also succeeded in changing the negative stereotype that connected Islam with terrorism. The GCC left an impression regarding its efforts against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction especially in the Gulf region, signing numerous agreements in this regards.

In the domains of military and security cooperation, the GCC had held various meetings since the first

meeting for the Gulf chiefs of staff in Riyadh in 1981. Military cooperation included the Peninsula Shield, a joint GCC force, the 2000 joint defense accord, and the Saudi-led 2015 Operation Decisive Storm aimed at returning legitimacy in Yemen. On the defense domain, the GCC approved in 2003 a strategy to combat radical terrorism and this was followed by a counterterrorism agreement in 2004. A deal to develop a GCC comprehensive security strategy was signed in 2008. In 2015, the GCC police headquarter was established in the UAE. The GCC also focused on bolstering cooperation amongst its members within media, economy, judiciary, and customs amongst others. The GCC also extended such cooperation with states, organizations, and entities throughout the globe.

GCC's success

The Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) success since its establishment on May 25, 1981 had reflected upon the citizens in the region, achieving their aspirations and dreams. Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said, adding that the establishment of the GCC some 38 years ago was a significant step especially with Kuwait playing a pivotal role in formulating the idea of the council. The late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had foreseen the importance of creating an entity formulating a link between the Gulf governments and their people, affirmed Jarallah who added that the GCC was successful in establishing a strong bond protecting the countries in the region and fending off threats. Late Sheikh Jaber, who was Crown Prince and Prime Minister in 1975, laid the initial idea for the council during a visit to Abu Dhabi, UAE, on May 16, 1975. In May of 1976, Sheikh Jaber called for the formation of the GCC as an organization geared towards the mutual welfare of the Gulf citizen. Abu Dhabi was the venue for the first ever GCC summit on May 25 of 1981.

In regards to Gulf crisis, he said that "(The crisis) is painful; however, the council managed to continue its path of cooperation and joint coordination," pointing out that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah continues his efforts to resolve the crisis without affecting the mission of the GCC.

Jarallah affirmed that the unity amongst the GCC countries had succeeded in overcoming various challenges in the past including the Iran-Iraq war and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and subsequent liberation efforts to name but a few. The GCC supported the unity of Iraq, Yemen, Syria, and Libya after years of war and conflict, said Jarallah, adding the council had a strong stance in refusing the prosecution of Muslim minority in Myanmar and it also was and continued to be an



DOHA: This archive photo shows leaders of Gulf Cooperation Council countries attend the 35th GCC Summit in Doha in 2014. —KUNA

adamant supporter of the Palestinian cause. "We are optimistic in regards to the GCC's path and think that it is admired by the world, which treats the council as a variable influential bloc both regionally and internationally," said Jarallah who stressed that the various ministerial committees of the GCC continue to work for the welfare of the people of the region.

On May 25, 1981, a historic day for the region saw the signing of founding treaty (charter) of the GCC in in Abu-Dhabi, capital of the UAE, by the leaders of its six member countries, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The permeable of the document set forth the targets of future cooperation, coordination and integration among the GCC nations in all areas, capitalizing on common history, shared destiny and religious Islamic values, and similar ruling regimes. Based on these noble objectives, the GCC countries were able to make outstanding achievements in various fields and coordinate their foreign policies.

Secretary congratulates leaders

Secretary General of the GCC Dr Abullatif Al-Zayani congratulated the Heads of the GCC states and citizens on the 38th anniversary since the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council. This came in a press statement by Zayani on behalf of members of the

GCC, heads of state and their citizens for the 38th anniversary of the founding of the GCC on May 25. Zayani expressed pride in the citizens of the GCC countries and their important achievements made to create coordination, complementarity and interdependence among the regional countries in all fields. He also commended the GCC for the great wisdom and insight of its state leaders, which has paved the way towards its towering goals.

Zayani stressed that the achievements of the GCC in various political, security, defense, economic, social and developmental fields enabled the Council to become a cohesive and well-established system in the face of difficult challenges facing the region and defend the achievements, characterized by distinguished civilizational achievements and high aspirations in the process of joint Gulf action. He added expressing his pride in the high standing of the GCC at the regional and international levels for its active efforts and contributions to support regional and international causes and permanent presence and contributions in various international forums to provide all means of support and assistance to friendly countries. Zayani appreciated the support received by the General Secretariat and all its employees from the Supreme Council of the GCC and from the distinguished Council of Ministers asking the Almighty to bless the efforts of the GCC countries. — KUNA

Spanish research team wins Amir's Award on Geriatrics

GENEVA: Kuwait's Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah on Friday handed over His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's award in the fields of health care for the elderly and health promotion to a team of researchers at La Paz Hospital in Madrid, Spain. This was part of the 72nd session of the World Health Organization (WHO), which runs from May 20 to 28. This team of researchers in the field of aging and osteoporosis of the elderly at the Institute of Research of the Spanish Hospital and was founded in 2006. The Executive Council of the World Health Organization has adopted the recommendation of the Award Committee to hand over His Highness the Amir's Award to the Institute for its "achievements in the field of health care for fractures among the elderly, which contributed to reducing the complications and deaths and shortening stay in hospitals for those cases."

Kuwait's Health Minister expressed his deep gratitude and appreciation for this generous initiative from His Highness the Amir. He added that this award comes as part of the flowing donations and generous support of the leader of humanity for health and development initiatives at the world level, which is praised by international organizations. He pointed out that this award, under the auspices of the World Health Organization (WHO), which is dedicated to the best initia-



GENEVA: Head of the Spanish research institute in La Paz Hospital Villa Lopez receives His Highness Kuwait Amir's Award on Geriatrics. — KUNA

tives and research on health care for the elderly and health promotion, confirms the role of health systems in addressing the challenges of health care for the elderly in recognition of their role in achieving development. He added that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's award for the best health initiatives in the field of health care for the elderly is one of the bright signs on the path of positive cooperation between the World Health Organization and Kuwait, which dates back to the period when Kuwait became a member in the Organization in May 1960.

Meanwhile, head of the research institute in La Paz Hospital Villa Lopez lauded the award of His Highness the Amir for specializing in the diseases of the elderly and

aging, which are classified as the most vulnerable in the world. In the meantime, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim said that the award is one of the hallmarks of the distinguished partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and represents a leap forward in global research on geriatrics. Ghunaim added that the strategic relationship with the World Health Organization (WHO) is developing at a good pace, adding that this is reflected in the continued tribute of the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus over evolving cooperation with Kuwait. — KUNA

Crime prevention challenges worth attention: Kuwait

VIENNA: Kuwait and the West Asian countries group said yesterday that challenges facing developing countries in addressing crime was worth the attention ahead of next year's 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (The Kyoto Congress) in Japan. This came after the conclusion of the West Asian countries group meeting in Vienna, which was chaired by Kuwait on the sidelines of the 28th session of the UN's Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). The meeting's attendees stressed the importance bolstering regional cooperation amongst West Asian members to effectively address issues such as terrorism funding, organized crime, and other security challenges. Training cadres and developing human resources will help better address crime and implement plans to bolster security cooperation, affirmed the attendees.

Meanwhile, delivering Kuwait's speech to the 28th meeting for the UN crime prevention and criminal justice committee, undersecretary at Kuwait's Ministry of Justice Zakariya Al-Ansari said that West Asian countries urged participants in the upcoming 2020 Kyoto Congress to thoroughly prepare for the event, which is expected to come out with an important declaration on crime

prevention and criminal justice. He indicated that the West Asian group had held several meetings, including the recent sideline one, to prepare for the upcoming conference.

Ansari commended the premise of the Kyoto Congress, stressing that it was important to continue efforts laid by the previous 13th meeting held in Qatar in 2015. The Kuwaiti official spoke about the outcome of the recent West Asia group meeting, which championed the benefits of achieving justice on the social and economic developments of nations worldwide. Ensuring the rights of those affected by all modes of crime and boosting notions of justice and equality will help countries to better address other challenges and hopefully the Kyoto Congress would address those topics.

Effective systems

Kuwait had underlined on Friday the importance of finding more effective systems and means to prevent crime, reintegrate criminals into society and address the root causes of crime. The Ministry of Interior Assistant Undersecretary for Criminal Security Major General Khaled Al-Deen brought this up during the discussion on the 28th session of the UN's Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). —KUNA

Local

Kuwait confident regional state of calm will prevail: Deputy FM

Foreign Minister hosts ghabqa for diplomatic missions in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Kuwait is confident that wisdom, reasoning and a state of calm will prevail in the region without the need for clashes, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said on Friday. This confidence stems from statements made by US and Iranian officials over their reluctance to go to war, he told reporters. "We, being within this circle, believe that there is cause for hope and optimism, that there will be control that does not present any danger or threat to the region's security," he added. Kuwait stands ready and is poised to carry out efforts aimed at calming and stabilizing the situation and avoiding confrontation, he said, reiterating the "sensitivity and extremely dangerous" nature of the "fast-paced developments."

The deputy minister expressed hope that the three GCC, Arab and Islamic summits called for by Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud would resolve or contribute to calming the situation. Asked if negotiations similar to North Korea were on the table, he responded, "it seems that negotiations between both sides have begun, as moves and calls are already being made," he said, in relation to Omani foreign

affairs-tasks minister Yousif bin Alawi's recent visit to Tehran.

In regards to Kuwait's bilateral relations with neighboring Iraq after Prime Minister Adel Abdulmehdi's visit, he said both sides recently signed five documents representing the path for future relations. About oil matters, he said that a memorandum of understanding on the joint oilfields in the north of Kuwait has been signed and is in effect. Jarallah's comments were made following a Ramadan ghabqa held for diplomatic missions in Kuwait and came a day after the Iraqi prime minister's visit to Kuwait accompanied by several high-level officials, including the oil minister.

His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah had attended the ghabqa hosted by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah in honor of the diplomatic missions based in Kuwait. Besides heads of the diplomatic missions, the event gathered large number of sheikhs, cabinet members, senior officials of the Foreign Ministry, academics, public figures and media celebrities. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (left) and His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah attend a ghabqa held for diplomatic missions in Kuwait. — KUNA

Kuwait presents draft on missing persons in armed conflicts

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Representative to the United Nations tabled to the UN Security Council on Thursday a draft resolution on the institutional framework for handling the issue of missing people during armed conflicts. "The draft is based on a national ordeal undergone by many families in Kuwait," Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi said in a speech to the Security Council meeting on 'Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.' "The Council has no point of reference in addressing the issue of missing persons in armed conflict so far. If there are such points of reference and specific measures in this regard before the eruption of conflict, great results could follow in the post-conflict reconciliation," he argued.

The Kuwaiti draft emphasizes the roles of the international humanitarian law and the human rights law relating to missing in action (MIAs). Ambassador Otaibi went on. He added that Kuwait plans to arrange for a meeting to brief the Security Council

on this issue during its presidency of the Council next month, voicing that the Council would adopt the draft. He noted that 2019 marks the 70th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 which represent a cornerstone of international humanitarian law. It also marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Security Council Resolution 1265 on the protection of civilians as an item on the Council's agenda.

Peace processes

Separately, a Kuwaiti diplomat said on Friday that coordination with countries hosting peace processes is important to proliferate notions of peace and security around the globe. Delivering Kuwait's speech to the UNSC Arria-Formula Meetings on peace, first secretary of the Kuwaiti UN mission in New York Fawaz Bourseli said that reforming the security sector and building its capabilities in addition to supporting the actions carried out



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi delivers a speech to the Security Council meeting on 'Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.' — KUNA

by the UNSC and the General Secretariat all contribute to the peace internationally. The Kuwaiti diplomat lauded the Cairo Roadmap for Enhancing Peacekeeping Performance, which developed the concept of peacekeeping cooperation to include host countries.

Bourseli said that usually peacekeeping forces deploy after the end of conflicts and wars as part of a political process to promote peace and security. He added that peacekeeping could be used as a tool to prevent conflicts from ever occurring in

the first place by managing and eradicating the source of disputes among countries and parties. Including countries hosting peace processes will address priorities and help in realizing peace in a more orderly fashion, indicated the diplomat. He affirmed that coordination and cooperation between UN peacekeeping forces and host countries would help to effectively promote peace on a wider scale. Bourseli mentioned the processes in Darfur and Haiti as an example of effective cooperation for peace. — KUNA

Shortage delays firing of 400 MoE expat employees

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education (MoE) postponed the termination of 400 expatriate office boys

until further notice due to a severe shortage in most schools, well-informed sources said. MoE will continue with its plans to replace expats in other areas, such as teachers, legal researchers, accountants and administrative staff with Kuwaitis, the sources added, noting that 750 of them had been laid off this year.

Meanwhile, the ministry of education referred to the parliament a list with the names of 216 Kuwaitis who had graduated from the American University in Athens to be included in Minister Hamed Al-Azmi's response to parliamentary inquiries made by MP Mohammed Al-Dallal. In his response, Azmi explained that the list included the names of 85

and half a million 'Captagon' narcotic pills at the time of arrest, the ministry's General Department of Public Relations and Security Media added in a press statement. Secret information obtained by the DCGD revealed that this person brought drugs to the country for trafficking, the statement noted. The narcotics are evaluated at more than half a million Kuwaiti Dinars (more than \$1.6 million), it concluded.

Five hurt in accident

Five people were injured when a vehicle caught fire in Wafra. Firefighters from Mina Abdullah fire station responded to an emergency call and handled the case. The injured persons were rescued and handed to medics. Meanwhile, three fire stations fought a blaze in makeshift cabins belonging to a company doing maintenance work at Ibn Sina Hospital. Shuwaikh and Sulaibkhat along with backup fire stations contained the fire and kept it from spreading. No injuries were reported.

Rumors denied

The relations and security information department at the interior ministry denied rumors on social media that the son of a high-ranking officer was arrested along with girls who were all under the influence.

Inspection tour

Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSDD) Director Lt Gen

Data exchange

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Kuwait Municipality signed a memorandum of understanding to exchange data concerning detailed Public Authority of Civil Information's address numbers, said informed sources. The sources added that both sides will exchange data through an electronic link to be launched after uploading various forms through the Kuwait Business Center website and municipal systems.

Municipality campaign

Kuwait Municipality public relations department announced the Capital's acting cleaning department manager Jamal Al-Fadhli said the department had a special plan to enhance cleanliness levels in Mubarakia and Salhiya markets through a set schedule. Fadhli reminded that according to bylaw number 9/87, those littering (throwing garbage, paper, tissues, cans and cigarette butts) on pavements, yards, streets and squares will be fined up to KD 200, adding that an inspection campaign was launched in the two markets and resulted in filing 55 violations of bylaw number 9/87, 30 cleaning citations and arresting 17 peddlers.



Drugs found with a suspect arrested on Thursday.

Khalid Rakan Al-Mikrad held an inspection tour of fire stations to check their readiness. He began his tour from the backup center, then went to Industrial Shuwaikh, Capital and Shuhada fire stations.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality workers close a store during a recent crackdown.

local spotlight

Huawei or Google

By Muna Al-Fuzal

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It is the most widely circulated story these days. But what made me write this article is the spread of some misconceptions, as if the Chinese company Huawei relies only on Google for its success or that US companies will lose its business. In any case, it is clear that there is an economic war between US and China now in the midst of development and Chinese successes that made Huawei the leading Chinese technology company in the world, posing a technical threat to US companies.

But the problem lies in Google's Android operating system - Google will stop its dealings with Huawei when it comes to common points in the system. Google issued a statement after the signing of a convention prohibiting US technology transfers to Huawei, and said it is obliged to comply with US law and respect it, thus preventing the provision of some applications in the future. Current users can still get all the features of applications on Google Play Store and other Google apps without problems. So the problem will happen with phones that will be manufactured in the future, not current ones.

The spokesman said Google is committed to this decision that was issued by the US Department of Commerce to put Huawei on the list of companies that cannot get US technology, but will review its implications. The decision came after the US administration of President Donald Trump added Huawei to the list of companies with which US companies can only trade with a license from the government.

I think the problem of blocking Google apps can be an ideal solution for Huawei to create its own app store to integrate all applications and compete with Google Play Store, as well as the Android system, as Google will not provide any updates to its applications or to the system itself. In this way, Huawei will face a problem with its new phones over the inclusion of a large number of important applications and services on Android devices, and its current phones will not enjoy the necessary security updates provided by Google.

I think the growth of the Chinese company in the future may depend on how much people rely on applications by Google - known for its popular search engine - including YouTube, Maps, and Gmail. In China, many Chinese use a search engine known as Baidu, because the government has blocked Google. Therefore, the absence of Google's search engine on Huawei phones may not affect the internal market, but people prefer to use Google if they want to search for information. This may cause some buyers around the world not to buy Huawei devices.

Huawei's founder believes his company can continue without access to US software. The company has gained great publicity and everyone is waiting for Huawei's reaction and what it will do for its users. I think Huawei's short-term loss is possible, but Google's long-term loss is also expected. According to Reuters news agency, Google has stopped dealing with Huawei on the level of hardware and software. Everyone knows that Huawei is using Android, and therefore its current phones will not receive Android updates except from open sources. I expect other US companies to follow the same approach as Google, which puts Huawei at greater pressure.

The new Huawei phones will mostly be released with an open-source Android version but will not include Google apps because they need permission. When people from around the world want to find something on the Internet, 89 percent of them use Google. YouTube also is a huge asset to Google now, and used by 1.8 billion people in the world. I think Huawei's biggest problem will be from Europe, Africa and Asian countries other than China. All things are still under consideration. I believe people will always want to use existing applications, whether from China or America.

Kuwaiti serviceman dies when coast guard boat capsized

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti serviceman died and others were wounded when a coast guard boat capsized while leaving Sabbiya Coast Guard Station on Friday, the Ministry of Interior said in a statement. The boat capsized while it was leaving Sabbiya Station resulting in the death of Abdullah Al-Failakawi, it added. The marine rescue and coast guard personnel rushed to the boat and recovered 10 injured crew members. The wounded were rushed to Sabbiya center for treatment, the ministry said, adding that an investigation was underway to know reasons of the accident.

Drugs found

Drug Control General Department (DCGD) arrested an unidentified person with large amounts of narcotics he brought to the country, the Interior Ministry announced on Thursday. The person had 19 kilograms of methamphetamine

Ministry pays striking mailmen

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Services announced paying overdue payments to the contracted postal parcels delivery company, noting that the company promised to return its staff to various post offices and work on increasing their working hours so that they can handle the accumulated undelivered parcels. Mail delivery personnel had recently went on strike in protest of their unpaid wages, which left large amounts of packages stacked up at box offices around Kuwait. The ministry added that all approvals needed to extend the company's contract for six more months (till the end of November) had been provided. In addition, the ministry said that it also got official approvals to offer three tenders concerning providing mail delivery services in all six governorates with a total value of over KD 3 million for public bidding tomorrow, noting that each tender covers two governorates.

Local



KUWAIT: Traditional 'misbah' prayer beads are displayed at a market in downtown Kuwait City yesterday. Misbahs are in hot demand during the holy month of Ramadan as Muslims use beads to count their 'Tasabih,' a prayer cycle to glorify and praise Allah, in which one bead is dropped down a string after each phrase. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Zain shares joys of girgian with children at Zain Hospital

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, shared the joys of the holy month of Ramadan with children at Zain Hospital by distributing girgian candy and gifts to the children and their families to celebrate the occasion in a family atmosphere full of joy and happiness.

Zain organizes visits to hospitals several times a year in many occasions, most importantly the holy month of Ramadan.

The initiative, which comes under the umbrella of Zain's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy, aims at sharing the blessings of the holy month with the children, their parents, and the medical staff who take care of them.

Zain's volunteers visited Zain Hospital's various wards and distributed gifts and girgian candy to the children and their families. The company also offered girgian candy to the Kuwaiti Society for the Care of Children in Hospitals (KACCH), who will in turn distribute them to children in a number of Kuwait's biggest and most prominent hospitals.

Zain expressed its heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to all the parties involved in organizing the visits including hospital staff, officials, children's families, and the volunteers themselves, who all helped draw a smile on the faces of the

children.

Zain highlighted that the aim of undertaking the annual hospital visits during special occasions is part of the company's commitment to celebrating the holy month of Ramadan through ongoing social activities that generate a sense of generosity and caring. As a responsible telecommunications company, Zain looks to improve the lives of the people within the communities it serves.

Zain affirmed that its social and Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility campaign during the holy month of Ramadan will include an extensive array of initiatives and programs that will focus on helping less fortunate people to enjoy Ramadan happily, as well as celebrating the true spirit the holy month brings.

Since the inception of Zain Hospital,



Zain Hospital's building.

Zain has been firmly committed to providing the latest and most advanced medical equipment for the hospital; which has become one of Kuwait's most important landmarks for specialized Otolaryngology.

The significance of this specialized health institution is in the delivery of the best patient care, as it serves a vast number of patients with a full range of state-of-the-art ENT medications.

Huawei holds elegant media ghabqa



KUWAIT: In the spirit of loving, sharing and caring, and as the holy month of Ramadan always brings excitement and joy, Huawei Consumer Business Kuwait (CBG) invited the media members and social media influencers to a unique Ramadan ghabqa recently.

This Ramadan, Huawei celebrated this special occasion with media members and influencers who have always been a huge support to Huawei. The evening continued with a speech from General Manager, Huawei CBG Kuwait, Jason Jiang, who extended the welcome and appreciation to the attendees.

The evening was held in the elegant The Palms Beach Hotel and Spa with its special design and interior decor. The venue provided a great opportunity to communicate and engage in unique surrounding, which was the ideal place to create joyous times and memorable moments with the loved ones. The evening was ended by the sounds of live music and enticing Ramadan Buffet of delicacies and traditional favorites.





Ramadan perfect time to reminisce about traditional Kuwaiti games



Children play 'dama' (draughts) during a function.



Citizens play 'dama' (draughts) during an official tournament.



Citizens participate in a 'carrom' tournament.— KUNA photos

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: After the advent of video games, digital entertainment and social media, traditional games were abandoned. But recently, people are engaging in social games, remembering the old times. In Kuwait, there are various traditional games - both old and new. Children are no longer playing popular outdoor games like ambar, muxi, heila, hay almeat, tecla (marble) and others.

Many other games are played by both children and adults. The most popular social games played in diwanis involve playing cards, including kot, played by six

players. Nethala is played on the same basis as kot with at least three or four players. Hand is played with a minimum of two players or more.

Carrom is an old game which was forgotten for many years, but is being played again. Carrom consists of wooden square board with four holes in the four corners. Players should pocket small round wooden black and white pieces into the holes with a striker. Dama (draughts) is played by both young and old people. It is played by two players, who place small round wooden pieces in two colors on a chequered board or square piece of cloth.

Some old international board games that

were forgotten for many years are back - in Kuwaiti style. Monopoly, where players buy and sell properties, was reissued in card form to make it easier to carry, so it can be played anywhere. A Kuwaiti version of this game was also released (Deal).

Two or three years ago, a Kuwaiti designed a board game 'Inhash ya Theeb' (Run Wolf) based on Ludo that became very popular. It can be played by two, three or four players. It is a simple board game played by moving four pieces to the house, and the winner is the player who gets all his figures to the house first. This game is now played in all diwanis and family gatherings.

International games played frequently in Kuwait include the card game U.N.O. Dominoes and chess are also played by some groups, but are not very popular. Games from childhood that are still played in some gatherings include 'Insan Hayawan Nabat' (Name Place Animal Thing), using pen and paper. The winner is the player who finishes first in filling all five categories with a name starting with the same letter including humans, animals, plants, things and countries. During the holy month of Ramadan, some clubs and companies organize competitions in some of the above-mentioned games, in which many people, especially the youth, participate.



NBK shares iftar, suhoor with students

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) visited both student residences in Kaifan and Shuwaikh areas to share iftar and suhoor banquets with the students and spent some good times with them, as part of 'Do Good Deeds in Ramadan' program.

The visit was filled with family-friendly atmosphere, in which NBK expressed its support and encouragement to the students and how much it values their participation in the iftar banquet as an initiative to make up for being unable to gather around one table with their families during the holy month of Ramadan.

"It gives us a great pleasure to share this banquet with our valued students, as they choose Kuwait to be their learning destination. We have introduced this new initiative of holding iftar and suhoor banquets with our valued students in order to share our customs and traditions and to capture the unique ambiance of the holy month of Ramadan as we firmly believe that reaching out to the community is a deep-rooted Kuwaiti tradition."

said Manal Faisal Al-Mattar, NBK Assistant General Manager of Public Relations and Communications.

Mattar added that Kuwait University is a top rated academic institution that highly values its students. As part of our annual 'Do Good Deeds in Ramadan' program, we have included the university and its students as an integral part of our coverage to official institutions, community service societies and mosques, besides our other humanitarian and charitable initiatives dedicated to the holy month of Ramadan.

Mattar pointed out that visiting the student residence felt like a family gathering, where we learned about the different habits and traditions related to the holy month of Ramadan in the GCC and neighboring countries. "We also aimed at establishing NBK's consistent presence in various social occasions as part of being actively involved in the community and in line with our firm belief that the NBK's corporate social responsibility initiatives are



Manal Al-Mattar

integral part of community development and porosity," she added.

Head of the student residence department, Sharifa Al-Kandari, Head of the activities department Mai Al-Osaimi and residence controller Nada Al-Qabandi, as well as students welcomed NBK team led by the Bank's executive management. Deputy residence controller Mubarak Al-Enezi and social worker Salman Boodai also welcomed NBK team at the student residence.



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Congress backs Gandhi after election defeat

Trump-Dem row takes harsh turn with impeachment at stake

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PRETORIA: A South African woman wearing a dress depicting newly-elected South African President Cyril Ramaphosa (seen inset) sings and dances during his inauguration ceremony at the Loftus Versfeld Stadium yesterday. —AFP

Ramaphosa sworn in S African president

All of the country's former presidents at ceremony except for Zuma

PRETORIA: Cyril Ramaphosa yesterday took the oath of office as president of South Africa at a colorful ceremony, vowing "a new era" amid expectations he will revive the economy and fight corruption. Foreign heads of state from more than 40 countries were among 36,000 people who witnessed the event replete with pomp, military honors and an air force flyover at a rugby stadium in Pretoria.

The 66-year-old leader was unanimously elected by parliament to a five-year term after his African National Congress (ANC) won legislative elections on May 8, taking 230 of the 400 seats. The ANC garnered 57.5 percent of the vote, its weakest result since apartheid was overturned 25 years ago. Ramaphosa is a trade unionist who played a prominent part in the struggle to end white-minority rule before becoming a successful businessman.

He faces a herculean task to tackle the country's many problems - from a sickly economy in which more than a

quarter of the workforce is jobless, to entrenched crime and corruption and land ownership that remains overwhelmingly in the hands of whites. Many solutions will require him to inch his way along a high wire, balancing leftwing calls for radical change with investors' demands for caution. "A new era has dawned in our country. A brighter day is rising upon South Africa," Ramaphosa said in his inaugural address.

"This is a defining moment for a young nation like ours. It is a time for us to make the future that we yearn for. 'I pledge here today that I will serve you...to build the South Africa that we all want and deserve. 'Let us declare that when we gather to celebrate the 50th year of our freedom there shall no longer be any person in this land who is unable to meet their basic needs'."

Cabinet tensions

Ramaphosa's first test will be choosing a cabinet - a task beset by rival factions within the ANC. He is

expected to name his new team within days, but the choice of vice president hangs in the balance after deputy David Mabuza said Wednesday he would defer taking his seat in parliament. An ANC integrity commission report has alleged that Mabuza - the party's No. 2 - "prejudiced the integrity of the ANC and brought the organization into disrepute". Ramaphosa first took power last year when the ANC forced scandal-plagued Jacob Zuma to resign after nine years in office, and vowed to root out corruption.

Zuma a no-show

Breaking with tradition Ramaphosa's swearing-in ceremony was moved from the amphitheatre of the Union Buildings - the seat of government, where Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the country's first black president in 1994. All other leaders after Mandela have taken their oaths at the Union Buildings, whose grounds can accommodate only up to 4,500 people. But this year

the event was moved to the 52,000-seater Loftus Versfeld rugby stadium to allow more people to attend.

All of the country's former presidents were at the ceremony except for Zuma, who on Friday attended a court hearing on corruption charges in the southeastern city of Pietermaritzburg. He told supporters afterwards he was too busy to go to Pretoria for Ramaphosa's inauguration. "There is no time. I am fighting to stay out of jail," Zuma said. One of his several wives was to attend the ceremony however.

More than 2,500 police were deployed for security, while a battalion of soldiers performed ceremonial parades inside the stadium. The air force put a spectacular aerobatics display overhead. The opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) has castigated the government for what it called a "wasteful" expenditure of 120 million rand (\$8.3 million) for the ceremony. "It is no secret that the South African economy is in dire straits," senior DA lawmaker John Steenhuisen said. —Agencies

Indian MPs face charges including for rape, murder

NEW DELHI: More than 40 percent of lawmakers in India's new parliament face criminal charges - some as serious as murder and rape - and the list is growing, an electoral reform group said yesterday. One member of parliament for the opposition Congress party is battling 204 cases including manslaughter and robbery, the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) said. At least 233 of the 543 members named as winning seats on Thursday face criminal proceedings, according to the ADR, whose election chief Anil Verma said there is a "disturbing trend" in parliament that "is bad for the democracy".

The ADR said it studied the records of 539 of the winners and found that the number facing criminal cases was the highest since it started studies in 2004. The report said 116 of the 303 lawmakers from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) landslide win face charges, including one for terrorism. Twenty-nine of the 52 Congress MPs face cases. Dean Kuriajose from Idudkki, in Kerala state, faces 204 criminal cases.

The ADR said the number of lawmakers facing grave criminal cases had more than doubled in a decade - including 11 murder cases, 30 manslaughter charges and three accused of rape. Indian laws bar people from contesting an election if they have been convicted while in office for crimes that carry jail terms of two or more years, with some exceptions depending on the crime. Candidates standing for office for the first time are allowed to have a conviction.

None of the 185 lawmakers from the previous parliament who faced criminal cases was convicted. Many have returned for a new term. Firebrand Hindu nationalist nun Sadhvi Pragya Thakur, a newly elected BJP MP, faces a terrorism charge over a 2008 attack near a mosque that killed six people. She denies the charges and says she was framed by a previous Congress government. Parties often brush off charges against their candidates by saying they were victims of political vendettas.

This year India's election commission made it mandatory for candidates to publish details of their criminal records during the campaign period. The ADR campaigns to bring accountability into Indian politics and successfully petitioned the Supreme Court to make candidates file their educational, financial and criminal records. Verma said the political class sought to avoid reform. But he added: "We will continue to legally fight this menace and demand that courts bar candidates facing criminal charges." —AFP

Owners charged as Surat school fire toll hits 20

SURAT, India: Indian police yesterday charged the owners of a private school which turned into an inferno that killed 20 teenagers, some of whom died jumping from the building in a desperate bid to escape the flames, officials said. Sixteen of the dead were young women who had been preparing for exams at the tuition center illegally set up on the top of a commercial building in the western city of Surat, the officials said. Horrifying images of students leaping from upper floors of the building on Friday afternoon have spread on social media. A youth died in hospital yesterday, increasing the toll, as an inquiry revealed that the victims were studying in a plastic dome that was quickly engulfed by flames. The victims were aged between 15 and 22, police said. More than 50 students were in classes when the fire erupted. Government officials said five of the dead had been due to receive exam results determining their university entrance on Saturday. All had passed with flying colors, one official told AFP. Police have charged three owners of the tuition center at the Takshashila Arcade with culpable homicide not amounting to murder, and attempted culpable homicide.

Displaced Libya students fearing for their future

TRIPOLI: The fight for control of Libya's capital is depriving tens of thousands of pupils of their education, with high school students displaced by the violence fretting about their future. "We've fallen behind... and I don't even know where we will sit our final exams or how they will calculate my grades," said Mayar Mostafa, a teenager in her last year of high school. Mostafa said the fighting has forced her and her family to flee their home in a southern Tripoli suburb, while her school has shut its doors. All this has left her "psychologically stressed out", she lamented.

Mostafa is among those who are living in limbo - not knowing when they will be able to resume their studies to salvage the school year, or when life as a whole might return to normal. On April 4, strongman Khalifa Haftar launched an offensive to seize the capital Tripoli and unseat the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA). More than 75,000 people have been driven from their homes

Shock and grief

Surat police commissioner Satish Sharma told reporters that one of the accused, Bhargav Bhutani, had been detained. Media reports said the other two were on-the-run. Sharma appealed for calm after some groups called for public protests while there were angry skirmishes on Friday night at the hospital where the injured were taken. But 22-year-old Ketan Chodvadiya has been hailed as a hero of the tragedy after he was shown in videos climbing the side of the flaming building to try to save some of the teenagers. "I climbed to the spot where I was seen in the video with the help of a ladder," he told the Indian Express newspaper.

"One student fell down and I couldn't catch her. I could see her lying dead and I can't forget the sight and I will always regret that I couldn't save her, but I am happy I could help around eight to ten students escape," he added. Widespread safety breaches were found at the center, officials said. "The fire was caused by a short-circuit in one of the air-conditioning ducts on the ground floor ... and spread to the third floor," said Surat's fire and emergency services commissioner U Upadhyay.

The Takshashila Arcade had permission for just one floor but two additional storeys were illegally constructed, according to a chief fire official Basant Parekh. "The coaching class owners had illegally occupied the terrace and had put up a makeshift dome," he added. Surat city has set up a team to identify other illegal structures being used for tuition classes in exam season. Images showing flames and



SURAT: Indian firefighters try to control a major fire in a building housing a tuition center on Friday. —AFP

black smoke billowing out of the building and students jumping from the upper floors have been widely shared.

Widespread public grief and anger has been expressed at the disaster. Bollywood superstar actor Amitabh Bachchan said on Twitter that he felt "grief beyond expression". R Madhavan another leading actor and producer, said on Twitter: "Those breaking the norms should be EXECUTED." Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who comes from Gujarat state, also expressed condolences. —AFP

in the latest fighting and 510 have been killed, according to the World Health Organization. More than 2,400 have also been wounded, while 100,000 people are feared trapped by the clashes raging on the capital's outskirts. Fighting between Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army and forces loyal to the GNA continues to rage south of Tripoli, and the UN envoy has warned of a "long and bloody war".

Schools shelter displaced

Mostafa remembers the day the fighting erupted, saying she was woken by "the deafening sound of machine-gun fire and cannons". "We had to flee our home in the midst of a decisive school year," she said. "I was planning to go to university next year... Now I don't know my fate". According to the UN's agency for children, UNICEF, the fighting is "directly affecting some 122,088 children". "The academic year has been suspended in all schools in conflict-affected areas, and seven schools are currently sheltering displaced families," UNICEF said last month.

It noted that an "attack on an education warehouse destroyed 5 million schoolbooks and national school exam results" in April. In many schools classes are suspended because teachers have been trapped by fighting and are unable to reach work. According to Rachad Bader, the head of a crisis cell set up by the Libya's education ministry, "most schools in Tripoli have remained open", despite the violence.



TRIPOLI: Displaced Libyan students from areas of clashes attend a lesson at a school on the southern outskirts of the capital on May 20, 2019. —AFP

"But that is not the case for schools in Ain Zara and Abou Slim" in the southern suburbs of the capital, he said.

These "are the areas hardest hit by the military operations," Bader added. "I hope that the fighting will stop soon, otherwise we will have to look for alternatives for displaced children so that they won't have to lose their school year," he said. —AFP

International

Despite Western-backed response, Sahel militants are gaining ground

Concern over weakness of regional armies

ABIDJAN: Jihadists are scoring gains in the Sahel, defying efforts by five countries in the fragile region to fight back with Western help against Islamist militancy. Areas of insecurity on the Sahara's poor, arid southern rim are widening, analysts say, even as the so-called G5 Sahel group - Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger - seek to expand their anti-terror campaign. "Overall, the security situation in the Sahel continued to deteriorate, having spillover effects on neighboring countries that are not members of G5 Sahel, including Benin, Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) and Togo," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said this month.

Guterres said in recent months, armed groups had been sighted on Mauritania's border with Mali, attacks on security forces had continued unabated in Mali itself, "terrorist groups, militias and armed gangs" had proliferated in Burkina, and militants had killed dozens of soldiers and civilians in Niger. At the end of last year more than 120,000 people had been displaced in Mali, a tripling in the space of a year, while 160,000 have fled their homes in Burkina.

According to a French military source, there are about 2,000 fighters across the Sahel, of which up to 1,400 are in Mali. Their hallmark tactics - brutal gun attacks, roadside bombings and hostage taking - seek to weaken the rule of law and authority of the state, often fomenting inter-communal fighting on which they capitalize. "There are not necessarily more attacks, but the attacks are more violent. The groups have acquired some technical compe-

tence," said Mahamadou Sawadogo, a researcher at the Crossroads of Study and Research for Democracy and Development at Senegal's Gaston Berger University.

"There's an increase in power at the quantitative level and also in their efficiency," noted Lassina Diarra, author of a book on West African countries facing transnational terrorism. "In Burkina, there appears to have been a merger of means between groups affiliated to Al-Qaeda and those affiliated to the Islamic State," he said. "It seems that they now lend each other a helping hand." Diarra suggested that battle-hardened fighters may have arrived from the Middle East after the so-called Islamic State lost its territory in Syria. "We are seeing changes in operational methods with the use of explosives, mines and car bombs" combined with more ambitious raids, he said.

Military weakness

Both academics showed concern at the weakness of regional armies, particularly in Burkina. The problems facing the G5's armed forces are well known. Their militaries are under-equipped and poorly trained, even though governments are already earmarking as much as 15 percent of their budgets on security. With support from France and others, the G5 countries are pushing ahead with plans for a pooled 5,000-man force.

But at present, they lack coordination in border zones, where militant forces are particularly active and whole populations become internally displaced. "The armed groups play with these borders," Sawadogo said. Even if

militants do not maintain a permanent presence, their zone of influence is growing. "They don't need to be there all the time, holding ground. They create the feeling of insecurity with sporadic attacks," Diarra said.

"They harass the symbols of the state" and drive out civil servants working for it, Sawadogo noted. "They don't have a hold over areas but they are not seeking to be a static force. It's governance from a distance. They have created comfort zones," he argued. "And now there's a corridor" that extends from southwest Burkina Faso to Mali and western Niger.

Hearts and minds?

"We need to fight against the ideology of the jihadists," Diarra said when asked how to fight back. He recommended providing instruction for imams that would avoid radical preaching and "factors for recruitment". "We have to fight on the same ground as the jihadists, use the same strategy," Sawadogo said. "For now, the jihadists benefit from complicity. They move around, prepare attacks and routes to fall back. They pass through villages."

But while village folk know about the armed groups, the security forces get little or no intelligence to strike, he said. Both researchers insisted on the need to uphold the presence of the state, with officials in place and a degree of local investment to help restore confidence among citizens. With the right structure in place, they said, people might be inclined to help the security forces and ignore extremism. — AFP

Assange indictment dangerous precedent for journalists?

NEW YORK: Does the indictment of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange under the US Espionage Act for publishing classified military and diplomatic documents threaten the constitutional right to freedom of the press? Many legal experts fear it does, and say journalists could find themselves facing similar charges if they try to protect their sources. "What he is accused of doing is exactly what professional journalists do every day - seeking, receiving and publishing important information about our government," said Sonja West, a law professor at the University of Georgia. "When it comes to the Espionage Act, this is a line that press advocates have been closely watching, and the Trump administration just crossed it."

Sixteen of the 17 new charges against the 47-year-old Australian unveiled Thursday by the US Justice Department are related to obtaining and disseminating classified information. The military documents and diplomatic cables were obtained by former Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning, who was sentenced in 2013 under the Espionage Act to 35 years in prison over the leaks. In a bid to head off a stampede of criticism from press freedom groups, Assistant Attorney General John Demers said: "Julian Assange is no journalist."

Ben Rhodes, a former senior official in the administration of Barack Obama, agrees. "This is not journalism," Rhodes said on his "Pod Save the World" podcast. "Julian Assange has essentially been operating at least in recent years as an extension of Russian intelligence. His motivation behind what he's doing is not transparency," he said. "It's on behalf of a very specific agenda." But others note that the events date back to 2010, long before the 2016 presidential election campaign, when WikiLeaks published documents about the Democratic Party obtained by Russian intelligence. — AFP

Spain fights to revive international reputation

MADRID: Spain is fighting to improve its international reputation, which has taken a hit from criticism of its handling of Catalonia's independence bid and its colonial past. Spain's reputation dropped in Germany, Italy and France after Catalonia pressed ahead with a banned independence referendum in October 2017 which was marred by a police crackdown, and then declared independence to no avail, according to research from the Elcano Royal Institute, a Madrid think-tank.

Catalan separatists argue Madrid's response to the push

for independence echoes the heavy-handed repression of the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, which ended with his death in 1975. They call Catalan leaders who are in jail while on trial in Madrid over trying to break with Spain "political prisoners". Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's government responded in October by setting up a new public diplomacy agency, Espana Global, that has led Madrid's pushback against what it frames as years of unchecked disinformation by a deft secessionist movement that has distorted the world's views of Spain.

"Spain unfortunately has not proposed an alternative narrative until now," Foreign Minister Josep Borrell said during an interview published Friday in Catalan daily El Periodico de Catalunya. "We have to dedicate much more energy, time and resources to the defence of Spain as a country that is on a par with any Western democracy." Global Spain has an annual budget of one million euros (\$1.1 million) and headed by Irene Lozano, a journalist, essayist and former lawmaker who is close to Sanchez. Its goal is to "defend Spain's demo-

cratic reputation". Lozano, who helped Sanchez write a recent book called "Resistance Manual" about his roller-coaster political career, told AFP in an interview.

Recently, Lozano has also had to deal with criticism of Spain's conquest of Latin America after Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador in March demanded Madrid apologize for the abuses inflicted on the indigenous peoples of Mexico. This came after Los Angeles city hall in November took down a statue of the 15th-century explorer Christopher Columbus, who a local official accused of representing "a very violent past".

For Madrid, these criticisms are a modern day manifestation of the "black legend" of Spain's past, that accuses Spaniards of cruelty and intolerance and which the country's rivals, notably the British empire, started promoting in the 16th century. Lozano replies to the criticisms of Spain by recalling that the country's 1812 constitution was one of the most liberal of its time and women there won the right to vote in 1933, 12 years before neighboring France. — AFP

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International

Trump-Dem row takes harsh turn with impeachment at stake

Attorney general given wide latitude to declassify intel info

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump doubled down Friday on his claim of an "attempted coup" against him as his battle with Democratic foes entered a vicious new phase of personal insults and strong-arm tactics. Hovering over it all: The looming question of whether or not the Republican leader will be impeached - "the big I-word", as Trump put it recently. The president said he has given his attorney general wide latitude to declassify intelligence information as he probes the origins of the government's investigation into Trump's 2016 campaign ties to Russia.

"They will be able to see ... how the hoax or witch hunt started and why it started," he told reporters as he departed on a trip to Japan. "It was an attempted coup or an attempted takedown of the president of the United States." "There's word and rumor that the FBI and others were involved. CIA were involved with the UK, having to do with the Russian hoax," he said, adding that he might talk to the outgoing British Prime Minister Theresa May about it. "We're exposing everything," he added.

Trump's bid to turn the tables on his political opponents comes amid an escalating constitutional clash of powers with the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives. House Democratic leaders have launched numerous probes aimed at getting evidence gathered during Special Counsel Robert Mueller's 22-month probe into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential campaign -

only to be stonewalled by the White House. That has raised calls by Democrats to initiate impeachment proceedings against Trump. In an odd turn however, it has been House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Trump's congressional nemesis, who has pumped the brakes on impeachment - even as she accuses the president of a potentially impeachable cover-up. The president, for his part, is daring his opponents to initiate proceedings against him - confident that an impeachment by the House would most certainly be blocked in the Republican-controlled Senate.

"If they try to Impeach President Trump, who has done nothing wrong (No Collusion), they will end up getting him re-elected," the president wrote Friday, approvingly retweeting a warning to Democrats by a fellow Republican, Senator Lindsey Graham.

Cutting words

Trump, meanwhile, is pulling out the stops in the fight for political supremacy as the country heads toward the 2020 presidential election. On Thursday, he gave Attorney General William Barr sweeping and unprecedented new authorities to investigate the investigators of his 2016 campaign's ties to Russia - directing all US intelligence agencies to "quickly and fully cooperate" with Barr's review. The intelligence agencies had previously rebuffed, on national security grounds, declassification demands by Republican lawmakers

seeking to spotlight alleged misdeeds by investigators. As pressure mounts, a cutting war of words has erupted between Trump and Pelosi, with each questioning the other's mental stability. On Friday, Trump posted a video of Pelosi remarks that had been edited to mash up instances in which she stumbled over her words. Asked why he was attacking her personally, Trump bristled: "Did you hear what she said about me long before I went after her?" "She said terrible things, so I just responded in kind. Look, you think Nancy is the same as she was? She's not," he said.

On Thursday, speaking to a room full of farmers and ranchers who had been invited to the White House for an unrelated event on China tariffs, Trump said Pelosi - the most senior female politician in American history - was "a mess". Pelosi had spent the previous few days needing Trump, claiming he threw a "temper tantrum" during a meeting with Democrats, saying she would "pray" for him, and suggesting those close to him should stage an "intervention". "She's obviously gotten under the president's skin," House Democrat Ro Khanna told CNN.

Where this goes from here is unclear - although there is an opportunity to lower the political temperature, with Trump off to Japan and Pelosi out of Washington next week on a holiday recess. Pelosi must contend with a restless Democratic caucus that is divided over whether or not to impeach the president. — AFP



TOKYO: US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump disembark from Air Force One upon arrival at Haneda International airport yesterday. — AFP

Trump mulling pardons in war crimes cases

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump confirmed Friday he is considering pardons for several military servicemen accused or convicted of war crimes, in what critics say would be an abuse of the powers afforded him under the US Constitution. The New York Times reported, quoting administration officials, that Trump envisaged making the controversial pardons during the Memorial Day weekend, when Americans honor those who died while serving in the military.

Reportedly among those being considered is Edward Gallagher, a Navy SEAL accused of shooting unarmed civilians and stabbing a teenage captive to death, who is due to stand trial starting next week. Trump is also said to be eyeing a pardon for Matt Golsteyn, an ex-member of the elite US Army Green Berets, charged with premeditated murder in the shooting death of an alleged Taliban bomb-maker in 2010.

Three Marines, arrested after video footage showed them urinating on the bodies of dead Taliban fighters in 2011, are also reportedly under consideration for a pardon, as well as a former Blackwater employee convicted of killing a teenaged Iraqi civilian in 2007. "We're looking at a lot of different pardons for a lot of different people," Trump told reporters on the White House lawn Friday, when asking why he was considering pardoning war criminals.

"Some of these soldiers are people that have fought hard, long, you know. We teach them how to be great fighters and when they fight sometimes they get really treated very unfairly. So we're going to take a look at it," Trump added. Trump confirmed he was considering two or three cases that were "a little bit controversial," adding that he may let trials of these people proceed and then decide afterward. "I haven't done anything yet. I haven't made any decisions," he said.

Retired Navy admiral James Stavridis was among those who came out strongly against Trump's reported plans. "I commanded several of the servicemen Trump may pardon," the former NATO Supreme Allied Commander wrote Wednesday in Time magazine. "Letting them off will undermine the military." This type of pardon, he argued, "strengthens enemy propaganda, as they will correctly say that we do not hold ourselves accountable for our own standards," and "spurs our enemies on to even more barbaric behavior."

Such pardons would be "disgusting," warned Democratic presidential hopeful and Navy veteran Pete Buttigieg. It would be "an affront to the idea of good order and discipline and to the idea of the rule of law, the very thing we believe we're putting our lives on the line to defend," said Buttigieg, who served as a naval intelligence officer in Afghanistan in 2014.

Killing prisoners

Gallagher, 39, is slated to face a military tribunal May 28 at the San Diego naval base. He is accused of stabbing a wounded 15-year-old Iraqi prisoner to death in 2017, while an American medic was treating him. He is also accused of shooting a young girl and an old man with a sniper rifle in 2017 and 2018, and of firing a heavy machine gun into a residential area. Golsteyn is to be tried at court martial but a date has not been set yet. According to court document excerpts, Golsteyn worried that the Taliban suspect, whom he was unable to detain for more than 24 hours, might make more bombs and kill an Afghan tribal leader who had identified him.

Investigators have said Golsteyn and another soldier eventually took the suspect back to his house and killed him. They then burned the body. A third controversial case involves Nicholas Slatten, 35, who worked as a security guard for the US private military contractor Blackwater and was convicted in December of killing a teenaged Iraqi civilian in the 2007 Nisour Square massacre in Baghdad, which sparked global outrage. "Bad message. Bad precedent. Abdication of moral responsibility. Risk to us," tweeted retired Army general Martin Dempsey. "The wholesale pardon of US service members accused of war crimes signals our troops and allies that we don't take the law of armed conflict seriously." — AFP

50 years ago, a dress rehearsal for Moon landing

WASHINGTON: As Earth grew ever smaller below his spacecraft, Apollo 10 commander Tom Stafford made an unusual request to mission control. The year was 1969, and his vessel was the first to be equipped with a color camera, which was beaming live images to an awestruck global audience. "I was feeling real high," recalled Stafford, who is now 88 and the last surviving member of the crew. "I said: 'Think you could call over to London and tell the president of the Flat Earth Society that he's wrong?'"

It was a light moment during a mission of paramount importance: 50 years ago this week, Apollo 10 set off to finalize the preparations for Apollo 11's lunar landing. The mission's objectives included an eight-hour orbit in a lunar module that Stafford flew down to within 14 km of the Moon's surface. Apollo 10 paved the way for Neil Armstrong's "giant leap for mankind" two months later - a historic milestone and a colossal geopolitical win for the United States at the height of the Cold War. But Stafford, a US Air Force test pilot who was among the first astronauts recruited for the newly formed National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), almost wasn't part of the mission, after a close call a few years earlier.

Migrants dropped at US bus stations as shelters overflow

SAN BERNARDINO, California: The three white vans bearing the Border Patrol logo slowly make their way into a back alley next to the Greyhound bus station in the city of San Bernardino, east of Los Angeles. As the agents slide open the doors, a group of 36 haggard-looking men, women and children - most of them from Guatemala - exit the vehicles carrying plastic bags filled with their meager belongings. They line up on a sidewalk as their names are checked by a representative from a local NGO who also enquires about their health.

A man asks where he can rent a phone and one of the agents sternly answers back in Spanish. "You decided to come this way into the US, you figure out what to do," the agent says. "What do you expect? You want me to give you my house?" Though clearly anxious about this next phase in their long journey to the US, the faces of the migrants show their relief at having made it so far. The group is part of thousands being dropped off at bus stations in California and other states by US Border Patrol as the agency deals with an influx of migrants crossing the border with Mexico and filling detention facilities to capacity. After staying at a local shelter or church in San Bernardino, the migrants typically head to other states to join relatives or friends pending the outcome of their asylum application. According to immigration authorities, more than 40,000 immigrant families

Judge suspended for anti-Trump comments

LOS ANGELES: A US judge has been suspended for six months without pay after making derogatory comments about Donald Trump, including criticizing his "inability to govern and political incompetence". Utah judge Michael Kwan's suspension earlier this week by the state's supreme court says that his behavior was in violation of the judicial code of conduct and sullied the reputation of the judiciary. "Judge Kwan's behavior denigrates his reputation as an impartial, independent, dignified, and courteous jurist who takes no advantage of the office in which he serves," the court said in a 19-page opinion.

As regards Kwan's postings about Trump on Facebook and LinkedIn, the court said they "were laden with blunt, and sometimes indelicate, criticism". In one posting on Jan 20, 2017, when Trump was inaugurated president, Kwan wrote: "Welcome to governing. 'Will you dig your heels in and spend the next four years undermining our country's reputation and standing in the world? ... Will you continue to demonstrate your inability to govern and political incompe-



KENNEDY SPACE CENTER, Florida: In this May 18, 1969 image, Apollo 10 Commander Tom Stafford, heading to the Kennedy Space Center launch pad, pats the nose of a stuffed Snoopy held by Janyne Flowers, astronaut Gordon Cooper's secretary. — AFP

Narrow escape

The US entered the space race well behind the Soviet Union, which put the first artificial satellite, Sputnik 1, into orbit in 1957, and sent up the first human, Yuri Gagarin, four years later. To catch up, the Gemini program was conceived to devise rendezvous and docking techniques for an eventual mission to the Moon. "As a boy I'd read about Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon - you'd see these spaceships flying together. Nobody had ever done it," Stafford said at a Washington



SAN BERNARDINO, California: Central American asylum seekers exit US Border Patrol vans as a Border Patrol agent unloads their belongings outside the bus station on May 22, 2019. — AFP

apprehended at the border since March 19 and with no known criminal record have been released into the United States due to Border Patrol facilities being swamped.

"Whenever possible, the releases have been coordinated with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs)," US Border Patrol said in a statement to AFP. "As NGOs have reached their capacities, CBP has released family units at transportation hubs during daylight hours when the weather does not endanger those released." Nearly 250,000 unaccompanied children or people traveling with family members were apprehended at the border in April alone, officials said, as opposed to some 59,000 in April of last year - a 400 percent increase. — AFP

tenence?" In another posting a month later, Kwan wrote: "Welcome to the beginning of the fascist takeover."

He continued, "We need to... be diligent in questioning Congressional Republicans if they are going to be the American Reichstag and refuse to stand up for the Constitution, refuse to uphold their oath of office and enable the tyrants to consolidate their power." On another occasion while presiding over a hearing, Kwan got into an exchange with a defendant in which he appeared to criticize Trump's immigration and tax policies, the court said.

The defendant told Kwan that he planned to pay all of his court fines when he got his tax returns. "You do realize that we have a new president, and you think we are getting any money back?" Kwan told the defendant. "Prayer might be the answer," Kwan added. "Cause, he just signed an order to start building the wall and he has no money to do that, and so if you think you are going to get taxes back this year, uh-yeah, maybe, maybe not. But don't worry, there is a tax cut for the wealthy so if you make over \$500,000 you're getting a tax cut." Kwan, who has served as a judge in the city of Taylorsville for the past two decades and has a history of misconduct linked to politically charged comments and his temper, has acknowledged that his behavior was unbecoming a judge. But he described his in-court political statements as an attempt at humor and argued, unsuccessfully, that a suspension would amount to infringing on his freedom of speech. — AFP

event commemorating the anniversary. The Oklahoma native was chosen for the two-man Gemini 6A mission, which could have ended in tragedy had it not been for the quick thinking of Commander Wally Schirra. Seconds before lift-off on December 12, 1965, they realized the engines of their Titan II rocket had cut out. Mission rules dictated that Schirra should pull a cord and eject them because if the rocket had taken off with partial thrust, it would likely fall back to its launch pad, causing a catastrophic explosion.

But realizing from previous experience that they had not in fact taken off, Schirra decided to wait. Stafford said it was a decision that probably saved their lives as the cabin had been soaking in pure oxygen for hours. "We were at 100 percent oxygen, we could have been like two Roman candles going out!" he told AFP. The mission launched three days later and met its objectives.

But perhaps Stafford's finest hour would be the Apollo 10 mission from May 18-26, 1969. It became synonymous with Snoopy and Charlie Brown in the minds of the public, because the three-man crew named their lunar and command modules after the iconic cartoon characters. "NASA developed a relationship with Charles Schulz, who drew Peanuts," he explained. The names were said to have caused some consternation among NASA management, which felt they lacked sufficient gravitas - accordingly, "Eagle" and "Columbia" were chosen for Apollo 11. The Apollo 10 crew could have been chosen to land on the Moon, but for the fact that NASA had not shaved enough weight off their lander at the time, added Stafford. Of course, they couldn't actually see it until they were upon it, because it was eclipsed by the Earth on their trajectory. — AFP

At least 29 inmates killed in clashes at Venezuela jail

CARACAS: At least 29 prisoners were killed and 19 police wounded in clashes at a jail in western Venezuela Friday, authorities said. The incident at the police station jail in the town of Acarigua, in Portuguesa state, occurred when police special forces (FAES) tried to stop a "massive prison break" which resulted in the deaths of 29 inmates, according to Portuguesa public security secretary Oscar Valero. The prisoners received the officers with "a hail of gunfire" while detonating three grenades, which injured 19 police, Valero told reporters.

The Una Ventana a la Libertad NGO, which defends prisoner rights, gave a preliminary toll of 25 dead. NGO director Carlos Nieto said the clashes broke out when the FAES attempted to rescue visitors who had been taken hostage Thursday by the "pran" - the leader of the inmates - at the jail. "This morning (authorities) sent the FAES and there was a clash. The detainees had weapons, they shot at the police. Apparently they also detonated two grenades," Nieto told AFP. The inmates' leader, Wilfredo Ramos, was one of those killed, according to an internal police report. The report, quoted by the NGO, said several officers were wounded by "shrapnel and explosives".

The prisons ministry did not comment on the incident, saying police station jails are not under its control. A video shared on social media shows an inmate - believed to be Ramos - with his face partly covered while brandishing a pistol and what appears to be grenades, and threatening two women. "It's our lives (on the line) and those of the visitors here," he says, as a woman pleads for help, while warning the police to stay out because "I'm prepared to die." Nieto said the inmates were demanding "food and to be transferred to prisons," and had denounced police "abuses". No information was given about the fate of the hostages.

Violence is a problem in such detention facilities, where inmates are supposed to be held for a maximum of 48 hours, Una Ventana a la Libertad said. There are around 500 of them in the country, holding 55,000 people even though their total capacity is just 8,000, the NGO added. The Acarigua jail has capacity for 60 inmates but was holding 500, according to the police report. These provisional detention centers "are not suitable to hold inmates for more than 48 hours," said Nieto. He said the prison system as a whole is "chaotic" and blamed the prisons ministry for "not fulfilling its functions." Venezuela has one of the worst records for prison violence in the region. In March 2018, 68 inmates died in a fire at a police jail in the northern city of Valencia. And in August 2017, a riot at a facility in the southern Amazonas state left 37 prisoners dead. More than 400 people are believed to have been killed in Venezuelan jails since 2011, while human rights organizations also say they face a lack of food and medicines - like much of the country - while the facilities are beset by corruption. — AFP

International

Instructions from HQ: Islamic State's new guerrilla manual

Group's newspaper instructs on hit-and-run tactics

CAIRO: After losing territory, Islamic State fighters are turning to guerrilla war - and the group's newspaper is telling them exactly how to do it. In recent weeks, IS' Al-Naba online newspaper has encouraged followers to adopt guerrilla tactics and published detailed instructions on how to carry out hit-and-run operations. The group is using such tactics in places where it aims to expand beyond Iraq and Syria. While IS has tried this approach before, the guidelines make clear the group is adopting it as standard operating procedure.

At the height of its power IS ruled over millions in large parts of Syria and Iraq. But in March it lost its last significant piece of territory, the Syrian village of Baghouz, and the group has been forced to return to its roots: a style of fighting that avoids direct confrontation, weakening the enemy by attrition and winning popular support. This attempt to revive Islamic State has so far been successful, analysts say, with many global attacks in recent weeks, including in places never before targeted by the group.

"The sad reality is that ISIS is still very dangerous," said Rita Katz, executive director of the SITE Intelligence Group, which tracks extremists. "It has the tools and foundations needed to build insurgencies across the world." In a rare video published by IS's Al

Furqan network in April, the group's leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi encouraged followers to fight on and weaken the enemy by attrition, stressing that waging war is more important than winning.

It was more downbeat than his only other video appearance from the pulpit of the Grand Al-Nuri Mosque in Mosul in 2014, when he was dressed all in black and sporting a fancy watch. In the new video, he sat cross-legged on a mattress as he spoke to three aides. A Kalashnikov rifle rested against the wall behind him - the same type of weapon that appeared in videos of Al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden and Baghdadi's predecessor Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, who both adopted the guerrilla warfare tactic.

"He appeared as a commander of hardened mujahideen, of an insurgency group, not the pampered leader of a well-off caliphate," said Katz. "His appearance totally mobilized Islamic State's supporters all over the world."

Organized tactic

Hassan Abu Hanieh, a Jordanian expert on Islamists, said IS has used guerrilla tactics to temporarily seize towns in order to attract media coverage but also as part of a new strategic approach. "This kind of war has turned into a strategy for the group," he said.

"At this stage they are using it as a war of attrition, like Baghdadi said in his latest speech." In April, IS claimed it had attacked the town of Fuqaha in Libya, killing the head of the town council and setting fire to the municipal guard headquarters. "They seized control of the town for several hours and then returned to their bases safely," the claim said of the IS fighters.

In recent weeks, Al-Naba newspaper, one of IS's most important media outlets, has published a four-part series titled "The Temporary Fall of Cities as a Working Method for the Mujahideen". In the articles, IS urged fighters to avoid face-to-face clashes with the enemy - something the group had previously encouraged. The series explained how guerrilla fighters can weaken the enemy without taking losses. It urged the jihadists to seize weapons from victims and grab or burn their valuables.

Among the goals of hit-and-run attacks, the series said, was to take hostages, release prisoners and seize cash from the enemy. Other goals were to "secure the needs of fighters" by collecting money, food, medicine and weapons "particularly when it is difficult to secure these needs because (the fighters) are in a weak position," one of the articles said. These guerrilla warfare manuals are the most detailed IS has published yet, Katz said.



TRAL: A Kashmiri protester wears a shirt depicting a picture of militant commander Zakir Musa stands in front of a damaged house following a gun battle in Dadsar village south of Srinagar on Friday. — AFP

The language is similar to the one used in manuals published years ago by Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia via its "Al-Battar" electronic magazine, which provided military instructions to supporters and cells around the world, she said. — Reuters

Sri Lanka troops hunt militants linked to attacks

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's military launched a major hunt yesterday for remnants of an Islamist group which carried out the Easter suicide bombings that killed 258 people, officials said. Several Colombo suburbs were targeted by troops using emergency powers on arrests and detentions adopted after the April 21 attacks. "Special cordon-and-search operations are under way in three areas just outside Colombo," a military official told reporters.

Similar operations were also carried out in North Western Province, near Colombo, where anti-Muslim riots this month left one man dead and hundreds of Muslim-owned shops, homes and mosques destroyed. Security forces have arrested scores of suspects in connection with the bombings of three hotels and three churches and over what appeared to be organized violence against the island's Muslim minority.

While authorities say the immediate jihadist threat has been blunted, President Maithripala Sirisena on Wednesday extended for one month the 30-day state of emergency imposed after the suicide bombings. Sirisena said the move was to maintain "public security", with the country still on edge after the attacks on three hotels and three churches that were blamed on a local jihadi group, the National Thowtheeth Jama'ath (NTJ). The Islamic State group has also claimed a role in the attacks. Christians make up 7.6 percent and Muslims 10 percent of mainly Buddhist Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, the independent Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka accused police of failing to prevent the anti-Muslim riots after the bombings. "There appeared to be no preventive measures taken although retaliatory violence against the Muslim communities was a distinct possibility after the terror attacks of April 21," the HRCSL said in a letter to acting police chief Chandana Wickramaratne. The commission faulted the police for releasing suspects who were later seen taking part in attacks on Muslim targets. — AFP



LHASA: This handout photograph taken on May 22, 2019 shows US ambassador to China Terry Branstad meeting local government and Communist Party leaders in China's western Tibet Autonomous Region. — AFP

US envoy urges Beijing 'dialogue' with Dalai Lama

BEIJING: The US ambassador to China has called on Beijing to open a "substantive dialogue" with the Dalai Lama in remarks made this week during a rare visit to Tibet, his embassy said yesterday. Terry Branstad visited northwest China's Qinghai province - home to many Tibetans - as well as the Tibet Autonomous Region, where access is restricted for diplomats and journalists. "He encouraged the Chinese government to engage in substantive dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives, without preconditions, to seek a settlement that resolves differences," an embassy spokesman told AFP via email.

China is accused by human rights groups of repressing Tibet's religion and culture, and cracking down on separatism. Beijing says it protects religious freedom and has invested heavily to modernize the region and raise living standards. Since fleeing to India in 1959

following a failed uprising in the Tibetan capital Lhasa, the Dalai Lama has been trying to reach a compromise with the Chinese government over the fate of his people.

Having initially called for Tibet's independence, the Buddhist leader is now campaigning for greater autonomy. But negotiations with Beijing have stalled since 2010. Observers accuse China of running down the clock until the death of the 83-year-old religious leader. During his visit to Lhasa, Branstad visited the Potala Palace - the former residence of the Dalai Lama - as well as Tibetan Buddhism's holiest temple, the more than 1,300-year-old Jokhang. He met with senior Tibetan religious and cultural leaders.

"He also expressed concerns regarding the Chinese government's interference in Tibetan Buddhists' freedom to organize and practice their religion," the embassy spokeswoman said. "The Ambassador raised our long-standing concerns about lack of consistent access to the Tibetan Autonomous Region," she added. In order to visit Tibet, foreigners require a special permit. For tourists it is usually relative easy to obtain, but for diplomats and in particular journalists it is more difficult. — AFP

Congress backs Gandhi after election defeat

NEW DELHI: Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi, scion of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, offered to resign yesterday after his Congress party was trounced in a second straight national election but the gesture was rejected, party officials said. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi triumphantly accepted pledges of allegiance from members of allied parties after his second landslide win, Congress leaders licked their wounds at a special meeting in New Delhi.

"Party President Rahul Gandhi offered his resignation but it was unanimously rejected by the members of Congress Working Commission," Randeep Surjewala, a party spokesman, told reporters. Gandhi led the party campaign against Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) but managed only 52 seats, barely more than the historic low of 44 in the 2014 election. The BJP increased its majority, taking 303 of the 543 elected seats announced Friday, up from 282.

"In a democracy wins and losses keep happening but providing leadership is a different matter. He gave leadership," senior Congress member Ghulam Nabi Azad told reporters after the meeting. Azad said party barons at the meeting, including Gandhi's mother Sonia and former prime minister Manmohan Singh, urged Rahul Gandhi to continue. Gandhi led the Congress campaign in the 2014 defeat before taking over from his mother as party president in 2017.

The 48-year-old lost his constituency in



NEW DELHI: Indian National Congress Party president Rahul Gandhi gestures as his mother and Congress senior leader Sonia Gandhi looks on during a Congress Working Committee meeting yesterday. — AFP

Amethi, Uttar Pradesh, that has been a family bastion for decades. He was allowed to contest a second seat however and won in southern India. Experts outside Congress have strongly criticized his display against Modi, who mocked the opposition leader as a spoiled member of the family dynasty that has dominated Indian politics since independence in 1947, providing three prime ministers.

Modi was unanimously elected head of his BJP-led alliance in a special ceremonial meeting at parliament. He is to be sworn in for a new term this week. In West Bengal state, where Modi's BJP took seats from the regional Trinamool Congress party, supporters of the two sides fought battles that left one dead, officials said. Paramilitary forces boosted security on Saturday because of the violence.

The BJP said a 23-year-old party worker was shot dead by Trinamool activists late Friday at Chakda, north of the regional capital Kolkata. The rival party denied any involvement. The man's family said he was shot in a field near his home. Clashes between BJP and Trinamool activists were also reported in three other districts. — AFP

Cleric who taught 'American Taliban' hails his release

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani religious teacher who spent six months with "American Taliban" John Walker Lindh has hailed his release, describing him as a "good person" who became upset over the situation in Afghanistan, Kashmir and Palestine. Lindh symbolized betrayal for the US when he was captured, bearded and dishevelled, while fighting for the Taliban in the Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif in 2001. His release from prison on Thursday - three years before the end of his 20-year sentence - has re-awakened memories of the Sept 11 attacks and underscored the tragedy of the US invasion of Afghanistan, where civilians are paying a deadly price as the war grinds on.

President Donald Trump said he was upset about the release, but government lawyers had told him there was no legal way to keep him in prison. "We'll be watching him and watching him closely," Trump told reporters. But Mohammad Iltimas, who taught Lindh for six months at a Muslim school near the Afghan border in Pakistan's northwest, said he was happy to hear of the decision to release him. "He was such a pure person, such a positive-thinking man," Iltimas told AFP.

Iltimas said Lindh came to his school - the Madrassa Arabia Hussania, outside the city of Bannu - in Dec 2000, and stayed until May or April of the next year. "He wanted to memorize the Quran," he said, describing how Lindh could often be seen listening to Quranic verses on a tape recorder or learning Pashto. "He was such a good student, pious and focused on his



PESHAWAR: Mohammad Iltimas, a Pakistani former religious teacher of "American Taliban" John Walker Lindh, displays notebooks of Lindh at his residence on Friday. — AFP

studies, I never saw him sitting idle. He was not interested in sports. He was such a serious and committed person to his cause."

Lindh was "upset over the situation in Afghanistan, Kashmir and Palestine", said Iltimas. At the time, the Taliban regime which controlled most of Afghanistan was engaged in a bloody fight with the rebellious Northern Alliance. Soon the madrassa student enlisted in the Taliban's ranks. After the United States intervened in Afghanistan following the Sept 11, 2001 attacks, Lindh was one of hundreds of Taliban fighters captured by Northern Alliance forces on Nov 25. He revealed his American identity to two CIA officers in the city of Mazar-i-Sharif. One of them, Johnny Micheal Spann, was killed in a prisoner revolt hours after he interrogated Lindh, making him the first American killed in post-9/11 conflict in Afghanistan. Mazar residents who remembered Lindh described to AFP their shock on hearing that an American had been captured fighting for the Islamist militants. "People were asking how is that possible," recalled 40-year-old resident Khayber Ibrahim. — AFP

British, Irish climbers become Everest victims

KATHMANDU: The deaths of an Irish and a British climber on Mount Everest took the toll from a deadly season on the world's highest peak to 10, expedition organizers said yesterday. British climber Robin Fisher, 44, reached the summit Saturday morning but collapsed when he had got just 150 m back down the slope. "Our guides tried to help but he died soon after," Murari Sharma of Everest Parivar Expedition told AFP. On the northern Tibet side of the mountain, a 56-year-old Irish man died Friday morning, his expedition organizers confirmed in a statement on their Facebook page.

The climber decided to return without reaching the summit but died in his tent at the North Col pass at 7,000 m. With two or three more days of climbing to come before hostile weather closes the summit again, the season is on target to be one of the most deadly of recent years.

Death zone queues

Four climbers from India and one each from the United States, Austria and Nepal have died on Everest during the short climbing season. Another Irish mountaineer is presumed dead after he slipped and fell close to the summit. A traffic jam of climbers in the Everest "death zone" has been blamed for at least four of the deaths. With the short window of suitable weather due to close soon, scores of climbers wanting to achieve the ultimate mountaineering accolade created bottlenecks close to the summit.

Teams had to line up for hours in freezing temperature to reach the top - risking frostbite and deadly altitude sickness. Indian climber Anuja Vaidya, 21, who reached the summit Wednesday said her team had to wait over an hour during the descent as a line of climbers stood in the way. "I was scared and worried," Vaidya said "It was so cold and windy. But we couldn't just come down as everyone was just waiting in a long queue." While Vaidya made it back without injury, she said she saw many frostbite-stricken climbers at the base camp. — AFP

CONSUMER PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

RECALL INFORMATION

Mercedes-Benz Cars
Model: S Class 4Matic (217,222)

VIN/FPN:
WDDUG8G81A379174 WDDUG8G81A374261
WDDUG8G81A379847 WDDUG8G81A374679
WDDUG8G81A379040 WDDUG8G81A368443
WDDUG8G81A372179 WDDUG8G81A366990
WDDUG8G81A378654 WDD221861A358079
WDD221861A366423 WDD221861A416153
WDDUG8G81A033525 WDDUG8G81A033118

Model year: 2018

RECALL REASON

The Hands-off Detection (HoD) function may not comply with the specifications in your vehicle. Because of this, the warning for the driver is not available. But the distance regulation, the steering assistance and all other functions of the driver systems are still available.

REMEDY

To check the steering boot installation position and correct if necessary, further update the software of the EPS control unit as a precautionary measure. The required work will certainly be carried out free of charge.

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Analysis

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In Asia, Trump finds more than ever he's among friends

In Europe, Donald Trump's relationships with leaders range from lukewarm to hostile. But in Asia, more than ever, the US president is finding that he's among friends. At a time that Trump is ramping up pressure on China, he has built warm relationships elsewhere in Asia and has recently seen surprise electoral triumphs by key partners. Japan is rolling out the red carpet for Trump, who will become the first foreign leader to meet newly enthroned Emperor Naruhito. Trump will bond with conservative Prime Minister Shinzo Abe over sumo wrestling and, weather permitting, their latest rounds of golf.

Trump's trip comes on the heels of India's election in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a Hindu nationalist who has enthusiastically built ties with Washington, won an unexpectedly strong new mandate, as well as Australia's polls, where Prime Minister Scott Morrison stunned pundits by beating back a challenge from the Labor Party, whose promises included a "more considered" approach to China.

Trump will return to Japan in June for the Group of 20 summit in Osaka and also visit South Korea, where President Moon Jae-in, despite coming from the opposite end of the political spectrum, laid the groundwork for one of Trump's signature foreign policy initiatives — direct negotiations with North Korea.

The diplomacy comes amid an intense trade war between the United States and China that has no end in sight, with Trump blacklisting Chinese tech titan Huawei and demanding an end to allegedly rampant theft of US technology. Envisioning a long-term US struggle against China, the Trump administration has said it is working on a comprehensive policy to counter the rising Asian power, akin to the Cold War doctrine of containing the Soviet Union.

Asian model for managing Trump

Toshihiro Nakayama, a professor at Keio University in Tokyo, said the Japanese were fully aware of the controversial nature of Trump, who is facing rising calls for impeachment from Democrats. But the United States, which stations some 50,000 troops in Japan under a defense alliance, is by far the most important ally for Tokyo — as well as an often difficult partner on trade. "There's a consensus that if the American people chose Mr Trump, it's not our job to criticize it; it's our job to manage the relationship," said Nakayama, also a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars in Washington.

French President Emmanuel Macron "initially tried to embrace him with style and nuance and it didn't succeed. So the Japanese government and people say that if you're going to embrace Mr Trump, you have to totally embrace him," Nakayama said. Trump came of political age talking tough on trade in the 1980s, when Japan loomed large in the US imagination as a competitor. But Abe has courted Trump assiduously since the mogul's stunning election in 2016, gifting him gold-plated golf clubs and flying halfway around the world to celebrate his wife Melania's birthday.

Patrick Buchan, a longtime Australian official who directs the US Alliances Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said Abe served as a global model on how to woo Trump — making the relationship personal and resolving concerns through private channels. "The Europeans, in my opinion, completely mishandled the Trump phenomenon. By responding to his public rhetoric or his Twitter tirades, you only created a vicious circle," Buchan said. "I think it is partly, if you want, the Asian way of not engaging in megaphone diplomacy," he said.

Common cause on China

To be sure, Trump's ties with allies in the region have also hit rocky patches. Shortly after Trump's election, he reportedly exploded and hung up the phone on Australia's then prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, when he heard of a deal on moving refugees from Australia to America. And in India, accounts that Trump likes to mimic Modi's accent have sparked outrage. But on strategy in Asia, leaders have found common ground. China has longstanding claims on territory administered by both Japan and India, while Australia has also voiced worries about Beijing's trading practices. Modi — who will meet Trump alongside Abe in Osaka — has sided unabashedly with the United States despite India's historic resistance to alliances, building a defense relationship but stopping short of accepting any joint military operations. Modi "has been willing to take the relationship with the US further than any of his predecessors," said Michael Kugelmann, deputy director of the Asia program at the Wilson Center. But Kugelmann warned that trade disputes could cloud the relationship. Trump is ending key trading preferences for India and forced the energy-hungry economy to stop buying from Iran and Venezuela. — AFP

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DURA: Palestinians jump in a pool (Ein Fara'a, or Fara'a spring) during a heat wave next to Israeli soldiers watching near the Dura village in the West Bank. — AFP

Irish affinity for Palestinians runs deep

Dr James J Zogby
President Arab American Institute

It is always gratifying to see the strength of Irish solidarity with the people of Palestine. This was brought home again last week during a visit to Ireland. While Eurovision was in Tel Aviv, a coalition of Irish Senators, non-governmental groups, and entertainers held a counter-concert "Palestine: You're A Vision" — to demonstrate Irish "solidarity with the oppressed Palestinian people living under occupation, under siege, or in exile."

And while in Dublin, we met with political leaders preparing for the final parliamentary vote, later this summer, on a bill to ban products originating in Israeli settlements from being sold in Ireland. The bill, which has broad public and political support, has passed several rounds in the Senate and an early vote in the lower chamber. Should the bill pass a final vote and become law, Ireland will be the first EU country to take a concrete stand against illegal Israeli settlements — just as the Irish were the first in Europe to lead the way against Apartheid in South Africa.

This Irish affinity for the injustices visited upon the Palestinian people runs deep in their history and culture. For example, there's documentary evidence that in the 1920s Irish Republican movement wrote in one of their manifestos of their solidarity with the Arabs in Palestine, seeing their struggles against the British Empire as one and the same fight as their own.

Later, in 1970's, the Palestine Liberation Organization developed close ties with the Irish Republicans. And, during the 1980's the PLO office in Dublin was headed by an

Irish national — the only PLO office not run by a Palestinian. The connections weren't just political. For the Irish, it was born of an affinity for victims of colonial oppression — the result of their own history as victims of British colonialism. In Ireland this history is ever-present.

There are reminders of its terrible past around every corner. Whether it's the imposing steeples of the Anglican Church of Ireland, brought by the colonizers and imposed on Irish soil, or the monuments to the famine of the 1840s during which over one million Irish perished from starvation and another million and one-half were forced to emigrate because they were denied the right to eat the abundant product of their own land, which was intended for export to Britain.

We saw one particularly touching plaque that hangs in the home of the Lord Mayor of Dublin. It is in honor of the Choctaw Indian Nation of North America, themselves victims of cruel settler colonialism, who collected funds during the Irish famine to aid its victims.

This Irish history with colonial rule goes back centuries. Last Sunday, my wife and I were walking on Lower New Street in Kilkenny, a small city south of Dublin, when we came across the remnants of an ancient tower and the ruins of a high stone wall. On closer examination we found signage indicating that this was Talbot's Tower and part of the miles of 25-foot-high walls that surrounded the original Anglo-Norman colonial settlement that became Kilkenny. The sign noted that wall had originally been built in the 13th century. One paragraph toward the end of the description of the wall's history deserves to be quoted in full: "Whilst the main purpose of the city walls was to protect the colonists living inside from attack, they were also

used to collect taxes. People living outside the city walls who wished to sell their goods in the marketplace had to pay a toll as they went through any of the seven city gates. The walls were also a statement of Anglo-Norman power and authority over the native Irish, who were kept under constant surveillance from the nine towers on the city walls, one of which was Talbot's Tower."

Not only its insidious purposes, spelled out so clearly on the sign, but the size of the wall and very look of its ominous tower, are so strikingly similar to the Israeli Wall that "separates" Palestinians, not just from Israeli settlements, but from their own lands. The Irish from the island's southern and northwestern counties won independence from British rule and nearly one hundred years ago the Republic of Ireland came into being. But even with independence, they never forgot their history or their ability to demonstrate empathy for others who remain oppressed.

At the end of a recent visit to Kilmainham Gaol, the notorious site where the British imprisoned thousands of Irish who were accused of crimes against the empire and where they executed the leaders who signed the proclamation of the "Irish Republic," one of our tour guides made reference to the struggles of the Palestinians and expressed the hope that one day they too would enjoy freedom. The Irish story is not yet over. The Good Friday Agreement (GFA) created a path forward to peace for the northern counties that remained connected to the British-led United Kingdom. But that agreement is now in danger as a result of Britain's push to exit the European Union. One of the by-products of the GFA has been an erasure of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Gandhi-Nehru brand tainted by poll humiliation

A second straight landslide election defeat for opposition Congress leader Rahul Gandhi raised serious questions Friday about his leadership and cast a damaging shadow over one of the world's most prominent political dynasties. Gandhi, who even lost the family constituency seat to the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party of arch-rival Narendra Modi, will have to face the music at a meeting of party leaders in coming days.

The election results made grim reading for Congress barons who have relied for generations on the talismanic Nehru-Gandhi name — which rivals the Kennedy clan in the United States and the Bhuttos in Pakistan — to provide electoral success. The tarnished party was predicted to get about 50 seats, barely improving the historic low 44 it won in Modi's last landslide in 2014. Congress failed to get a single seat in 13 of the country's 29 states.

When asked about responsibility for the loss, Rahul Gandhi told a press conference late Thursday: "This is between my party and me. Between me and the Congress Working Committee." Party spokesmen have insisted the 48-year-old son, grandson and great-grandson of Indian prime ministers would not resign and that strategy was to blame for the defeat. "We have to go back to the drawing board," Congress spokesman Salman Soz said.

Tarnished icons

But experts say the party and its ruling family is in denial. "The Congress leadership has clearly failed. It is a discredited and bankrupt leadership," Kanchan Gupta, a politics expert at the New Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation think-tank, told AFP. Congress has been a virtual one-family party for the last century. India has been mesmerized by the twists and turns of its successes and frequent tragedies.

Pro-independence leader Motilal Nehru served as party president twice between 1919 and 1929. His son Jawaharlal Nehru took over and became India's first prime minister after independence, ruling until his death in 1964. His daughter Indira Gandhi and then her son Rajiv Gandhi — Rahul's father — followed as premiers. Both were assassinated in office. Rajiv's widow Sonia Gandhi won two elections



Indian National Congress Party president Rahul Gandhi gestures as he speaks during a press conference at the party headquarters in New Delhi. — AFP

as party leader but did not become prime minister, fearing her Italian origins would fuel a backlash.

Party fortunes had dwindled since she started to hand the reins to Rahul ahead of the 2014 vote and as Modi turned the BJP into a formidable vote machine, seizing on corruption scandals that hit Congress.

Rahul failed this time to connect with voters in the way that Modi did, critics said. The Nehru-Gandhi name that was once Congress's biggest asset is now a liability. The Congress "campaign was a disaster and now their very existence is under question. The more it staggers, the more it helps the BJP," Hartosh Singh Bal, political editor of Caravan magazine, told AFP. Modi made hay mocking Rahul Gandhi's lineage, calling him "shehzada" (prince), which contrasted sharply with his humble origins as a tea seller.

Modi also attacked Rahul's father, Rajiv, describing him as India's most corrupt premier. The use of Rahul's sister Priyanka on the campaign trail did not galvanize Congress votes as expected. "Rahul's party may have mobilized crowds for him but he simply couldn't connect," said Gupta at the Observer Research Foundation. Gupta said that Congress's age-old policy of offering welfare handouts to the poor no longer resonates with an "aspirational India".

"It is pretty much over to the Congress to decide if it wants to shield Rahul Gandhi, like they have done other times," said Nistula Hebbar, political editor of The Hindu newspaper. "If they do, the going gets much tougher for the party to revive from its present situation," she told AFP. Several big-hitting Indian politicians have defected from Congress over the years because of the Gandhi's refusal to give up power. Sharad Pawar, who formed the National Congress Party, and Trinamool Congress Party leader Mamata Banerjee, quit long before Rahul took charge. — AFP

Women gaining ground in EU Parliament

The number of women members of the European Parliament has doubled since direct elections were first held in 1979, but they still remain the minority, particularly in the top jobs. Here is an overview.

Around a third

Women made up just 16 percent of the 1979 parliament; in today's outgoing assembly, they account for 36 percent of the 751 MEPs. This is on average higher than in the national parliaments of the European Union's 28 member states where female representation in 2018 was on the whole just under 28 percent, according to the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS). On a worldwide scale, women hold an average of 24 percent of parliamentary seats, according to the global Inter-Parliamentary Union of national parliaments.

Country matters

The largest representations of women in the European Parliament's national delegations are from Finland (77 percent), Ireland (54.5 percent) and Croatia (54.5 percent). Malta and Sweden each have equal numbers of men and women, while Spain is not far off at 48 female. At the other end of the scale, in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania and Romania the portion of women MEPs is less than 20 percent. For this year's European elections, 11 EU states have imposed, to varying degrees, gender quotas in their electoral lists. These include Italy, Greece and Luxembourg for the first time.

For the last elections in 2014, two countries among those with gender quotas had demanded full parity, even though the obligation was not met. France ended up with 43.2 percent of women MEPs, and Belgium with 33.3 percent. Gender quotas met voluntarily by political parties can be more successful in boosting the representation of women than the "fast track" of legally binding legislative quotas, the EPRS



Chairwoman of the SPÖe Pamela Rendl - Wagner applauds during an election campaign for the European elections in Vienna, Austria yesterday. — AFP

notes. As an example, it points to Sweden and Denmark which have large percentages of women in their national parliaments.

Two presidents

The European Parliament has had only two women presidents, out of 18, since 1979, and few women occupy the assembly's senior positions. The very first president was a woman, French Holocaust survivor and women's rights icon Simone Veil, who held the post from 1979 to 1982. Another Frenchwoman, centre-right former lawyer Nicole Fontaine, was president from 1999 to 2002. In the outgoing parliament, women MEPs hold a third of the seats in the executive and women head two of the 11 political groups. Less than a third of the parliament's international delegations were headed by women MEPs in January 2018. By contrast, women represent nearly 60 percent of the parliament's administrative staff.

Better than other EU bodies

The European Parliament nonetheless has greater female representation than the EU's executive European Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Central Bank — none of which have ever had a woman as president. In 2014 a group of MEPs threatened to reject the composition of the proposed Commission because it had only four women among 28 members. Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker, who has complained that member states do not present enough female candidates, eventually gathered nine to join the body. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, MAY 26, 2019

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TOKYO: US President Donald Trump (center) speaks during a meeting with business leaders in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

Trump urges fairer trade with Japan

US president kicks off 4-day visit to cement ties

TOKYO: President Donald Trump yesterday vowed to make the US trade relationship with Japan a "little bit more fair", as he kicked off a four-day visit to Tokyo aimed at cementing ties between the two close allies.

Trump's four-day trip is expected to feature plenty of warm words and images as he plays golf and watches sumo with his "friend" Shinzo Abe, Japan's prime minister.

But the world's top and third-biggest economies are also thrashing out a trade deal and Trump wasted no time in lashing out at what he sees as an imbalance between the pair. "Japan has had a substantial edge for many, many years. But that's OK, maybe that's why you like us so much," Trump told leaders from some of Japan's leading companies, including Toyota, Honda and Nissan.

After a bilateral trade deal has been signed, it will be "a little bit more fair," vowed the president. "With this deal we hope to address the trade imbalance, remove the barriers to United States exports and ensure fairness and reciprocity in our relationship. We're getting close," said Trump.

He added: "We hope to have several further announcements soon and some very big ones over the

next few months." Some observers suspect Abe is rolling out the red carpet to present Japan as the most favorable of the countries currently engaged in trade disputes with Washington but little concrete progress is expected with elections looming for the Japanese PM.

Japanese and US officials hail as "unprecedented" the relationship between Trump and his "golf buddy" Abe, and the pair are scheduled to again find time for a round to burnish their diplomatic bromance. Just over an hour before Trump arrived, a 5.1-magnitude earthquake rattled buildings in Tokyo, with the epicenter very close to where the leaders are due to tee off. The official centerpiece of the trip is Trump's meeting tomorrow with Japan's new Emperor Naruhito, who only ascended the Chrysanthemum Throne at the beginning of the month following his father's historic abdication for health reasons. "With all the countries of the world, I'm the guest of honor at the biggest event that they've had in over 200 years," said Trump before his departure.

But the visual highlight is more likely to be Trump's visit today to the final day of the summer "bashi" or sumo tournament where he is expected to present the trophy to the winner.

pensions or benefits triggered weeks of strikes and protests by public sector workers and military veterans.

Measures to rein in the public sector wage bill include a three-year freeze in all types of state hiring and a cap on extra-salary bonuses. State pension will also be taxed. However a temporary public sector salary cut mooted by some early in the process was not included. A big chunk of the deficit cut stems from tax increases including a 2 percent import tax and a hike in tax on interest payments. The government also plans to cut some \$660 million from the debt servicing bill by issuing treasury bonds at 1 percent interest rate to the Lebanese banking sector.

"The jury's still out"

The final cabinet approval had been obstructed by a dispute over whether more needed to be done to bring the deficit lower. But Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil, speaking to local media, said "all the clauses and articles" had been agreed. Nobody had raised any objections when Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri said "we are done" at the end of the session, he added. Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil, who had been demanding further debate, signalled no objection to the cabinet decision.

"We have started along the path of controlling the deficit and reducing it and we will continue through subsequent budgets," Al-Jadeed television quoted him saying.

Deputy Prime Minister Ghassan Hasbani, speaking to Reuters on Thursday, said the draft budget would stabilise the financial situation and avoid "catastrophe" but it fell short of the major structural reforms Lebanon needs. Economists in Lebanon say it will give a "positive shock" to market confidence against a backdrop of years of low economic growth, concern over a slowdown in the growth

of bank deposits and falling central bank net foreign assets. Aberdeen Standard Investments emerging markets fund manager Kevin Daly said: "We are still skeptical because they still have very little room in the budget." Wages and subsidies made up a large proportion of the deficit, he noted. "I think the market will come back after the weekend and take a closer look ... the jury is still out on these guys".

"Never been closer"

Abe has just recently returned from Washington and Trump himself will be coming back to Japan in just over a month for the Group of 20 leaders' summit in the western city of Osaka.

The relationship between the former war-time foes "has never been stronger, has never been more powerful, has never been closer," Trump said.

"This is an exciting time for commerce between the two countries that we both love." The formal diplomatic part of the trip is limited to a short bilateral meeting and a working lunch tomorrow, after which the two leaders will brief the media. They are also poised to meet families of people abducted by North Korea during the Cold War era to train Pyongyang's spies, an emotive issue in Japan that Abe has pressed Trump to raise in talks with the North's leader Kim Jong Un. Trump will also address troops at a US base in Japan, highlighting the military alliance between the two allies at a time when tensions are running higher with North Korea after the failure of the Hanoi summit in February. Hours before Trump landed, hawkish National Security Advisor John Bolton told local media there was "no doubt" Pyongyang's recent missile tests had violated UN Security Council resolutions but insisted Washington is still ready to resume talks.

US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer held talks with his Japanese counterpart on the sidelines of the visit but with Abe facing upper house elections in the coming months and Trump battling China, both are likely to avoid concessions. —AFP

Lebanese draft budget trims deficit to 7.5% of GDP

BEIRUT: The heavily indebted Lebanese government approved a draft budget to cut its large deficit on Friday, aiming to ward off a financial crisis which top leaders have warned is bearing down on the country unless it carries out reforms. The draft 2019 budget, which will cut the deficit to 7.5 percent of GDP from 11.5 percent in 2018, is seen as a critical test of the government's will to launch reforms that have been put off for years by a state riddled with corruption and waste. Lebanon's bloated public sector is its biggest expense, followed by the cost of servicing a public debt equal to some 150 percent of GDP, one of the world's heaviest debt burdens.

The budget could help unlock some \$11 billion in financing pledged at a Paris donors' conference last year for infrastructure investment, if it wins the approval of donor countries and institutions.

"Now, praise God, we are done. The budget is complete," Information Minister Jamal Jarrah said after a cabinet session. One more meeting to seal the process will be held at the presidential palace tomorrow before the draft is referred to parliament for approval.

Fears the budget would lead to cuts to state salaries,



BEIRUT: People walk along Beirut's corniche. —AFP

Nassib Ghobril, chief economist at Lebanon's Byblos

Bank, said the draft budget had stopped increases in government spending but had not reduced them.

"They might reduce the deficit to an acceptable level. But it is not a reform budget or an austerity budget, it is a budget based heavily on taxes," he said. "This is the easy way out for the government to reduce the deficit. If we believe the figure, it is a significant reduction in the deficit, but it is not the way to do it in a stagnating economy, in an economy in need of liquidity." —Reuters

Business

NBK Economic Report

Kuwait inflation picked up slightly in 1Q19, but to remain low in 2019

Inflation among core items mixed, but mostly lower

KUWAIT: Consumer price inflation rose through 1Q19, finishing the quarter at 0.8 percent y/y from 0.4 percent at the end of 4Q18. However the rise was smaller than we expected and has in fact led us to downgrade our inflation forecast for the full year. Our measure of core inflation, which excludes food and housing, was unchanged, ending the quarter at 1.7 percent. The rise in headline inflation in Q1 was due to base effects following price falls a year ago. Prices still fell month-on-month in two of the first three months of 2019, but the declines were on average smaller than last year.

The overall picture remains one of weak price pressures due to a combination of modest economic growth, continued housing market and food price softness, slow wage growth and a strong exchange rate, which is keeping import prices down.

Housing rents see fresh decline

Deflation in the housing services component (mostly rents) almost halved to -0.6 percent y/y in March from -1.1 percent in December, perhaps supporting the view that challenges in the residential market due to oversupply continue to ease. However rents - which had been steady for a year - fell 0.7 percent m/m in March, hinting that softness in the market may not have fully passed. Although property prices and activity levels have recovered from their lows of 2016-17, rents in the apartment sector, which is important for the consumer price index basket, may be being weighed down by relatively weak demand from the expatriate segment due to recent falls in the number of expat dependents (which may especially affect larger units).

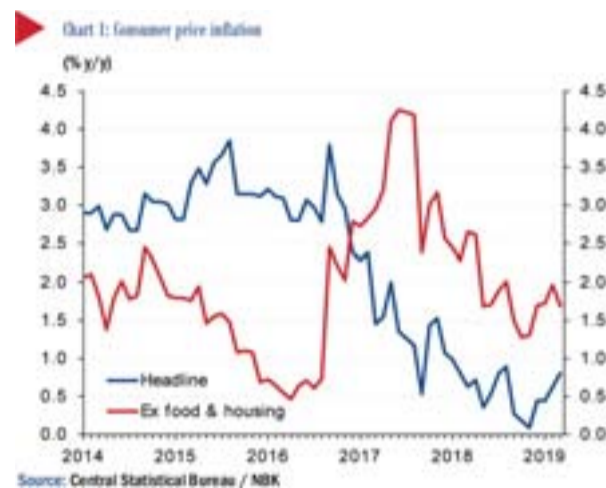
Inflation in the food and beverage segment - a component worth 17 percent of the CPI basket - picked up to a seven-month high but nevertheless remained low at 1.0 percent in March from -0.1 percent in December. The pick-up was due to a largely base effect-driven rise in fish and seafood inflation after a sharp drop a year ago, while deflation in vegetable prices has eased of late.



Although slightly more volatile recently, food price inflation has been broadly steady over the past two-to-three years, averaging just 0.1 percent y/y since 4Q16. Key to this has been softness in international food prices, which have trended slightly lower, but volatility also tends to be reduced by various subsidies and price controls.

Developments in the other, core categories of inflation were mixed, with only four out of ten seeing higher inflation in March compared to December. The strongest rises were in the communications (up 1.0 percent to 6.0 percent) and clothing segments (up 0.9 percent to 0.4 percent), the latter only its second consecutive positive month after nine months of deflation. On the other side, there were notable falls in inflation in the miscellaneous (down 0.8 percent to -0.5 percent) and education (down 0.5 percent to 1.9 percent) categories, both due to base effects after price rises last year. Inflation in the miscellaneous category fell due to the personal care subcomponent, which includes jewelry.

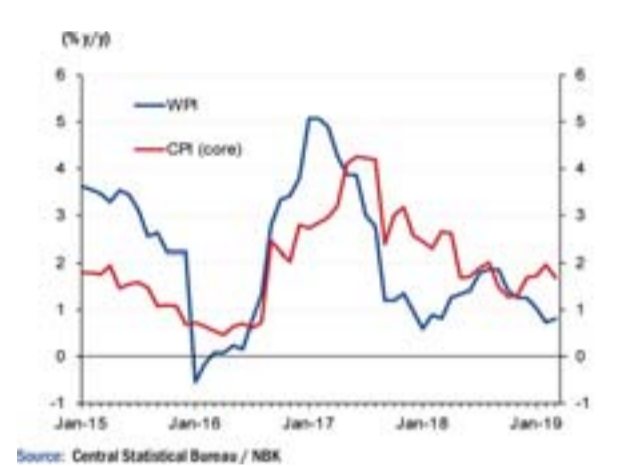
Separately, we also note a lack of inflation in the wholesale price index (WPI), which represents wholesale prices charged between businesses (before reaching consumers). WPI inflation eased to just 0.8 percent y/y in March from 1.3 percent in December and has now more than halved from a peak of 1.9 percent last September. These figures are of interest because they can indicate the degree of inflationary pressure in the pipeline - particularly of core manufactured goods.



Within the overall total, domestically-generated WPI inflation (0.6 percent) is below imported inflation (1.0 percent), suggesting that weak price pressures are not just due to the relatively strong dinar exchange rate, which has risen over the past year due to the strength of the US dollar to which it is mostly pegged.

Outlook appears benign

Although in our view the outlook for inflation has not fundamentally changed from before, we have lowered our forecast for inflation in 2019 to 1.5 percent from 2.0 percent due to the softer-than-expected outturns in 1Q19 - and an even lower figure is possible. This would still represent an increase from last year's 0.6 percent, as some of the negative factors that weighed on inflation in 2018 gradually unwind. Core inflation is forecast to hover around 2 percent for the rest of this year and average close to last year's 1.9 percent. Upward risks to the inflation outlook would include a fall in the US dollar which led to a weaker dinar (pushing up import prices) and stronger consumer spending due to recent robust loan



growth. Downward risks include renewed weakness in housing rents due to lingering vacancies and lower core inflation if economic growth disappoints.

Bayt.com weekly report

How to make your CV pass the 7-second scan

As a job seeker, your first way to catch any employer's attention is to have an excellent CV. What is meant by that is having a CV that is straight to the point and truly impressive to the hiring employer. Your chance to be selected for an interview depends enormously on your CV. So, don't let any mistake ruin your chances for your potential job and follow some of the golden rules on how to write a winning CV.

The average time that a recruiter spends reading any CV is 7 seconds...Don't be amazed! This is especially true when recruiters have hundreds of CVs to check out for any full-time or part-time job. To make sure that your CV is among the first selected ones, you need to master the below items that career experts at Bayt.com recommend to all jobseekers:

1. Objective statements are helpful:

An objective statement should highlight what the candidate would be adding to the new company and how they can help them in achieving their vision once they become part of the team. Objective statements can be two to three sentences long, but ideally not more than that. The statement should also be customized for each position the candidate applies for.

2. Personal details are essential:

Of course, without your basic information and contact details, your CV will get you nowhere.

Your full name, email address and phone number as well as your nationality and address should always be present and clear.

3. Experience is why you are relevant:

And here is the most important part in the seven-second scan; in this section, employers are always looking at the company names you have recently worked for and the period of service for each position you've held. This is one of the first items on your CV that can attract hiring managers. What they would usually like to see is several years of professional experience that is relevant to the one you are applying for. This will signal to them that you have the relevant skills and experience. So, be sure that your CV includes what matters: that is, the company name, period of working there, and relevant job titles.

4. Key achievements are how you can add value:
This usually comes in the second stage of scanning, when you have passed the first 7 seconds. However, you'll still need to get the hooks right to pass the first scan. The hiring manager will directly start looking in the selected CVs for the most relevant achievements and experience.

Achievements should be remarkable milestones or accomplishments that relate to your career and should always be mentioned in a way that is relevant to the company. Show, for example, how you increased profit, decreased cost, increased sales and market penetration, improved a particular ratio, led a measurable change, or developed a new system that helped in achieving the company's objectives. It is very important here to write numbers, percentages and show the quantitative and qualitative results you achieved in your work experience.

5. Education is your ticket:

As part of the 7 second scan, employers will look at your education, the name of the institution you obtained your education from, the year of completion, the major of study, and the scores (if included). Always include the most relevant degrees and certifications for the job post you are applying for. If you have more than one degree, try to order them chronologically from the most recent to the oldest.

6. Overall shape matters:

Part of the recruiter's job is selecting the best candidates out of hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of CVs. That is, by no means, an easy task, especially when the recruiter has multiple vacancies to fill at the same time. Hence, if the recruiter ends up looking at a very untidy, crammed and unorganized CV, you can only imagine what they will do. They will definitely stop reading it and quickly close the window of your Word or PDF file!

To avoid this, try to have your CV displayed neatly in one or two pages and not more than that. Make the formatting simple and very well-structured. Using one color can help a lot, as can using a clear font, bullet points, and numbering wherever appropriate. In addition to that, including a personal, professional photo is nearly a must when applying for jobs nowadays.

7. References are the booster:

Always make sure to mention at least three references from your previous employers (or professors, if you are a fresh graduate). Recruiters expect from you to mention your previous line managers, clients and colleagues if there are any. You cannot mention relatives or friends at all! In addition, reference contact details should have the following format: name of reference, organization they work in, job title, your professional relation to them, email address, and phone number.

Brazil economy minister threatens to quit over pension reform

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's economy minister threatened to quit over the country's stalled pension reform in an interview published Friday, as President Jair Bolsonaro's embattled government struggles to pass its signature economic policy. Paulo Guedes, a US-trained free-marketeer spearheading the government's pro-market agenda, told Veja magazine that if the proposal was watered down significantly or faced too much opposition, he would "get on a plane and go live abroad."

His comments come as Bolsonaro supporters plan marches across Brazil on Sunday to shore up the ultra-conservative government as it faces growing opposition.

Bolsonaro, who took power in January on a promise to revive Latin America's biggest economy, has seen his popularity plunge as rising unemployment and education spending freezes fuel opposition to his administration, which is plagued by infighting.

His controversial order earlier this month permitting millions of Brazilians to carry loaded weapons in public has fuelled anger, sparked a legal challenge and added to his woes in Congress, where his relations with key leaders had already deteriorated.

Sunday's planned demonstrations come after tens of thousands of students and teachers took to the streets on May 15 in protest over the government's suspension of 30 percent of discretionary spending for public universities in the second half of this year. After such a strong display of opposition, Bolsonaro needs a big turnout today to save face and strengthen his authority.

But the former paratrooper has said he would not participate in the demonstrations, which have been organized by his most radical supporters, and has advised his ministers against taking part. —AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

| | |
|--------------------|---------|
| US Dollar Transfer | 304.900 |
| Euro | 343.010 |
| Sterling Pound | 388.440 |
| Canadian dollar | 228.390 |
| Turkish Lira | 50.230 |
| Swiss Franc | 305.210 |
| US Dollar Buying | 296.700 |

ASIAN COUNTRIES

| | |
|-------------------|---------|
| Japanese Yen | 2.768 |
| Indian Rupees | 4.384 |
| Pakistani Rupees | 2.189 |
| Sri Lankan Rupees | 1.728 |
| Nepali Rupees | 2.740 |
| Singapore Dollar | 222.390 |
| Hongkong Dollar | 38.846 |
| Bangladesh Taka | 3.594 |
| Philippine Peso | 5.812 |
| 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 | 32.299 |
| Egyptian Pound - Transfer | 17.950 |

| | |
|------------------------|---------|
| Yemen Riyal/for 1000 | 1.225 |
| Tunisian Dinar | 105.140 |
| Jordanian Dinar | 430.710 |
| Lebanese Lira/for 1000 | 17.950 |
| Syrian Lira | 0.0203 |
| 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 | 0.380321 | 0.394221 |
| Czech Korune | 0.005197 | 0.014497 |
| Danish Krone | 0.041645 | 0.046645 |
| Euro | 0.333917 | 0.347617 |
| Georgian Lari | 0.109032 | 0.109032 |
| Hungarian O.001149 | 0.001339 | 0.001339 |
| Norwegian Krone | 0.031022 | 0.036222 |
| Romanian Leu | 0.054769 | 0.071619 |
| Russian ruble | 0.004738 | 0.004738 |
| Slovakia | 0.009123 | 0.019123 |
| Swedish Krona | 0.027885 | 0.032885 |
| Swiss Franc | 0.298352 | 0.309352 |
| Australasia | | |
| Australian Dollar | 0.202659 | 0.214459 |
| New Zealand Dollar | 0.193327 | 0.202827 |
| 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 | 0.042619 | 0.046119 |
| Hong Kong Dollar | 0.037100 | 0.039850 |
| Indian Rupee | 0.003712 | 0.004484 |
| Indonesian Rupiah | 0.000017 | 0.000023 |
| Japanese Yen | 0.002703 | 0.002883 |
| Korean Won | 0.000246 | 0.000261 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 0.068862 | 0.074862 |
| Nepalese Rupee | 0.002683 | 0.003023 |
| Pakistani Rupee | 0.001457 | 0.002227 |
| Philippine Peso | 0.005717 | 0.006017 |
| Singapore Dollar | 0.216164 | 0.226164 |
| Sri Lankan Rupee | 0.001378 | 0.001958 |
| Taiwan | 0.010177 | 0.010357 |
| Thai Baht | 0.009228 | 0.009778 |
| 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 Pound | 0.000151 | 0.000251 |
| Moroccan Dirhams | 0.020535 | 0.044536 |
| Omani Riyal | 0.785630 | 0.791310 |
| Qatari Riyal | 0.079481 | 0.084421 |
| Saudi Riyal | 0.080220 | 0.081520 |
| Syrian Pound | 0.001293 | 0.001513 |
| Tunisian Dinar | 0.097770 | 0.105770 |
| Turkish Lira | 0.043955 | 0.053800 |
| UAE Dirhams | 0.081588 | 0.083288 |
| Yemeni Riyal | 0.000991 | 0.001071 |

Business

UK shoppers pause in April after a surge in spending

Clothing sales help boost overall sales

LONDON: British shoppers paused in April after three months of strong buying, according to official data that showed continued underlying strength in consumer spending even as the Brexit political crisis unfolded.

Monthly retail sales volumes were flat last month, the Office for National Statistics said, stronger than a median forecast for a 0.3 percent decline in a Reuters poll of economists. During the three months to April, sales rose 1.8 percent, the fastest growth by this measure since August last year. Consumer spending has been a bright spot for the economy amid the Brexit crisis, contrasting with cuts to business investment throughout 2018 and slower global economic growth. Britain was originally due to leave the European Union on March 29 but the deadline has been pushed back to Oct 31 as Prime Minister Theresa May failed to break an impasse in parliament on the terms of Brexit.

May said on Friday she would resign as leader of the ruling Conservative Party on June 7, paving the way for a new prime minister to try to take Britain out of the EU. Consumers are gloomy about the outlook for the economy, according to surveys. But strong job creation and rising pay growth have boosted their spending power, even if wages remain lower than before the financial crisis once adjusted for inflation.

Ruth Gregory, an economist with consultancy Capital Economics, said it was only the second time in the past 10 years that sales rose or remained flat for four consecutive months. But she said the numbers would have been worse without a strong rise in clothing sales which were helped by the warm weather over

Easter and price cutting. A separate measure of retail sales suggested consumers turned more cautious in May. The Confederation of British Industry's sales balance, adjusted for the time of year, was the weakest since March 2009. Samuel Tombs, an economist with Pantheon Macroeconomics, warned against reading too much into the CBI's figures which were based on a small number of retailers.

"A dip in retail sales in May certainly is plausible, as the boost from warmer-than-usual weather to clothing sales unwinds, but we strongly doubt that the sky has fallen in," he said. ONLINE SURGE The contrast between strong growth in online sales in the ONS data—which hit a record high in the three months to April—and the problems of high street retailers underscored the fundamental shifts taking place in the industry. Duncan Brewer, retail partner at consultants Oliver Wyman, said. "Retail used to be simple: consumers went to stores, browsed products, then bought what they wanted," he said. "Now, attracting consumer spending has become all the more competitive with the rise of new businesses, both big and small, which are successfully reaching new consumers online." Bricks-and-mortar stores hoping to survive would have to offer the kind of service that customers cannot get online, Brewer said. Retailers themselves have reported mixed fortunes this month.

Morrisons, Britain's No 4 grocer, missed quarterly growth forecasts, blaming political and economic uncertainty and No 3 player Asda warned of an "increasingly challenging backdrop". But discounter B&M had its best ever Easter trading season. —Reuters



LONDON: A woman leaves with her goods in a plastic carrier bag after shopping at a branch of Marks and Spencer supermarket in west London. —AFP

World faces clear and present danger from trade war: OECD

LONDON: It was a stark warning about the risks ahead for the global economy, even by the forthright standards of the boss of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

"The world economy is in a dangerous place," Angel Gurría said as the OECD announced its latest, lower forecasts for growth on May 21. The source of his worry: the mounting trade tensions between the United States and China, which could hit the rest of the world much harder than they have to date.

"Let's avoid complacency at all costs," Gurría said. "Clearly the biggest threat is through the escalation of trade restriction measures, and this is happening as we speak. This clear and present

danger could easily have knock-on effects." With much of the world economy still recovering from the after-effects of the global financial crisis a decade ago, US President Donald Trump caused alarm when he raised tariffs on \$200 billion worth of goods from China on May 10, prompting Beijing to say it would hit back with its own higher duties.

Trade tensions are the main reason that growth in the global economy will weaken to 3.2 percent this year, the slowest pace in three years and down from rates of about 5 percent before the financial crisis a decade ago, the OECD said.

More tariffs?

The world economy is expected to pick up slowly next year, but only if Washington and China drop their latest tariff moves. The impact could be a lot more severe if Trump follows through on his latest threat to hit a further \$300 billion of Chinese imports with tariffs and China retaliates again.

That kind of tariff escalation, plus the associated rise in uncertainty about a

broadening of the trade war, could lop about 0.7 percent off the world economy by 2021-2022, the OECD said.

That would be equivalent to about \$600 billion, or the loss of the economy of Argentina. But the knock-on effects might not stop there. A full-blown trade war, combined with an ensuing debt crisis in China and a shift away from exports to drive its economy, could cause a 2 percent hit to China's economy, in turn knocking global growth further, the OECD said.

To be sure, that kind of worst-case scenario may well be averted, given the stakes for the United States and China. Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping are due to meet at a Group of 20 leaders' summit in Japan on June 28-29.

Other G20 nations will be urging them to step back from the fight, chief among them Germany and Japan, two export power-houses which have much to lose from a long trade war. For now, the effect of the trade tensions is being felt mostly among manufacturers. By contrast, consumers, buoyed by low

unemployment and weak inflation in many of the world's rich economies, have shown little sign of alarm at the row between Washington and Beijing.

But over the longer term, a protracted trade war is likely to drag down the consumer economy too. Global trade should normally grow at double the pace of the world economy but is expected to lag it in 2019, boding ill for investment by companies, the OECD said. That investment would normally drive productivity growth, which is key for long-term prosperity and is urgently needed. Living standards for many workers in rich countries remain lower than before the financial crisis of 2008-09.

The frustration with low living standards is widely seen as one of the main factors behind the rise of populist politics, including Trump's presidential election victory in 2016. "To put it bluntly, this cannot be the new normal," said Laurence Boone, the OECD's chief economist. "We cannot accept an economy that doesn't raise people's living standards." —Reuters

NBK announces winners of Al-Jawhara weekly draws

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait continues to reward its customers with Al-Jawhara Account through weekly, monthly and quarterly draws. The bank recently announced the winners of the weekly draw for the month of May, naming, Minor Betool Esmal Suliman Dashti, Saja Abdullah Syed Al-Behbehani and Nadiyah Ali Asghar Adoumi, as the winners of the KD 5,000 prize each.

Automatically entering customers into the draws, Al-Jawhara Account gives customers a chance to win KD 5,000 weekly, KD 125,000 monthly and a KD 250,000 grand prize quarterly for every KD 50 deposited into their account. If no withdrawal or transfers occur on the account during the required period, customers will receive an additional chance to enter the draw for every KD 50 held in the account, doubling their chance to win.

Since 2012, the National Bank of Kuwait has rewarded loyal customers with a total worth of prizes up to KD 2,200,000 in the weekly, monthly, and quarterly Al-Jawhara draws. All the draws are conducted in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce & Industry and the name of all the winners are announced.

Customers can open an Al-Jawhara Account by simply visiting any NBK Branch. Also, NBK Customers can conveniently open an Al-Jawhara Account through the NBK Online Banking and NBK Mobile Banking.



Weak American manufacturing points to slowing economic growth

WASHINGTON: New orders for US-made capital goods fell more than expected in April, further evidence that the economy was slowing after a growth spurt in the first quarter that was driven by exports and a buildup of inventories. The report from the Commerce Department on Friday also showed orders for these goods were not as strong as previously thought in March and shipments were weak over the last two months, indicating that manufacturing was fast losing ground.

The sector, which accounts for about 12 percent of the economy, is being squeezed by businesses placing fewer orders while working off stockpiles of unsold goods in warehouses. The inventory overhang is concentrated in the automotive sector, which is experiencing slow sales. Boeing's move to cut production of its troubled 737 MAX aircraft is also hurting manufacturing.

The loss of momentum came even before a recent escalation in the trade war between the United States and China, leading economists to expect demand for capital goods to remain soft.

The renewed trade tensions between Washington and Beijing have roiled the US stock market. Data on Thursday showed a measure of factory activity hit an almost 10-year low in May.

"We can't sugar-coat today's news," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFJ in New York. "Business investment is absolutely critical for the economy to move forward and investment is normally the swing factor that pumps up growth or pulls out the support from the economy."

Orders for non-defense capital goods excluding aircraft, a closely watched proxy for business spending plans, dropped 0.9 percent last month as demand softened almost across the board. These so-called core capital goods orders rose 0.3 percent in March instead of 1.0 percent as previously reported. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast core capital goods orders falling 0.3 percent in April.

Shipments of core capital goods were unchanged last month after a downwardly revised 0.6 percent decline in the prior month. Core capital goods shipments are used to calculate equipment spending in the government's gross domestic product measurement. They were previously reported to have slipped 0.1 percent in March. Friday's report followed data this month showing weak retail sales, industrial production and home sales that prompted economists to slash GDP growth forecasts for the second quarter.

The economy grew at a 3.2 percent annualized rate in the first quarter, but the downward revision to March core capital goods shipments suggests business spending on equipment was even weaker than initially estimated during the quarter. That could result in the January-March GDP growth estimate being trimmed when the government publishes its revision next week.

JPMorgan on Friday cut its second-quarter growth estimate to a 1.0 percent rate from a 2.25 percent pace. Growth is mostly slowing as last year's massive stimulus from the Trump administration's tax cuts and spending increases fades. The dollar slipped against a basket of currencies in thin pre-holiday trade. US Treasury prices dipped, while stocks on Wall Street were trading higher. U.S. markets are closed on Monday for the Memorial Day holiday.

Economists said the raft of weak data, uncertainty over the trade war and sluggish global growth could force the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates. The US central bank recently suspended its three-year interest rate hiking campaign and last month showed little desire to alter its monetary policy stance.

"We had previously expected the next move from the Fed would be a hike, albeit at the very end of our forecast horizon in late 2020," said Michael Feroli, an economist at JPMorgan in New York. "We now see the risks of the next move as about evenly distributed between a hike and a cut."

Overall orders for durable goods, items ranging from toasters to aircraft that are meant to last three years or more, tumbled 2.1 percent in April after increasing 1.7 percent in the prior month. Orders for transportation equipment dropped 5.9 percent after rising 5.9 percent in March. Orders for motor vehicles and parts decreased 3.4 percent last month, the most since May 2018. Orders for non-defense aircraft plunged 25.1 percent after rising 7.8 percent in March. Boeing reported receiving only four aircraft orders in April, down from 44 in March. All of the orders last month were for the company's fastest-selling MAX 737 jetliner, which was grounded in March after two fatal plane crashes in five months. Boeing has also suspended deliveries of the aircraft.

Overall durable goods shipments fell 1.6 percent in April, the most since December 2015, with civilian aircraft shipments tumbling 16.0 percent last month. Motor vehicle shipments dropped 3.4 percent.

Durable goods inventories rose 0.4 percent last month, boosted by stocks of motor vehicle and aircraft. Order books at factories also slipped in April. "That does not bode well for future production," said Joel Naroff, chief economist at Naroff Economic Advisors in Holland, Pennsylvania. "It is becoming clear that whatever boom the tax cuts may have created, if they did much at all, is largely gone." —Reuters

EQUATE Group announces Q1 financial results

KUWAIT: The EQUATE Group, a global producer of petrochemicals, yesterday announced its Q1 2019 unaudited earnings, reporting \$294 million in EBITDA, a 49 percent decrease from \$577 million in Q1 2018, and \$889 million in revenue, a 28 percent decrease from \$1,241 million in Q1 2018. Net income after tax stood at \$183 million in Q1 2019, a 57 percent decrease from \$435 million in the same period last year.

Commenting on the results, Dr Ramesh Ramachandran, CEO and President of the EQUATE Group, said: "While downstream demand growth has remained stable, uncertainty of tariffs and volatility in global markets has unsettled our customers. The rapid rise in inventory ahead of the Chinese New Year has taken longer than expected to work out. Nevertheless, inventory at end user customers seems to be at the lowest level we have seen in a long time. The bearish sentiment can be overcome when we remove the factors contributing to the uncertainty. Our focus at EQUATE will remain on being the safe, reliable and low-cost producer to ride out this phase of market uncertainty. The construction of US Gulf Coast plant remains on track to go on line before the end of 2019."

The EQUATE Group is a global producer of petrochemicals and the world's second largest producer of ethylene glycol (EG). The Group owns and operates industrial complexes in Kuwait, North America and Europe that annually produce over 6 million tons of ethylene, EG, polyethylene (PE), polyethylene terephthalate (PET), styrene monomer (SM), paraxylene (PX), heavy aromatics (HA) and benzene (BZ). The EQUATE Group includes EQUATE Petrochemical Co (EQUATE), The Kuwait Olefins Company (TKOC), as well as a number of subsidiaries such as MEGlobal and Equipolymers.

Their products are marketed throughout Asia, the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The Group's shareholders are Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC), The Dow Chemical Company (Dow), Boubyan Petrochemical Company (BPC) and Qurain Petrochemical Industries Company (QPIC).

Wall Street edges up after Trump sparks US-China trade hopes

NEW YORK: Wall Street's major stock indexes edged higher on Friday after falling in the previous session, as hopeful comments from US President Donald Trump regarding trade relations with China assuaged concerns among some investors.

Trump said late on Thursday that he saw a resolution to the trade war with China "happening fast." He added that Chinese telecom equipment company Huawei Technologies Co Ltd, which the White House has blacklisted, could also be included in a trade deal.

Still, he called Huawei "very dangerous." No high-level talks between the United States and China have been scheduled since the last round of negotiations in Washington two weeks ago.

Yet Trump's comments were enough to give a slight lift to US stocks in muted activity ahead of a long weekend. Friday marked the lowest volume of the year for a full trading session. US markets will be closed on Monday for the Memorial Day holiday. —Reuters

Business

NBK provides new currency notes for Eid through its mobile ATMs

Al-Salem: NBK ATMs are fully stocked prior to Eid Al-Fitr holiday

KUWAIT: In the spirit of sharing joyous occasions and festive holidays with its customers, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has fully stocked its mobile ATMs with new currency notes for Eid Al-Fitr, as it always strives to support its customers anywhere, anytime.

A variety of bill types in different denominations have been provided through ATMs effective last Saturday including: KD 5 and KD 10 banknotes, throughout various governorates across Kuwait. This service is available during two shifts, from 4:00 to 6:00 pm and from 8:00 pm to 12 am throughout the holy month of Ramadan.

Moreover, customers may withdraw new currency notes through NBK Interactive Teller Machine (ITM) available at the Avenues from 11:00 am to 6:00 pm and from 7:30 pm to 2:30 am.

"NBK has always been keen on celebrating joyous holidays with its valued customers by providing them with the opportunity to withdraw new currency notes through NBK Mobile ATMs located across different regions and governorates. This is part of the Bank's efforts to provide the best services and most convenient solutions to meet customers' needs and interests," said Maitham Al-Salem, ATM Channel Manager at National Bank of Kuwait.

Al-Salem confirmed that NBK ATM network is readily available to serve the bank's customers throughout Eid Al-Fitr holiday. Dedicated employees are assigned to fully



Maitham Al-Salem

stock the machines during the holidays to cover the expected increase in ATM cash withdrawals during that period. He also highlighted that NBK ATMs are constantly prepared to meet customers' needs, both on regular days and during holidays and different occasions, thanks to the ATM network operating system which follows the latest, most advanced and safest banking technologies.

Al-Salem added that providing new currency notes was well received last year by NBK customers, with ATM cash withdrawals reaching a total of 14,668 transactions worth KD 900,000. NBK continues to strengthen its leadership position in the banking sector by maintaining the largest network of banking services in Kuwait, provided through 68 branches, in addition to a wide network exceeding more than 13,000 Point of Sale (POS) and 8,000 NFC-enabled devices. NBK also has the widest network of over 316 ATMs, including 99 Cash Deposit Machines (CDM) located around Kuwait.



Withdraw Eidiya Anytime With NBK Mobile ATMs

Gulf Air upgrades Baku aircraft to transport fans of Chelsea and Arsenal

MANAMA: Gulf Air - the Kingdom of Bahrain's national carrier - in a move to facilitate and ease travel of football fans has upgraded its aircraft that is scheduled to operate to Baku's Heydar Aliyev International Airport on 29 May 2019 for fans of both Arsenal and Chelsea football clubs. The airline will operate its flagship Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner to allow more fans to travel and watch the big game between two English giants Arsenal and Chelsea in the final of UEFA Europa League.

With 26 seats in Falcon Gold and 256 in economy class seats, the state-of-the-art Dreamliner will be operated for the first time on the Bahrain-Baku route to cater to the increasing demand from football fans around the Gulf Air's network to witness the highly anticipated football match of the season.

Gulf Air's CEO Kresimir Kucko said of this occasion: "The commercial team at Gulf Air is very responsive to events and happenings around our expanding network. When the demand forecast showed an increase we man-



aged to upgrade the operating aircraft on 29th May to our new Dreamliner. The B787-9 has much more capacity than the regular scheduled aircraft to Baku and we are happy to offer this opportunity to all football fans of Arsenal and Chelsea". The airline operates 5 weekly flights between Bahrain International Airport and Heydar Aliyev International Airport. Baku as a Gulf Air destination has shown increasing demand since it was launched in 2018.

About Gulf Air

Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of

Bahrain, commenced operations in 1950, becoming one of the first commercial airlines established in the Middle East. Today, Gulf Air is a major international carrier serving 49 cities in 26 countries.

The airline operates double daily flights or more to 10 regional cities, in addition to select destinations in the Indian Subcontinent and Europe, from its hub at Bahrain International Airport. Gulf Air currently serves all its destinations with a combination of wide and narrow body fleet of 36 aircraft.

The modern fleet will herald a new era for Gulf Air as it continues to enhance its product and service offering. Renowned for its traditional Arabian hospitality, evidenced by the airline's signature family and business friendly products, Gulf Air is committed to being an industry leader and developing products and services that reflect the evolving needs and aspirations of its passengers.

Gulf Air connects Bahrain to the world and, as such, is a key national infrastructure asset, serving as a powerful driver for the economy and supporting the Kingdom's ongoing economic growth. With its mobile app and Bahrain stopover programme, the airline promotes Bahrain as a tourist destination to the world.

Gulf Air has been the Title Sponsor of the FORMULA 1 GULF AIR SAUDI GRAND PRIX ever since it made history as the first Formula 1 Grand Prix to be held in the Middle East in 2004. In addition, the airline has been Official Carrier of the biennial Bahrain International Airshow since it was first held in 2010.

Huawei founder Ren Zhengfei on company's future

KUWAIT: In his latest meeting with the media, Huawei founder Ren Zhengfei has reiterated that the company is in a strong position to move ahead despite recent political actions in the United States.

Addressing questions about the impact of the White House's recent executive order, Ren noted: "What the US will do is out of our control. To us, the most important thing is to do our job well. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the US companies that we work with. Over these 30 years, they have helped us to grow into what we are today. They have made many contributions to us. As you know, most of the companies that provide consulting services to Huawei are based in the US, including dozens of companies like IBM and Accenture. In the face of the recent crisis, I can feel these companies' sense of justice and sympathy towards us."

The Huawei founder then went into greater detail about its relationships with US companies. "The US is a country ruled by law. US companies must abide by the laws, and so must the real economy. The media should understand that these US companies and Huawei share the same fate. We are both players in the market economy. Our close relationships with US companies are the result of several decades of effort on both sides. These relationships won't be destroyed by a piece of paper from the US government."

The supply of products to Huawei from international partners was also discussed. "Our company will not end up with an extreme supply shortage. We have got well prepared. Even if there is an insufficient

supply from our partners, we will face no problems. This is because we can manufacture all the high-end chips we need ourselves," said Ren.

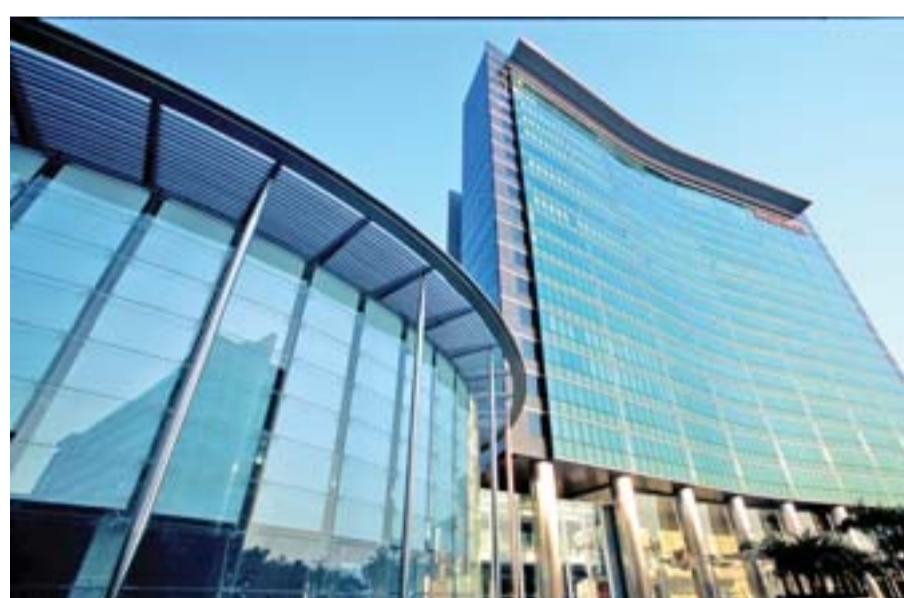
As long as these companies can obtain approval from Washington, Ren commented that Huawei will continue to buy in large volumes from them. "It may be the case that they cannot obtain approval quickly. We have ways to go through this transition period. Once approval is granted, we will maintain our normal trade with these US companies and work together to build an information society for humanity. We don't want to work alone."

In an answer to a direct question about why the US is targeting Huawei, Ren responded: "I don't know exactly what [those US] politicians are thinking. I think we should not be the target of US-led campaigns just because we are ahead of the US."

The Huawei founder also responded to questions about overall disruptions to the international ICT market. "Europe will not follow in the footsteps of the US, and the majority of US companies are communicating closely with us. We will certainly be able to continue serving our customers. Our mass production capacity is huge, and adding Huawei to the Entity List won't have a huge impact on us. We are making progress in bidding worldwide."

With regards to Huawei's own business outlook for 2019, Ren added: "Our growth will slow down, though not by as much as everyone imagines. In the first quarter of this year, our revenue grew 39% over the same period last year. This rate decreased to 25 percent in April, and may continue decreasing towards the end of this year. But the US ban will not lead to negative growth or harm the development of our industry."

In sectors where Huawei have the most advanced technologies, at least in the 5G sector, Ren added that there "won't be much impact". Not just that, but Huawei competitors won't be able to catch up with



it within two to three years. 5G standards are widely considered to have a huge impact on society, added Ren. The company appears to be well prepared for the future in terms of technology innovation and R&D. Huawei has 26 centers of expertise for R&D globally, over 700 mathematicians, 800 physicists, and 120 chemists working at Huawei, according to Ren. He further noted that Huawei have the most 5G standard-essential patents in the world - about 27 percent of the total.

"We have an Institute of Strategic Research, which provides a large amount of funding to well-known professors at top universities around the world. We don't expect return on this investment. The way we sponsor research is similar to how investment works according to the US Bayh-Dole Act. It's the universities that benefit from the investment. By doing so, we will work with more scientists researching technologies at different stages," says Ren.

As for its three business groups, when asked about where revenue will come from

over the long term, Ren doesn't take the view that the most profitable one is necessarily the most important. "Only the department that is responsible for building network connections will be able to become number one in the world. It is the very department that has come under attacks from the US. I have compared it to a badly damaged aircraft. Actually, we have realized that this department does not face as many difficulties as others because it has been preparing for a long time. Our 5G, optical transmission, and core network technologies are free from the pressure that is being put on this department, and these technologies will be the world leaders for many years to come."

In addressing its latest reputational challenges, Ren concluded that: "We do not seek to solve our reputation issues outside of China through media campaigns. I think we will ultimately need to solve these issues by providing excellent services to our customers. We are very advanced, and our customers will realize this if they start using our services."

Mexico confirms economy shrank in Q1, in blow to 'AMLO'

MEXICO CITY: Mexico's economy contracted by 0.2 percent in the first quarter of the year, revised government data confirmed Friday, a rough start for new President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.

The contraction raises the specter of recession just months into the anti-establishment leftist's six-year term, threatening his promise to "transform" the country and deliver average annual GDP growth of four percent. The

revised number for January to March was the same as the preliminary figure released in April, which took economic analysts by surprise and triggered talk of a possible recession-two or more consecutive quarters of contraction-in Latin America's second-largest economy.

Mexico's economy registered zero growth in the fourth quarter of 2018, according to the national statistics institute, INEGI. Lopez Obrador-widely known as "AMLO"-downplayed the data.

"There's still time" to reach his target of two-percent growth for 2019, he told a press conference.

"I've placed my bet, I'm not backing down. Let's just wait and see how the year ends." Lopez Obrador won a landslide victory in Mexico's elections last year, taking office in December with a strong mandate. But the economy threatens to be his Achilles' heel. He has trig-

gered backlash in the business world with some of his policies, including a controversial decision to cancel a \$13-billion Mexico City airport project that was already one-third complete.

The central bank and finance ministry cut their economic growth forecast for 2019 by four percentage points in April, to a range of 1.1 to 2.1 percent. Mexico also announced a trade surplus of \$1.37 billion for April, fueled by an 11.7-percent increase in exports to the United States.

Mexico was the largest US trading partner in the first three months of the year, despite President Donald Trump's repeated threats to tear up the two countries' trade agreement and close their shared border. That was mainly thanks to Trump's trade dispute with China, which previously held the top spot. — AFP

Ahli United Bank congratulates winners of Al-Hassad draw

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank announced on 22nd of May 2019 the winners of its weekly draw of Al-Hassad Islamic account which is the very first draw account in Islamic banking in Kuwait that has reshaped the lives of thousands lucky winners. Al-Hassad has have over 850 prizes, over a 12 month period.

The weekly draw announced the grand prize winner of KD 10,000 as Fadi Al-Mahmoud.

20 other winners won prizes of KD 1,000 and are as follows: Ahmed Abdullah Al-Sharqawi, Nazeeh Yousef Abu Aasi, Ali Khaled Ali Marzouq, Abdullah Abd AlSayed Al Failakawi, Khalid Sulaiman Al-Anzi, Khalil Ali Abdulla Haji, Meshal Abdullah Al-Mutairi, Hanadi Mohammad Al-Tuwari, Khirya Haidr Hussain, Mohammad Hamad Al-Mutairi, Abdullah Jassim Al-Damkhi, Wafaa Hamad Abdul-Razzaq, Khaled Nazhan Al-Shammari, Angela Degia Perez, Ebrahim Ali Abbas, Nabeel Ebrahim Mohamed, Jaffar Hassan Khamis, Adel Jaffar, Nabil Joseph Kotran and Mohd Hasan Ahmed.

Al-Hassad Islamic Account presents also four quarterly mega prizes of KD 250,000 that will help the lucky winners achieve their dreams and aspirations in addition the monthly draw to win a prize of KD 100,000.

One powerful new aspect of the Al-Hassad Islamic Account is the prize draws on the holy occasion of both Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha, when the winning customers will receive the Eid prizes of KD 100,000 each. May the Eid always bring prosperity and blessings to the Islamic nation.

Al-Hassad Islamic Account presents also 21 weekly prizes comprised a grand prize of KD 10,000 and 20 prizes of KD 1,000 each. In addition to the highly attractive package of the prizes, there will be the annual expected profits on, which makes the Al-Hassad account a useful tool; for family and other savings, both for the short term and for the longer term - a fact which well appreciated by a large multitude of new and old customers.

To be eligible to participate in the draw, the customer should have a minimum balance of KD 100, whereby the customer has two chances to participate, with a maximum of 30,000 chances per draw, in addition to annual profits for all participants. Every KD 50 invested for at least 15 days entitles the customer to one chance in the each draw. The longer the customer keeps his balance the bigger the changes of participation in the draw. Draws are held every Wednesday at AUB Kuwait or AUB Bahrain depending on the draw plan. On the occasion Ahli United Bank congratulate its winning customers, and commented that there are many chances to win waiting for our customers.

Transferring EGP directly to Egypt is now available to KFH customers

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has offered its customers the opportunity to transfer Egyptian pounds to Egypt on what was previously limited on USD.

The initiative of KFH of adding new currency that deals with and makes transfers to (Egyptian Pound), is part of its keenness to strengthen its banking services to all segments of customers, especially the Egyptian community, which is regarded as the largest Arab community in Kuwait.

KFH customers are now able to make transfers to Egypt in pounds directly from their bank accounts to the beneficiary accounts of any bank throughout the day, with more speed and less cost using online banking services through KFHonline, smartphones or banking branches.

General Manager Treasury Kuwait at KFH, Ahmad Eissa Al-Sumait, said that KFH has increased the number of available currencies to the countries of the world, reaching 28 foreign currencies. "This comes in line with the Bank's strategy to improve customer while expanding the transfer network of KFH to become more adaptable and meet the increasingly changing requirements and needs of customers," he added.

Al-Sumait continued in a press release, that KFH continues its role in optimizing the Bank's liquidity, pricing foreign currencies and deposits, and setting prices of buying and selling various currencies daily. This is to enhance the ability to provide competitive prices and high-quality services to customers.



Ahmad Al-Sumait

What's On



Al Hamra continues its mission to create lasting memories for the Children's Home

Al Hamra Real Estate Co, a leader in real estate development and management, recently hosted its Girgean event under the umbrella theme of nationwide initiative 'Spread the Joy', in collaboration with the Children's Home, an orphanage managed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. The event combined engaging and exciting activities to drive a memorable experience for the little girls and boys.

Reflecting the true spirit of the Ramadan season and rich Kuwaiti culture, the one-of-a-kind program returned to share good tidings with the less fortunate, reiterating the brand's warm hospitality and compassion. Conveying messages of love and support during the event, the orphan girls, and boys aged between 3-17 years, enjoyed fun-filled agenda of games, entertainment, and gifts that brought smiles all around.

Abdullah Al Mansour, the Marketing and Public Relations Manager at Al Hamra Real Estate Co, said: "Following last year's successful campaign

that included the involvement of likeminded entities in Kuwait, we were encouraged to continue this wonderful initiative to raise awareness about vulnerable groups and spread happiness. This event was just the start of many more activities to come for the year ahead - 2018 inspired the children's creativity and showcased their talent to the people of Kuwait. We intend to pursue different platforms that will benefit their growth and development such as edutainment, sports, music and many more."

He added, "Girgean is a joyous occasion for our nation's children and so, they deserve to feel a sense of belonging amidst a supportive community. Deeply rooted in the rich cultural heritage of Kuwait, we hope to maintain and grow our local platforms as an active and responsible member of the society." "Spread the Joy" campaign is part of Al Hamra Real Estate Co's established CSR Strategy to invest in the long term sustainability of local communities and promote value-empowerment through inclusion.



Australian Embassy hosts ghabqa

By Ben Garcia

The Australian Embassy in Kuwait recently hosted a ghabqa at Al-Hashemi Ballroom, Radisson Blu Hotel. Jonathan Gilbert, the Australian Ambassador to Kuwait, welcomed guests and lauded Kuwait's hospitality and warmth. "This is my second Ramadan here in Kuwait. I am thankful for all the invitations I have received to attend iftars, diwanias and ghabqas across Kuwait. I am pleased to say I am increasingly enmeshed in and familiar with the different traditions and activities that take place during the holy month," Gilbert said.

He pointed out that there are approximately 600,000 Muslims in Australia with backgrounds ranging from the Middle East and South East Asia. "I am proud of the role they play in Australia's vibrant multi-cultural society. Our shared commitment to tolerance, respect and inclusion binds us to one another and makes our multicultural society one of the most harmonious in the world," he added.

He also mentioned the increasing number of students they have had from Kuwait wherein some of them were present during the event. "They shared with me their positive and life changing experience studying in Australia, including engineers studying in Perth, scientists in Sydney, teachers in Melbourne, doctors in Canberra, economist



studying in Adelaide, speech studying in Bendigo and many more," he said. Addressing the alumni, Gilbert urged them to give back to their country and make meaningful contribution as they pursue the New Kuwait Vision 2035.

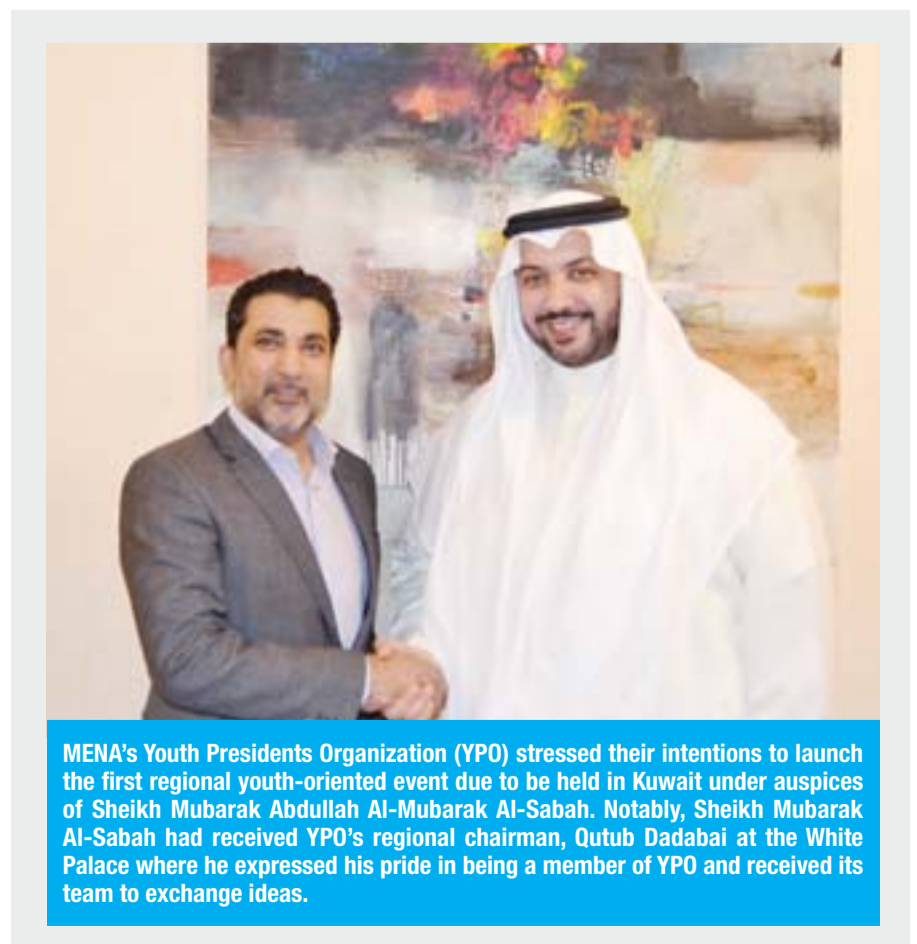


Within its distinctive programs designed to share the joy of Ramadan with various social sects and bodies, the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently visited MOI's central operations center where it joined the 112 emergency operator employees tier for an Iftar meal. In this regard, CBK's deputy director for corporate communication, Amani Al-Wer'a stressed that the visit is part of the bank's social responsibility activities during the holy month of Ramadan.



Arraya United Company organizes Ghabqa banquet

Arraya United Company recently organized a Girgean festivity and a Ghabqa banquet for people with special needs of various age categories and those residing in social care houses. The ceremony, which included competitions and recreational activities, was attended by board chairman, Jassem Al-Fajji and CEO, Adnan Al-salem. Speaking on the occasion, Al-Salem stressed that the ceremony was held as part of the company's social responsibility activities during the holy month of Ramadan.



MENA's Youth Presidents Organization (YPO) stressed their intentions to launch the first regional youth-oriented event due to be held in Kuwait under auspices of Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. Notably, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah had received YPO's regional chairman, Qutub Dadabai at the White Palace where he expressed his pride in being a member of YPO and received its team to exchange ideas.

Health & Technology

Fake Facebook accounts: A look at the never-ending battle against bots

The staggering figure of more than three billion fake accounts blocked by Facebook over a six-month period highlights the challenges faced by social networks in curbing automated accounts, or bots, and other nefarious efforts to manipulate the platforms. Here are some key questions on fake accounts:

How did so many fake accounts crop up?

Facebook said this week it "disabled" 1.2 billion fake accounts in the last three months of 2018 and 2.19 billion in the first quarter of 2019. Most fake social media accounts are "bots," created by automated programs to post certain kinds of information — a violation of Facebook's terms of service and part of an effort to manipulate social conversations. Sophisticated actors can create millions of accounts using the same program. Facebook said its artificial intelligence detects most of these efforts and disables the accounts before they can post on the platform. Still, it acknowledges that around five percent of the more than two billion active Facebook accounts are probably fake.

What's the harm from fake accounts?

Fake accounts may be used to amplify the popularity or dislike of a person or movement, thus distorting users' views of true public sentiment.

Bots played a disproportionate role in spreading misinformation on social media ahead of the 2016 US election, according to researchers. Malicious actors have been using these kinds of fake accounts to sow distrust and social division in many parts of the world, in some cases fomenting violence against groups or individuals. Bots "don't just manipulate the conversation, they build groups and bridge groups," said Carnegie Mellon University computer scientist Kathleen Carley, who has researched social media bots. "They can make people in one group believe they think the same thing as people in another group, and in doing so they build echo chambers." Facebook says its artificial intelligence tools can identify and block fake accounts as they are being created — and thus before they can post misinformation. "These systems use a combination of signals such as patterns of using suspicious email addresses, suspicious actions, or other signals previously associated with other fake accounts we've removed," said Facebook analytics vice president Alex Schultz in a blog post.

Should I worry about bots and fake accounts?

Many users can't tell the difference between a real and fake account, researchers say. Facebook and Twitter have been stepping up efforts to

identify and weed out bogus accounts, and some public tools like Botometer developed by Varol and other researchers can help determine the likelihood of fake Twitter accounts and followers. "If you use Facebook to communicate with family and friends you should not worry much," said Filippo Menczer, a computer scientist who researches social media at Indiana University. "If you use it to access news and share that with friends, you should be careful." Menczer said many Facebook users pay little attention to the source of material and may end up sharing false or misleading information.

"Everyone thinks they cannot be manipulated but we are all vulnerable," he said. Along with bots, humans represent a key element in the misinformation chain, researchers say. "Most false information is not coming from bots," Carley said. "Most of it comes from blogs and the bots rebroadcast it" to amplify the misinformation. Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg said Facebook is seeking to eliminate the financial incentives of fake accounts. "A lot of the harmful content we see, including misinformation, are in fact commercially motivated, so one of the best tactics is removing incentives to create fake accounts upstream, which limits content made downstream" Zuckerberg told reporters. — AFP

US plans rollback of trans healthcare protections

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's administration on Friday announced plans to roll back anti-discrimination protections for transgender people in the health care system, provoking an outcry from rights groups. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) proposed removing a provision of the Affordable Care Act introduced by former president Barack Obama in 2016 that defined discrimination "on the basis of sex" to include gender identity.

Gender identity was defined as whether an individual considered themselves "male, female, neither, or a combination of male and female." But the measure was blocked after several states and healthcare entities sued. The proposed new rule would define gender identity in healthcare law "to conform with the plain understanding recognized by the court," the HHS said. "When

Congress prohibited sex discrimination, it did so according to the plain meaning of the term, and we are making our regulations conform," said Roger Severino of the HHS Civil Rights Office. But the move was criticized by rights groups.

"Nobody should be turned away from medical care, with their health and lives put at risk, because of who they are," the National Center for Transgender Equality said in a statement. According to a 2015 study, nearly one-quarter (23 percent) of transgender respondents reported that they did not seek the health care they needed in the year prior due to fear of being mistreated. Louise Melling, deputy legal director with the American Civil Liberties Union, said: "This move by the Trump administration is nothing less than an act of violence against those whose health care needs have historically been ignored, neglected and dismissed." — AFP

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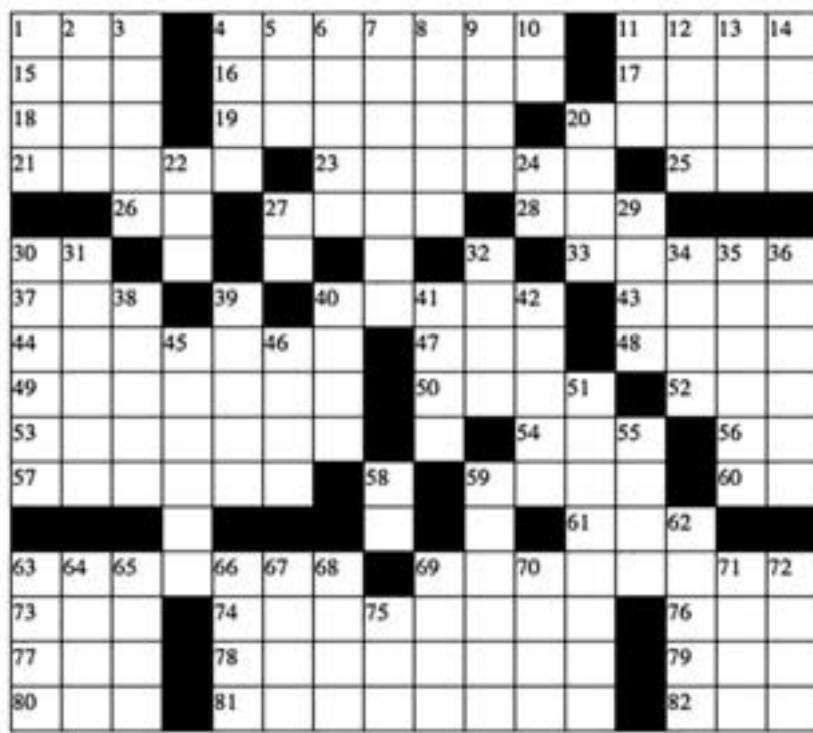
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ACROSS

1. A state of southwestern India.
4. A handheld collapsible source of shade.
11. An informal term for a father.
15. (Judaism) Sacred chest where the ancient Hebrews kept the two tablets containing the Ten Commandments.
16. Give a promotion to.
17. A feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause).
18. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
19. A port and tourist center in southwestern Italy.
21. Hungarian choreographer who developed Labanotation (1879-1958).
23. Any of various spiny trees or shrubs of the genus *Acacia*.
25. An associate degree in applied science.
26. A public promotion of some product or service.
28. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
30. A white trivalent metallic element.
33. An anti-TNF compound (trade name Arava) that is given orally.
37. Worthless or oversimplified ideas.
43. (Old Testament) Cain and Abel were the first children of Adam and Eve born after the Fall of Man.
44. A state in the southeastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico.
47. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
48. A river that rises in northeastern Turkey (near the source of the Euphrates) and flows generally eastward through Armenia to the Caspian Sea.
49. A wheeled vehicle adapted to the rails of railroad.
50. A wad of something chewable as tobacco.
52. The compass point midway between northeast and east.
53. Small dull-colored moth with chewing mouthparts.
54. An American doctorate usually based on at least 3 years graduate study and a dissertation.
56. A metric unit of volume equal to one tenth of a liter.
57. Remote city of Kazakhstan that (ostensibly for security reasons) was made the capital in 1998.
60. A gray lustrous metallic element of the rare earth group.
61. A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
63. French artist who immigrated to the United States.
73. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
74. Biennial or perennial herbs of north temperate regions.
76. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
77. A kind of person.
78. Having a rasping or grating sound.
79. A barrier constructed to contain the flow of water or to keep out the sea.
80. A statement that deviates from or perverts the truth.
81. Seven performers or singers who perform together.
82. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

2. Predatory black-and-white toothed whale with large dorsal fin.
3. Jordan's port.
4. English Quaker who founded the colony of Pennsylvania (1644-1718).
5. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
6. Pay back.
7. Of the dull yellowish green of the meat of an avocado n 1.
8. Food mixtures either arranged on a plate or tossed and served with a moist dressing.
9. Of or relating to near the ear.
10. A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
11. Seed of a pea plant.
12. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
13. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
14. Type genus of the Anatidae.
20. (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
22. Hormone secreted by the posterior pituitary gland (trade name Pitressin) and also by nerve endings in the hypothalamus.
24. A state in midwestern United States.
27. 1/10 gram.
29. Type genus of the family Arcidae.
31. A town in northern France on the Strait of Dover that serves as a ferry port to England.
32. Not only so, but.
34. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
35. A stock or supply of foods.
36. Italian Benedictine monk who was archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 to 1109.
38. A substance used as a coating to protect or decorate a surface (especially a mixture of pigment suspended in a liquid).
39. Back and sides of a hog salted and dried or smoked.
40. An aromatic ointment used in antiquity.
41. Any competition.
42. A drawing illustrating the relations between certain quantities plotted with reference to a set of axes.
45. The whiteness that results from removing the color from something.
46. Type genus of the Majidae.
51. A fee charged for the use of a wharf.
55. Tropical woody herb with showy yellow flowers and flat pods.
58. 30 to 300 kilohertz.
59. The vital principle or animating force within living things.
62. (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
64. Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
65. A block of solid substance (such as soap or wax).
66. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
67. Female equine animal.
68. Preparatory school work done outside school (especially at home).
69. The lean flesh of a fish similar to cod.
70. Closely confined.
71. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
72. God of love and erotic desire.
75. Nocturnal mouse-like mammal with forelimbs modified to form membranous wings and anatomical adaptations for echolocation by which they navigate.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, your thoughts and mind can be very intense and move rapidly now. It'll be best to stay at home and try to work off the nervous energy rather than taking a chance on hurting someone else because of your tendency to be too hard on their feelings. You may find yourself going against your own value system now because it doesn't match your desires. Aries, try gardening. It'll let you spend excess energy and keep you from being around someone who may irritate you. Thus, it'll keep you out of unneeded arguments. Enjoy your day as much as possible.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, good practical ideas come across today but not from you to others. This is a time you could be having a hard time with those you love. Be thoughtful here or eruptions could turn harsher by the world. This may not be something you want to happen. Try to do things you like today especially without the audience of younger people. Otherwise, words will probably fly. Your dog won't do that to you. Do something with him or her if you must have company. Taurus. Communication with those you love will get better soon.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, romance is high on your mind now. That may be funded properly this morning. Perhaps breakfast in bed is just what you need too. This is a great day to be alive. Promises you've made to yourself have a good chance of being implemented on this Saturday. Lunch or dinner with friends could manage to start the course of action you'll remember for the rest of your life. Prosperity is in full bloom if you'll put it into play today. Talk about your dreams to others. Gemini. That gives them the chance to help you all. Group conversation can and will further your career. Enjoy. Note the birthday congratulations on this page too.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, even on this Saturday, things are happening on the job front. You're in the middle of it still. Feeling the urge to go on with what you're doing on the job change you're still considering; your common horse sense takes over to lead you forward. Taking action now is what you've decided is the right thing to do. Whether you believe it or not, Cancer, your serious frame of mind keeps you working towards the career path you need at this time. Small irritations, even though annoying, don't bother you as much as they have before. Your mind is on making a better situation for you and those you love.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, you have a knack for choosing a person, looking them over and realizing exactly what they're good at doing, both at work and in their personal life. Today isn't a day for anyone to daydream in your presence. You'll be quick to set them straight as to what to do, when and where. Leo, if another seems to have an unrealistic approach to work, you call them on it, even though you've just had the same thing for the last couple of days. Of course, it's easier to see this trait in others rather than yourself. On the self-front, you're making choices about your life such as how to take care of self in a healthy manner. Choices you make now are good for you.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, today is a great day for recognizing the best things in life such as home, family, children and pets. And you do. You may be about to experience great material gain. Perhaps you know where that's coming from now. Virgo, take this day to enjoy those you love. Go exploring. That doesn't mean you have to go outdoors. It could be discovering new science or learning about something you love through investigation of books or the Internet. Do it with the ones you love. Let them learn the value of experiencing the power of learning about things they'd never thought about before.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, today is a day of reflection, looking at the issues you've had this week, noting the resolution of those problems and making the best of your life. While doing this, you come to a better understanding of those around you, their likes, dislikes, problems even when they don't want you to know they have them and their lives in general. Libra. You also come to the decision that most humans are alike in their thoughts. Overlooking their little idiosyncrasies is made easier by your thoughtful outlook after running all the scenarios in your mind. You come back to the fact that you're only capable of controlling your own life as are they. Don't give them control by allowing them to hurt your feelings.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, practicality and work are what you're putting your effort into now. You're successful but you have some that don't share your thoughts and optimism on getting things done in the way you desire. Organization and achievement mean more to you than almost anything else at this time, Scorpio. So, you keep on moving in the direction you need to go with your opposition trying to block you at every turn. This day has you wishing for some help. Don't try to make others conform to your wishes. Get busy making what you want done, alone.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 18)

Sagittarius, being on schedule and working to get a project out in a timely manner gives you great confidence that you can do anything you desire. Ambition urges you to do more but you need to take your time working through what you desire. If you don't, you may find yourself at a standstill workwise or having to stop because your overextended. No one can keep up the pace you're setting, Sagittarius. Later on, this evening take time for the one you love. Maybe a nice dinner at a small restaurant where you two can talk all evening about both of your hopes and desires. A little bit of wine may get the conversation started.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, today you're back to your usual self with believing that the practical way is the only way. Creative avenues left with yesterday. This is a nice time for you because you have everything in its place as you feel it should be. Emotions are settled in where you can understand them easily now both on others and with yourself. People you love seem to be happy with themselves. That makes you more comfortable. Be careful about your brand of comedy today where your lover is concerned. This could cause a problem in your home life, Capricorn. All in all, it's a wonderful day for you.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Aquarius, take time off to reflect on your life which you've been doing now for a few days. Think about what you want for the next phase of life and how to accomplish it. Then go for it when you can. Today, try to relax and enjoy what you have now. Also, staying to yourself feels good. Try to get some of that done now so that you can recharge your batteries. Enjoy taking a nap with your dog lying beside you. That's a calmer in itself. Stay away from making appointments, personal or business wise, Aquarius. Watch the stars tonight and wonder some more.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, close relationships are what you depend on now. Generally, those relationships have to be nurtured and weathered for some time before you can really lean on them. Do something with a friend you love today. Allow them to take your mind off the frustrations and irritations you've been feeling for the last couple of days. Stay away from allowing people you meet to influence you in any manner now. This isn't the time to make new friends but to appreciate those who've stood by you. Have some food brought in so that there are no outside influences. Have the person who brings your food's tip ready at the door so you don't have to converse.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Musical Instruments 2 - Word Search

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

- | | | |
|------------|-----------|---------------|
| BALALAIKA | DRUM | PIANO |
| BODHRAN | DULCIMER | SLIDE WHISTLE |
| BONGOS | FLUTE | TRIANGLE |
| CABASAS | GUITAR | VIBRAPHONE |
| CITTERN | HARMONIUM | XYLOPHONE |
| CLARINET | HARP | |
| CONCERTINA | MANDOLA | |
| CONGA | MIZMAR | |

Musical Instruments 1 - Solution

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

- | | | |
|-------------|----------|-------------|
| BANJO | KEYBOARD | TIN WHISTLE |
| BASSOON | MARACAS | TROMBONE |
| BOUZOUKI | MARIMBAS | TUBA |
| BUGLE | MELODICA | UKULELE |
| CHIMES | OCARINA | VIOLA |
| COW BELL | PICCOLO | |
| EUPHONIUM | RECORDER | |
| FRENCH HORN | SITAR | |

Friday's Solution

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

Daily Sudoku

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

Friday's Solution

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

Lifestyle

SUNDAY, MAY 26, 2019



This picture shows an unnamed man supposed to be British street artist Banksy sitting next to a montage of oil paintings entitled "Venice in oil" portraying a massive cruise ship surrounded by tiny Venetian gondola boats.

Banksy in Venice? New work appears and perhaps the artist himself

The mysterious British artist Banksy has apparently left his mark on a crumbling wall in Venice, and even claimed to have set up an unlicensed art stall in Italy's famous "floating city". The image of a migrant child signaling for help, appeared, in the Banksy style, on a crumbling wall beside one of the Venice canals. Meanwhile a video posted on Banksy's Instagram account was said to show the secretive artist, buried in hat, coat or newspaper, setting up an unlicensed art stall in the central Saint Mark's Square.

He sets up a series of nine oil paintings in the style of the 18th-century Venetian great Canaletto, which when placed together depict a huge cruise ship surrounded by tiny gondolas, plying their way through the Venice canals. The piece, called "Venice in Oil", seemed to denounce the mass tourism which is endangering much of Venice. At

the end of the video, the artist figure, whose face is always hidden, is told to pack up his stall and move on by Venice police.

There was no indication as to whether anyone had bought one, or all, of the canvases. On his Instagram account he wrote: "Setting out my stall at the Venice Biennale. Despite being the largest and most prestigious art event in the world, for some reason I've never been invited." The prestigious Venice international art fair got under way this month. Banksy's most famous, or perhaps infamous, work is now called "Love Is in the Bin".

Moments after the painting "Girl with Balloon" sold for £1,042,000 (\$1.4 million, 1.2 million euros) last year—a joint record for the maverick artist—it literally went through the shredder, which was hidden in the frame. The buyer went through with the purchase, and some art experts say it is

now worth more than it had been before the stunt. Despite years in the international spotlight as he became one of the most famous artists of his generation, remarkably little is known about the British artist.

"Nobody ever listened to me until they didn't know who I was," he has said with characteristic irony. Though he was hustled off the Venice streets by the police, Banksy left his more lasting image on a wall: the picture of the little immigrant girl holding up a pink distress flare, standing in the style of the US Statue of Liberty. As usual, the artist didn't sign the graffiti but Banksy fans on the internet had no doubt who was behind it.—AFP

Putin does not watch caricatures of himself, Kremlin says of BBC show

Vladimir Putin is unlikely to watch a new BBC comedy chat show hosted by a cartoon version of the Russian leader as he "does not look at caricatures" of himself, the Kremlin said Thursday. The British broadcaster on Wednesday announced a new semi-scripted show called "Tonight with Vladimir Putin", set to be aired on BBC Two channel next month. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Russian media that Putin "does not read the books written about him and does not look at caricatures." "He does not want to resemble them in any way," he said.

The star of the show will be a 3D digital cartoon version of Putin, created using motion-capture technology. This will enable him to walk around and sit behind a desk "interviewing real human guests in front of a studio audience, all in real-time," the British broadcaster said in a statement. "Everybody's favorite bear-wrestling global strongman Vladimir Putin has finally achieved his ultimate goal—a chat show on the BBC," it said.

"Forget global politics, landing two pilot episodes on BBC Two of his soon to be world-famous chat show marks the ultimate victory for Vlad, leader of the free world." The short pilot episodes will each feature two guests, the broadcaster said, with British spin doctor Alastair Campbell set to appear in the first episode. A preview of the show showed a 3D image of Putin in front of Buckingham Palace. "Greetings, people of the United Kingdom," the cartoon says in a simulated Russian accent.

In one of the shows, the fictional Russian president is shown trying to get his head around feminism—in another he thanks Campbell "for his part in making such a mess of things," the BBC said. Britain and Russia are at loggerheads following the poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal in the city of Salisbury last year.

Putin has honed an image of a steely man-of-action. While he enjoys telling sometimes coarse jokes at public events, he apparently is less keen on laughing at himself. Shortly after he came to power in 2000, a Russian television channel was forced to axe a popular satirical show called "Kukly," or puppets, that included a Putin character. The Russian leader was thought to be irked by his depiction in the program.—AFP



An alleged work by British street artist Banksy depicting a migrant child wearing a lifejacket holding a pink flare, is painted on the outer wall of a house overlooking the canal Rio de Ca Foscari, in Venice. — AFP photos

Opera singers prepare like Olympic athletes for 'Tosca' in Washington

On the eve of every performance, Riccardo Massi goes silent, not uttering a single word all day. It's part of the Italian tenor's strict regimen to preserve his instrument—his vocal cords. "I experimented a lot, and I saw this is the best thing to do," said Massi, the male lead in Puccini's beloved "Tosca" through Saturday at the Kennedy Center in Washington. "My voice needs rest." There are 2,364 seats in Washington's opera house, and the singers need to reach each one unamplified.

"So much of the craft is how you create this sound using only the bodies of the singers and the instruments of wood and metal," said Washington National Opera general director Timothy O'Leary. "Opera singers are like Olympic athletes, creating incredible feats with their bodies." Retaining the heavy build of his martial artist and stuntman past, the six-foot-four Massi, 40, is setting his mark in the Italian spinto repertoire.

His booming voice cuts through a full orchestra, equally at ease in lyrical or dramatic roles filled with affecting Italianate sobs. Having performed as Cavaradossi in London, Hamburg and Sydney, he takes the role to Dresden next week. In Washington, he's performing opposite Keri Alkema as the title fiery diva. Especially thrilling is the despair he brings to the top notes in the aria "E lucevan le stelle," as Cavaradossi recounts his love for Tosca while awaiting execution.

"You warm up your body and you open up your body because the body is singing," said Massi, who stretches for 1.5 hours before vocalizing for as long to prepare. "The



Volunteers make adjustments to costumes for the upcoming Washington National Opera (WNO) production of Tosca at the WNO's Costume Studio Workroom in Washington, DC. — AFP photos

voice doesn't have to do anything with the cords. They just have to vibrate... in the most passive way, with no pressure, no tension." In order to maintain his vocal cords, Massi watches his weight, skipping bread, pasta, alcohol and sweets altogether. He no longer lifts weights or runs, activities that can tense up or stress the diaphragm and vocal cords.

Interpretation

It took 150 hours of rehearsals over 27 days to finalize the production. Each show involves 217 staff, including 96 stage performers, 66 musicians in the pit and another seven backstage. Staff spent eight weeks on the period costumes, including Tosca's hand-printed mauve chiffon gown in Act I. Sumptuous trompe l'oeil scenery borrowed from the Seattle Opera evokes a towering church interior, a palatial apartment and the Castel Sant'Angelo mausoleum of Rome in 1800.

The sets were likely created in the 1940s, so their designers may have been trained by those from the opera's first production in 1900. The story of love and loss has special resonance in the #MeToo era, with Tosca rejecting villain Scarpia's demands for sexual favors and killing him after singing her soaring aria "Vissi d'arte" in Act II. After Cavaradossi's death, she flings herself backwards from a parapet before the curtain drops.

"Opera is a crazy way to tell a story because there are all the art forms simultaneously. It requires massive suspension of disbelief... all the human forces of a theater company and the symphony orchestra combined, and more besides," said O'Leary. "Some cases—I would argue this is one of them—resist interpretation. It makes sense in the time and place when they were originally set. And when you overdo interpretation, it works against the material."

Fidelity to the score

The WNO production sticks closely to the score, with visual tensions crafted by director Ethan McSweeney, who has a classical theater background. Rome-born conductor Speranza Scappucci masterfully unifies the singers on stage and the orchestra in the lowered pit. "I want to try and understand what the composer wanted," added Scappucci, who like Massi pores over source materials.

"It should never sound like an imposition but rather

trying to convince the artists in front of you, the singers or the orchestra or the chorus." Massi likened that symbiosis to "instinct." "With no empathy between the pit and the stage, there is no art. Of course, there is music, but it's not art. And when you have this deep connection between the two, the audience can tell, trust me, even if they never saw opera before," he said.

Scappucci, 46, has been in high demand since she made her European debut in 2013, appearing a year later at the WNO in her first major US opera house production. It's a dizzying rise for someone who started as an opera rehearsal pianist. The music director at the Opera Royal in Liege, Belgium, she has conducted at the prestigious Vienna, Barcelona, Rome and Zurich opera houses—with a Paris Opera debut planned for next year.—AFP



Musicians in the WNO Orchestra share a laugh before entering the orchestra pit for the performance of Tosca for the Washington National Opera (WNO) at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.



Performers act onstage during a production of Tosca for the Washington National Opera (WNO) at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

Young orchestra musicians bridge US-Cuba divide

Baton in hand, conductor James Ross mixes English and Spanish to set the rhythm for his orchestra of young Cuban and American musicians playing in a convivial atmosphere that contrasts sharply with the diplomatic tensions between their countries. "From the first moment, there's been a generous exchange with lots of heart," a smiling Ross told AFP between rehearsals.

On Havana's National Theatre stage, where the Cuban American Youth Orchestra has been rehearsing all week, it's difficult to distinguish the different nationalities of the violinists, clarinetists and cellists as they play in perfect unison. "It's a group of 30 Americans and at least 40 Cubans searching for harmony," said Ross. Either music students or young professionals, they are all aged between 18 and 24.

This is 24-year-old American Chris Beroes-Haigis's first trip to Cuba. "It's been an unforgettable experience so far. Cuba is a country that's very rich with cultural history and amazing people and incredible music," he said, holding his cello. He says he's "learning a little bit" of Spanish, while alongside him 20-year-old Cuban clarinetist Maria Laura Terry Zamora says she speaks "a tiny bit of English." But that's no barrier, as "music is a universal language," says Terry.

The Cubans have benefited from gifts of musical instruments and sheet music, but Terry says the biggest bonus has been forging new relationships. "It's been a wonderful experience because it's been very helpful sharing with such good musicians, not just the youngsters who share with us and play with us in the orchestra, but also the teachers that have given us a lot of good advice," she added.

This weekend, they will play two concerts, one in Havana and the other 100 kilometers (60 miles) away in Matanzas. They will perform one American piece, "Billy the Kid" by Aaron Copland, and two Cuban compositions—one by Guido Lopez-Gavilan and another by Jorge Amado Molina, a violinist in the orchestra. It's a powerful message at a time of increasing tension between Washington and Havana, which could have scuppered a project that began in 2014 during warmer bilateral relations under Barack Obama's presidency.

That environment encouraged a number of American artists to visit the island nation, notably the Minnesota Orchestra, which performed two concerts in Havana in 2015, after an 85-year absence. "After that, I kept thinking about the people we had met, the students we had worked with, and decided we need a chance for both countries to come together with music and with our young people. So we created this idea to have a new orchestra formed together," said clarinetist Rena Kraut, who was part of the Minnesota trip.

Powerful message

However, with the change of government in Washington came a more challenging environment in which to pursue such collaboration. "In the beginning it was very different because things were politically very open and there was so much optimism in the air between our two countries," said Kraut. "Then things changed, especially in our country, in the United States, so we became even more determined to keep a foot in the door so it would not close between the US and Cuba."

Since the arrival of Donald Trump, the White House has adopted a tougher stance on Cuba than predecessor Obama, ramping up sanctions against the communist government to punish it for supporting Venezuela President Nicolas Maduro. As part of the link-up, Cuban musicians were also supposed to go to the US to play, but that has happened only once—in 2017.

The US consulate in Havana has closed down and it has become much harder for Cubans to obtain a US visa. On the Cuban side, the young musicians are just as determined as Kraut to maintain the links. It's not the first time that musicians from the two countries have played together, but "this time there's a very special flavor to this union," says Dayana Garcia, the Havana orchestra director. "I think it's very brave, and wonderful and opportune to choose moments like this to defend the fact that we can continue together."—AFP

Foot in the door

Visitors tour room 1742 at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal part of the exhibit of the Lennon-Ono Bed-Ins for Peace. — AFP

Montreal celebrates Lennon-Ono 'bed-in' for peace

John Lennon and Yoko Ono spent a week in pajamas in 1969 at The Queen Elizabeth hotel in Montreal, welcoming journalists and recording "Give Peace a Chance" as the Vietnam War raged. Fifty years later, the hotel is celebrating their fabled experiment in pacifism with a series of special events including guided tours of the couple's room. "We're still talking about it 50 years later, but at the time we had no idea the impact that it would have," Joanne Papineau, spokeswoman for the hotel, told AFP.



Visitors tour room 1742 at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal part of the exhibit of the Lennon-Ono Bed-Ins for Peace. — AFP

"After the couple left, for years we didn't talk about the bed-in, but then John was murdered, other wars continued and people started showing up wanting to see where it all happened," she said. "Many years later, they suddenly found meaning in what the couple had done." From May 26 to June 2, 1969, Lennon and Ono received journalists from around the world who interviewed the couple in bed, as well as fans and fellow artists who helped to create a chirpy ambience and send a simple message: Stop the Vietnam war.

The idea derived from sit-ins, in which protestors sit in front of or inside an establishment until their demands are met or they are arrested. Amid this merry chaos and with limited technical means, Lennon composed and recorded his famous hymn to peace, "Give Peace a Chance."

His entourage, which included psychedelic drug advocate Timothy Leary and writer Allen Ginsberg, not always singing in tune, provided the chorus. The song would later be remixed in a professional sound studio. "This is certainly one of the most remarkable and influential songs of contemporary music," Genevieve Bornesaid, host of the upcoming festivities, told a news conference on Thursday. "This bed-in for peace was also one of the first acts of activism by artists."—AFP



Members of the Cuban-US Youth Orchestra, composed of young Cuban and North American musicians, rehearse at the National Theater of Havana. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



A picador falls from his horse during a bullfight at the Las Ventas bullring during the 2019 San Isidro festival in Madrid.



Spanish matador Diego Urdiales performs a pass on a bull.



A man swings from a bull sculpture outside the Las Ventas bullring.

MADRID'S BULLFIGHTING 'RITUAL' ACCLAIMED AND CONTESTED

When the bull collapses and dies in front of the matador, silence descends on Madrid's bullfighting ring, a "ritual" that its French manager Simon Casas vigorously defends in an increasingly conflictive climate. Around 500,000 enthusiasts are expected to descend on Madrid's Las Ventas arena during the month-long Feria de San Isidro, the Spanish capital's biggest bullfighting festival. But now more than ever, activists and politicians are getting involved as regional and municipal elections loom on Sunday.

Madrid's outgoing left-wing mayor has promised "corridos" (bullfights) "without blood or death". But the conservatives and far-right defend a "tradition" associated with Spanish identity. To make their point, they enlisted three "toreros" (bullfighters) as candidates for April's general election. "I don't know anyone who loves the fighting bull more than the torero," says Casas, a 71-year-old former matador, as he strolls through Las Ventas, built in 1929. It "is never an enemy for the torero but a glorified partner."

In a corral next to the ring, visitors measure up these "fighting bulls" that have been reared solely for combat and sometimes weigh more than 600 kilos. "If I had to be an animal, I wouldn't want to be a kitten or a doggie but a fighting bull," says Casas. "I'd die, yes, but... I would make my destiny glorious."

Operating room and abattoir

Every day, representatives of the toreros pick at random the bull that will face off with each matador that evening in a solemn ceremony that involves picking papers out of a hat. "That's the way it's been done since the 19th century," says Casas. In his office, paintings and photos pay homage to toreros killed by bulls: Joselito in 1920, Manolete in 1947... Before a fight, rare are the matadors—those toreros tasked with killing the bull—who don't pass by the chapel in Las Ventas to pray.

Nearby, two operating rooms are on hand for injured toreros. As for the bull, it will die unless it receives an



Spectators arrive to the Las Ventas bullring during the 2019 San Isidro festival in Madrid. — AFP photos

extremely rare pardon—"because you have to follow things through otherwise it becomes a performance and not a ritual," says Casas. Bullfights that involve killing the bull in the ring are legal in Spain, part of France, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela and some of Ecuador. In Portugal, it's illegal but the bull is slaughtered afterwards.

'He killed it badly'

On this spring day, the Las Ventas ring is teeming with close to 24,000 people. "Long live Spain" shouts the crowd as former king Juan Carlos I joins onlookers. First off, the bull is weakened by toreros who drive pikes and "banderillas"—colored darts—into it, drawing blood. Then a

flourish of trumpets announces the entrance of the matador who has 10 minutes to finish the bull off.

"Ole!" "Good!" The matador is applauded when he manages to attract the bull into circles around him, standing close to its horns. Suddenly thousands of white handkerchiefs rise in the audience: "a bull was very valiant, it was killed at once, the public is asking for an ear" as a reward for the torero, explains Antonio Mercader, a 54-year-old economist and enthusiast. Onlookers whistle with disapproval at another matador as "the bull suffers too much," adds his wife, Paqui Fernandez, pulling a face. "He killed it badly."—AFP

Sleepless in Berlin: Nightingales flock to scruffy city parks

Sarah Darwin, the great-great granddaughter of British biologist Charles Darwin, was sleepless in Berlin when, to her "enormous surprise", she heard a nightingale warbling merrily outside her window. "It's very, very rare in the UK, so to be living in the middle of a capital city in Europe and hearing a nightingale singing outside your bedroom window is quite an extraordinary experience," the Berlin-based British botanist told AFP.

The trills got Darwin thinking, and led to the launch of a citizens' project examining why the non-descript-looking brown bird, with its distinctive song, has been flocking to the German capital. The project by Berlin's Natural History Museum, where Darwin works, asks city dwellers to go out and record nightingales' song with their smartphone and upload it onto an app.

Through the sound clips collected, scientists are also seeking to map out whether the birds take on "different dialects" in different parts of Berlin. "What's really exciting in Berlin is that, unlike for instance in England, where the population of nightingales has plunged by 90 percent in the last 60 years, in Berlin there's in fact a positive trend," said Silke Voigt-Heucke, who is coordinating the project. Scientists estimate that the population has grown by six percent annually over the past 15 years in Berlin. There are believed to be between 1,200 and 1,700 nightingale pairs in the capital now.



The sun cuts through the morning fog as a commuter on a bicycle makes his way through the Tiergarten park in Berlin. — AFP

'A little unkempt'

While urbanization has forced wildlife out of most European city and town centers, in sprawling Berlin large areas of often prime land are still green. But more attractive for the nightingale may be the German capital's general scruffiness. "We keep our parks and gardens in Berlin slightly more untidily, and the nightingales need this," said Darwin. "They nest on the ground, they need thick vegetation to protect them from foxes, cats, birds, dogs."

"If you clear your gardens and have nothing but grass and the occasional tree, then there's nowhere for a nightingale to breed. "So Berlin is very special in that way—a little bit unkempt—and we have to keep that. We have to learn to see the beauty in this kind of wildness."

'Get lost!'

Take the 210-hectare Tiergarten park right in the centre: just steps away from the German parliament, the extensive park is home to between seven and 10 nightingale nests. One recent spring morning, a fox slunk past as Voigt-Heucke took a group to check if the Tiergarten nightingale inhabitants had returned from their winter hide-out in Ghana.

Standing before an untidy patch of thicket, she sounded a single-tone long whistle four times, and immediately received an agitated reply—composed of a variety of trills, whistles and what sounded like throbbing beats. "In the daytime, the message is aimed at potential competitors, telling them to 'get lost'," said the scientist of the loud riposte from the nightingale inhabitant. At night, the nightingales' song is aimed at attracting females to nest with them, with some birds known to sing for hours.

Bird dialects?

One of the research's early findings is that the bird's repertoire may be far broader than initially thought. Voigt-Heucke said the catalogue consisted of 2,300 different so-called stanzas submitted as recordings by the public and confirmed by scientists but "the potential is that it could end up containing 8,000 stanzas". Scientists are now hoping to determine whether the birds adopt regional dialects.

"What we can already show is that some of these stanza types are more frequent in Berlin and Brandenburg," the state that surrounds the city, said Voigt-Heucke. "We hope that we can show that other stanza types are seen in Bavaria or in the Ruhr region."

'Life changing'

While the citizen's project is running into its second and final year, Darwin said that she was already hatching related plans. For the scientist, the project has served a key purpose of "engaging people with nature". Over 18 months, "we've collected this extraordinary community of people who are celebrating the arrival of the nightingale and we are literally changing people's lives," said Darwin. "One man said to me: 'When I used to walk to work, I'd put my headphones on and listen to my music. Now I take them off and I listen to the birds'. "This is the sort of a big life changing thing that people are doing."—AFP



(From left) French actress Athenais Sifaoui, French actress Dany Martial, French actor Salim Kechiouche, French actress Marie Bernard, French actress Hafsia Herzi, French-Tunisian film director Abdellatif Kechiche, French actor Shain Boumedine, French actress Lou Luttiau and French actress Meleinda Eliasfour attend a press conference for the film "Mektoub, My Love : Intermezzo" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

'Leery, retrograde' Cannes film sparks scandal

An almost unwatchable "lech fest" of a film by one of France's top directors that includes some two and a half hours of twerking and pole dancing was savaged at the Cannes film festival Friday. Critics laid into Abdellatif Kechiche—who is being investigated by police for an alleged sexual assault on an actress—for the way his camera drools over the bodies of his female cast and for a 13-minute cunnilingus scene in a nightclub toilet.

The director ran out of his own gala red-carpet premiere after his young leading actress, Ophelie Bau, whose bottom occupies the screen for much of the movie, left before the end. Kechiche picked up a microphone as the lights came up and said, "I apologise for having kept you and now I'm off." He then laughed and hurried away from his actors and up the aisle toward the exit.

The 58-year-old director later defended "Mektoub, My Love: Intermezzo" at a stormy press conference where he said it was an attempt to "create the most free cinema experience possible", praising his actors for having "fearlessly crossed boundaries" for him. Kechiche also railed at an AFP question about the sex assault allegations leveled against him in October by a 29-year-old actress as "stupid and sick". He said he had a "clear conscience" and that the "new morality of our time disturbs me".

'Three hours of jiggling butts'

Within minutes of his bizarre exit from the premiere, Kechiche's self-styled ode to "love, desire, music and the body" was getting a critical pasting. "It is painfully retrograde and painful to watch," the Hollywood Reporter declared. The movie was little more than "three-hours-plus of jiggling female butts", wrote critic Boyd van Hoeij. "Oral-sex intermezzo aside, this is basically 'Twerking Female Fannies: The Movie'."

"Sitting through it was its own kind of hell. If only one could unsee and unhear it," he added. Variety said that given the sex assault allegation against Kechiche—which he strenuously denies—this "bloated, petty provocation" may never be released. Others questioned how it should have been allowed to compete for the festival's top prize, the Palme d'Or, which the Tunisian-born director won in 2013 for "Blue Is the Warmest Color". The stars of that lesbian love story, Lea Seydoux and Adele Exarchopoulos, later complained about Kechiche's behaviour towards them on set.

'Lascivious trash'

New Zealand producer Patricia Hetherington, one of many who walked out of his new movie's first Cannes screening early Friday, called the film "the most lascivious leery trash I've seen. Eurgh! "Talk about objectification and voyeurism." Its inclusion in a year when the festival—once a stalking ground of disgraced Hollywood legend Harvey Weinstein—also honored veteran French actor Alain Delon had already stoked controversy. #MeToo campaigners launched a petition calling for the award to be withdrawn, branding Delon a violent "misogynist".

The actor had earlier admitted to slapping women after his son revealed that he once broke eight of his mother's ribs and her nose twice. Bau and two other actors from "Mektoub, My Love" did not attend the Cannes press conference with Kechiche refusing to comment on their absence. But a spokeswoman for the film said later that the actress could not be there because she was making another movie.

Even some of Kechiche's biggest fans were appalled by the film, the second part of a trilogy set in his childhood home of Sete, a port and resort on France's Mediterranean coast. David Ehrlich of the Indiewire website called it "a four-hour movie about butts. Literally 60 percent of the movie is close-ups of butts. "I had a mild psychotic break (down) at one point," he tweeted as the curtain came down.

But the film also had its fans among French critics. Philippe Rouyer hailed the "actors who gave everything to play out this magisterially filmed trance." Even so, the New York Times wondered if "you die from twerking for too long? The women's stamina is ultimately terrifying."

Journalist Kyle Buchanan said Kechiche's focus on his actresses' backsides was "so obsessive that even Sir Mix-A-Lot might blanch", referring to the US rapper whose hit "Baby Got Back" starts with the immortal line, "I like big butts and I cannot lie." Kechiche seemed to confirm that when he told reporters that "when you walk around Paris you see lots of beautiful backsides", particularly on the classical sculptures that adorn the French capital.—AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Models present crochet clothing creations made by inmates as part of 'Ponto Firme' project in the Adriano Marrey maximum security penitentiary in Guarulhos, Brazil. — AFP photos



Inmates show off crochet creations in Brazil prison fashion show

The catwalk came to a Brazilian prison Wednesday when models from the Sao Paulo Fashion Week paraded a collection at a maximum security facility in front of the inmates who created them. Intricate crochet bodices, cheeky skirts and denim finishes featured in the fashion show at the Adriano Marrey prison outside Sao Paulo, where inmates looked on, lavender-colored yarn in hand. A rehabilitation project at the facility teaches convicts crochet—a technique similar to knitting—to build self-esteem and life skills.

"I was proud of myself seeing my creation being modeled for the public and even more proud to know that people liked that piece that I made," said Fidelison Borges, 41, who is serving a combined 18 years for armed robbery and drug trafficking. Around 120 detainees have completed the program, called Ponto Firme, Portuguese for Fixed Point, since Brazilian fashion designer Gustavo Silvestre brought needlework to the cells in 2016.

As an incentive, participants' sentences are

reduced by one day for every 12 hours completed in the program. Silvestre has taken the project twice to Sao Paulo Fashion Week, with some former inmates even modeling the crochet creations in front of the who's who of Latin American fashion. The theme of this year's collection, chosen by the inmates, was "opportunity," Silvestre told AFP.

"Sometimes the detainee has the desire to change and reevaluate their life and search new paths for his life, but when he gets outside prejudice and the lack of opportunity are the biggest challenges," Silvestre said. "Often the person can't get past this stage and returns to crime." For this year's Sao Paulo Fashion Week, held in April, Silvestre shepherded prisoners and former inmates, who now work with him, to complete the 35 pieces in three months.

'Calms me down'

The inmates dismiss those who mock the idea of men doing crochet. "There are people who say that it's only for women, but I don't see it that way," said

Islan da Luz, a 28-year-old drug trafficking convict, while crocheting a powder blue skirt for his wife and a magenta one for his mother. "I think those who think like that are ignorant and prejudiced, and a minority." Most of the 2,200 inmates at Adriano Marrey were convicted for drug trafficking. Seventy percent did not finish primary school.

Crochet "created a will in me, it calms me down, it helped me overcome smoking and using drugs," said Felipe Santos da Silva, 28, who is serving 11 years for robbery. Silvestre recalled a former inmate who, upon his release, sold some of his crochet work to fund his application for a driver's license. "He won't carry on with crochet, but it is helping him to build his path," said Silvestre. "He wants to drive his Uber, be a taxi driver, own a business, but it's crochet that's helping him with these first steps." —AFP



Barbados' singer Rihanna poses during a promotional event of her brand Fenty in Paris. — AFP

Rihanna

hails 'carte blanche' at LVMH

Rihanna said Thursday she had been given complete freedom to design her first fashion line for French luxury powerhouse LVMH, which is banking on the pop diva to find a new market of millennials beyond the reach of its traditional brands. The Barbados-born superstar is the first black woman to head up a fashion house for the Paris-based firm, which owns Dior, Louis Vuitton, Fendi and Givenchy among others.

Rihanna's new line "Fenty"—after Robyn Rihanna Fenty, her full name—was unveiled to fashion journalists in the French capital on Thursday and is to go on sale Friday in a pop-up store near the famous Place des Vosges. "I just want to see things from my perspective. I'm a young black woman who loves and embraces all of the young people ideas and energies. I'm so about that," she told AFP in an interview. "It is about turning all of that into something luxurious for this fashion house which has been doing it forever."

The singer, who has 170 million followers on social media, thanked the billionaire boss of LVMH Bernard Arnault for giving her "carte blanche". Despite its dominance, LVMH has not started a luxury brand from scratch since Christian Lacroix in 1987. "I appreciated that they were flexible enough to allow me to have a different perspective of how I want to do things," Rihanna said. "They allowed me to do that, so it's great," she added.

The singer, who is working on her ninth album, was helped with the collection from designers from across the LVMH empire. Arnault said earlier this month that a "talented and multicultural" team had been set up behind the scenes. "Definition of my style? Very flexible, moody, just like most women. What I feel like at this moment on the day, how comfortable I want to be, how conservative, how sexy," Rihanna said Thursday.

The 31-year-old is not the only pop icon to have become a fashion industry player. Beyonce, who has her own Ivy Park and House of Dereon labels, last month signed a deal with German sportswear giant Adidas. Black designers have also been making dramatic inroads into the fashion industry of late, with the American Virgil Abloh the most talked about designer at recent Paris fashion weeks. Abloh, whose parents come from Ghana, now heads LVMH's Louis Vuitton menswear line as well as his own Off-White Label.—AFP

Mexican designer overcomes disability in style

When Adriana Macias graduated from law school, she found no firm was interested in hiring an attorney without arms. So Macias, a 41-year-old Mexican woman who was born without them, began working as a writer, playwright, motivational speaker and now a fashion designer who has just launched a new clothing line. She designed it—as she does nearly everything—with her feet.

She unveiled her debut collection at Fashion Week Mexico last month, where disabled models strutted the runway—or rolled down it in wheelchairs—showing off her fall-winter line of 12 flowing, vibrantly colored designs made so people with disabilities can easily put them on. She herself uses custom-made clothes that allow her to dress herself using her feet.

"I'm putting out this clothing line with all these details designed to make the clothes accessible, very comfortable, very practical, but also very formal. I wanted (the show) to be inclusive because

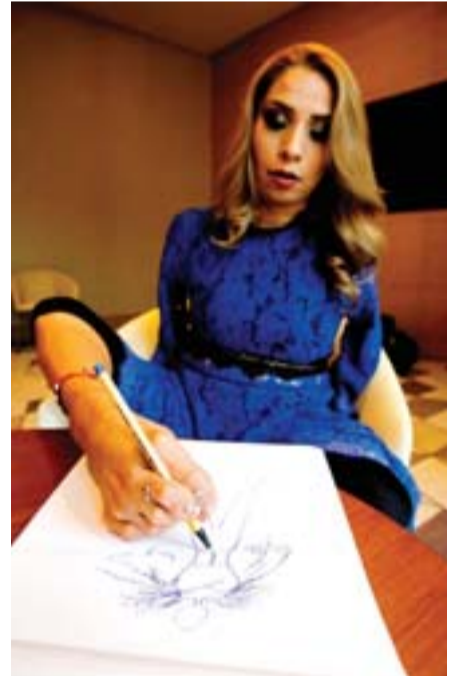
inclusiveness is a very important issue," she told AFP. "People should not exist for clothes, clothes should exist for people."

No more prosthetic arms

Macias's parents taught her from birth to use her feet for the things other children did with their hands. Today, she eats, drinks, writes, draws, cooks, cleans and even dresses her three-year-old daughter with her feet and legs. Sitting cross-legged on her chair, she gestures with her feet when she speaks. Sometimes she rests her chin on her toes, which sport rings and nail polish, or uses them to brush back her long hair. She used prosthetic arms until she was 20, but had to give them up when the added weight gave her shoulder problems.

"It was tough going off to university without my prostheses, taking off my shoes in class to write. It's considered bad manners to take off your shoes," she said with a smile and her usual lively determination. She thrived at university anyway, earning a law degree, but got a cold welcome in the professional world. "No one wanted to hire me," she said.

"Everybody thought it was weird or shocking that someone would show up at an office, take their shoes off and apply for work." That is when she began writing—she has published three books and a play—and also working as a motivational speaker and, now, a designer. She even holds a Guinness world record, for "most birthday candles lit with the feet in one minute": 11.—AFP



Mexican disabled designer Adriana Macias works in one of her designs.



Mexican disabled designer Adriana Macias puts makeup on in front a mirror.



In this file photo Mexican disabled designer Adriana Macias acknowledges applause after the presentation of her collection during the Mexico Fashion Week in Mexico City.



Mexican fashion designer Adriana Macias -who was born without arms - combs her daughter Meritxell's hair in Guadalajara, state of Jalisco, Mexico. — AFP photos

Latin American art emerges as a bargain for collectors

Shopping for a masterpiece but can't afford, say, a steel rabbit sculpture that went for over \$90 million? Then, consider Latin American art. Indeed, even big names, such as Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, offer a lot of bang for the buck, auction houses, gallery owners and collectors told AFP. "With a million dollars you really can buy a masterpiece," said Virgilio Garza, director of Latin American art at Christie's in New York.

For someone seeking a modern or contemporary US

or European work, Garza said that same amount of money "will not get you very far." Money has been really flooded the spring art auctions in New York. Jeff Koons' work entitled "Rabbit"—a stainless steel casting of an inflatable bunny—fetched \$91.1 million, a record for a living artist, last week at Christie's. And a Claude Monet painting from his celebrated "Meules" (Haystacks) series fetched \$110.7 million at Sotheby's. That was a record for the French Impressionist.

The standouts among Latin American art, however, were acquired for a song, relatively speaking. At Sotheby's, a famous painting of watermelon slices by Mexico's Rufino Tamayo was auctioned for \$4.9 million. And a work by Uruguay's Joaquin Torres Garcia entitled "Construccion en blanco" drew 3.4 million.

First-time collectors

Latin American art is perfect for people who are only starting to collect, because of the bargains out there, said Garza. A portrait of the daughter of Diego Rivera—the world's top draw among Mexican artists, followed by Kahlo and Tamayo—was thought to be worth up to \$700,000 at Sotheby's. Yet in the end, nobody took it home. Tamayo's "Mujer con Rebozo" (Woman with a Shawl) went for \$495,000 last Wednesday at Christie's, far below its estimate of up to \$700,000.

A large triptych by the Cuban-American artist Carlos Alfonzo—whose career was distinguished but brief because he died at age 40—went for \$350,000 at Christie's. That was a record for the artist at auction. Garza said Latin American art is perfect for someone starting a collection because "there are really good things at reasonable prices." —AFP



Visitors look at artwork at Christie's in New York. — AFP photos



Classifieds

Sunday, May 26, 2019

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas with light to moderate variable wind to south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h.

BY NIGHT: Relatively humid specially over coastal areas with light to moderate south easterly wind changing to north westerly wind later on, with speed of 10 - 30 km/h.

| WEATHER WARNING | | | No Current Warnings | | |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| STATION | MAX. EXP. | MIN. REC. | SFC. CHART 25/05/2019 0000 UTC | | |
| KUWAIT CITY | 41 °C | 28 °C | | | |
| KUWAIT AIRPORT | 43 °C | 23 °C | | | |
| ABDALY | 43 °C | 26 °C | | | |
| BUBYAN | - °C | - °C | | | |
| JAHRA | 43 °C | 28 °C | | | |
| FAILAKA ISLAND | 41 °C | 26 °C | | | |
| SALMIYAH | 35 °C | 29 °C | | | |
| AHMADI | 35 °C | 29 °C | | | |
| NUWAISIB | 41 °C | 26 °C | | | |
| WAFRA | 43 °C | 25 °C | | | |
| SALMY | 42 °C | 25 °C | | | |

| 4 DAYS FORECAST | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------|--|--------------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| DAY | DATE | WEATHER | Temperatures | | Wind Direction | Wind Speed |
| | | | MAX. | MIN. | | |
| Sunday | 05/26 | Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear later on | 44 °C | 25 °C | SW-SE | 06 - 36 km/h |
| Monday | 05/27 | Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear | 42 °C | 25 °C | VRB-SE | 08 - 30 km/h |
| Tuesday | 05/28 | Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear | 45 °C | 26 °C | NW-VRB | 08 - 26 km/h |
| Wednesday | 05/29 | Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear | 46 °C | 28 °C | SW-SE | 08 - 28 km/h |

| PRAYER TIMES | |
|--------------|-------|
| Fajr | 03:19 |
| Sunrise | 04:51 |
| Zuhr | 11:45 |
| Asr | 15:20 |
| Sunset | 18:39 |
| Isha | 20:08 |

| RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| MAX. Temp. | 42 °C |
| MIN. Temp. | 25 °C |
| MAX. RH | 36 % |
| MIN. RH | 10 % |
| MAX. Wind | S 25 km/h |
| TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR. | 0 mm |

CHANGE OF NAME

I, HUSAIN KAKUMAMA HUZAIFA SHABBIR, holder of Indian Passport No. Z2814333, Permanent R/O Najampura Sagwara, Rajasthan 314025, have changed my Given Name to HUZAIFA SHABBIR HUSAIN Surname to KAKUMAMA. (C 5538)

I, CANDELINA FERNANDES Residing at H.No: 192/3, Near Ganapati Temple Central Horta Aquem-Baixo, Salcete Goa, has changed my name from MARIA CONCEICAO FERNANDES to CANDELINA FERNANDES. Hereafter, in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by the name CANDELINA FERNANDES. (5537)

I, MELBA FERNANDES Residing at H.No. 192/3, Near Ganapati Temple Central Horta Aquem-Baixo, Salcete Goa, has changed my name from MELBA DOMINGOS VAS to MELBA FERNANDES. Hereafter, in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by the name MELBA FERNANDES. (C 5537)

I, DOMINGOS VAS, S/o Francisco Vas Residing at H.No: 192/3, Near Ganapati Temple Central Horta Aquem-Baixo, Salcete Goa, has changed my name from DOMINGOS FRANCISCO VAS to DOMINGOS VAS. Hereafter, in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by the name DOMINGOS VAS. (5536) 24-5-2019

MOHAMMED ANAS KAYUM AHMED (new name) S/o KAYUM AHMED previously called MOHAMMED ANAS (old name) S/o KAYUM AHMED resident near chuna bhatti, rajtalab, banswara (Raj.) solemnly declare. (C 5534)

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DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

| Arrival Flights on Sunday 26/5/2019 | | | | | Departure Flights on Sunday 26/5/2019 | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------|-------------|-------|----------|---------------------------------------|-------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| Airlines | Flt | Route | Time | | Airlines | Flt | Route | Time | |
| FEG | 441 | Asyut | 00:05 | KAC 774 | Riyadh | 13:35 | | | |
| IGO | 1757 | Kochi | 00:10 | JZR 212 | Jeddah | 13:45 | AIC 988 | Hyderabad/Chennai | 00:05 |
| THY | 772 | Istanbul | 00:20 | QTR 1078 | Doha | 14:10 | JZR 713 | Sohag | 00:10 |
| KAC | 102 | London | 00:50 | KNE 231 | Riyadh | 14:10 | MSR 615 | Cairo | 00:30 |
| DLH | 625 | Dammam | 00:50 | FDB 5059 | Dubai | 14:15 | FDB 072 | Dubai | 00:30 |
| JZR | 734 | Cairo | 01:00 | GFA 221 | Bahrain | 14:15 | BBC 044 | Dhaka | 00:40 |
| JZR | 722 | Alexandria | 01:00 | KAC 364 | Colombo | 14:35 | FEG 342 | Sohag | 01:05 |
| KAC | 504 | Beirut | 01:00 | KAC 792 | Madinah | 14:40 | JZR 409 | Delhi | 01:10 |
| UAE | 853 | Dubai | 01:40 | KAC 562 | Amman | 14:40 | IGO 1758 | Kochi | 01:10 |
| KLM | 446 | Bahrain | 01:45 | KAC 304 | Mumbai | 14:45 | KAC 677 | Dubai | 01:40 |
| PGT | 840 | Istanbul | 01:50 | SVA 500 | Jeddah | 14:45 | THY 773 | Istanbul | 01:50 |
| PGT | 858 | Istanbul | 01:50 | JZR 222 | Riyadh | 14:45 | DLH 625 | Frankfurt | 01:50 |
| KKK | 1268 | Istanbul | 01:55 | KAC 618 | Doha | 14:50 | KAC 363 | Colombo | 02:00 |
| ETH | 620 | Addis Ababa | 02:15 | KAC 788 | Jeddah | 14:55 | KAC 417 | Manila | 02:00 |
| QTR | 1086 | Doha | 02:30 | KAC 516 | Tehran | 15:00 | JZR 111 | Doha | 02:10 |
| KAC | 414 | Bangkok | 02:40 | KAC 118 | New York | 15:00 | THY 765 | Istanbul | 02:50 |
| GFA | 211 | Bahrain | 02:50 | KAC 692 | Muscat | 15:00 | JZR 707 | Luxor | 02:50 |
| ETD | 305 | Abu Dhabi | 03:05 | KNE 529 | Jeddah | 15:05 | PGT 859 | Istanbul | 02:50 |
| OMA | 643 | Muscat | 03:05 | ETD 303 | Abu Dhabi | 15:15 | PGT 841 | Istanbul | 02:50 |
| RJA | 648 | Amman | 03:05 | OMA 645 | Muscat | 15:20 | KKK 1269 | Istanbul | 02:55 |
| MSR | 612 | Cairo | 03:15 | ABY 127 | Sharjah | 15:35 | ETH 621 | Addis Ababa | 03:05 |
| KAC | 418 | Manila | 03:20 | KAC 546 | Cairo | 15:50 | KLM 446 | Amsterdam | 03:10 |
| QTR | 1076 | Doha | 03:30 | FEG 341 | Sohag | 16:00 | UAE 854 | Dubai | 03:30 |
| RBG | 1557 | Alexandria | 03:35 | FDB 051 | Dubai | 16:10 | ETD 306 | Abu Dhabi | 04:00 |
| LMU | 510 | Cairo | 04:00 | JZR 732 | Cairo | 16:10 | OMA 644 | Muscat | 04:05 |
| IGO | 1751 | Chennai | 04:10 | QTR 1072 | Doha | 16:15 | QTR 1087 | Doha | 04:15 |
| KAC | 784 | Jeddah | 04:25 | KAC 502 | Beirut | 16:15 | MSR 613 | Cairo | 04:15 |
| JZR | 1738 | Cairo | 04:45 | FEG 241 | Alexandria | 16:45 | RBG 1558 | Alexandria | 04:25 |
| JZR | 404 | Hyderabad | 04:50 | JZR 116 | Doha | 17:05 | JZR 1735 | Cairo | 04:40 |
| DHX | 170 | Bahrain | 05:05 | SVA 510 | Riyadh | 17:10 | LMU 511 | Cairo | 05:00 |
| KAC | 382 | Delhi | 05:15 | GFA 215 | Bahrain | 17:30 | IGO 1752 | Chennai | 05:10 |
| THY | 770 | Istanbul | 05:20 | JZR 214 | Jeddah | 17:35 | KAC 303 | Mumbai | 05:15 |
| JZR | 402 | Mumbai | 05:25 | IRA 665 | Shiraz | 17:35 | QTR 1077 | Doha | 05:15 |
| KAC | 344 | Chennai | 05:30 | JZR 724 | Alexandria | 18:05 | KAC 103 | London | 05:20 |
| KAC | 552 | Cairo | 05:45 | QTR 1080 | Doha | 18:10 | THY 771 | Istanbul | 06:30 |
| JZR | 112 | Doha | 05:50 | MSR 620 | Cairo | 18:30 | GFA 212 | Bahrain | 06:50 |
| QTR | 8511 | Doha | 06:05 | JZR 716 | Sohag | 18:40 | RJA 649 | Amman | 07:00 |
| BAW | 157 | London | 06:10 | RJA 640 | Amman | 19:05 | KAC 165 | Rome | 08:00 |
| KAC | 284 | Dhaka | 06:15 | GFA 217 | Bahrain | 19:05 | KAC 171 | Frankfurt | 08:00 |
| JZR | 714 | Sohag | 06:20 | ABY 123 | Sharjah | 19:20 | JZR 211 | Jeddah | 08:00 |
| KAC | 678 | Dubai | 06:40 | KAC 156 | Istanbul | 19:25 | BAW 156 | London | 08:00 |
| KAC | 204 | Lahore | 06:45 | RBG 555 | Bahrain | 19:40 | QTR 8512 | Doha | 08:05 |
| KAC | 302 | Mumbai | 07:05 | KAC 776 | Riyadh | 19:45 | IGO 1756 | CNN | 08:10 |
| IGO | 1755 | CNN | 07:10 | KAC 166 | Rome | 20:00 | KAC 501 | Beirut | 08:50 |
| KAC | 358 | Kochi | 07:25 | KAC 104 | London | 20:00 | KAC 545 | Cairo | 08:50 |
| UAE | 855 | Dubai | 07:35 | KNE 381 | Taif | 20:00 | KAC 561 | Amman | 08:55 |
| KAC | 332 | Trivandrum | 08:05 | FDB 057 | Dubai | 20:05 | KAC 613 | Bahrain | 09:00 |
| JZR | 708 | Luxor | 08:45 | OMA 647 | Muscat | 20:05 | KAC 161 | Geneva | 09:00 |
| ETD | 301 | Abu Dhabi | 08:50 | DLH 624 | Frankfurt | 20:10 | KAC 117 | New York | 09:05 |
| THY | 6564 | ISL | 08:50 | MEA 402 | Beirut | 20:15 | UAE 856 | Dubai | 09:05 |
| ABY | 125 | Sharjah | 09:00 | KAC 542 | Cairo | 20:35 | KAC 791 | Madinah | 09:10 |
| FDB | 5055 | Dubai | 09:20 | QTR 1088 | Doha | 20:40 | KAC 787 | Jeddah | 09:15 |
| SAW | 703 | Damascus | 09:30 | KLM 445 | Amsterdam | 21:00 | KAC 691 | Muscat | 09:20 |
| IGO | 1753 | Ahmedabad | 09:40 | KAC 172 | Frankfurt | 21:00 | KAC 741 | Dammam | 09:40 |
| KAC | 384 | Delhi | 09:55 | JZR 1234 | Taif | 21:10 | KAC 773 | Riyadh | 09:40 |
| SVA | 512 | Riyadh | 10:00 | ETD 307 | Abu Dhabi | 21:10 | ABY 126 | Sharjah | 09:40 |
| GFA | 213 | Bahrain | 10:40 | UAE 859 | Dubai | 21:15 | JZR 731 | Cairo | 09:45 |
| MEA | 404 | Beirut | 10:55 | ALK 229 | Colombo | 21:15 | ETD 302 | Abu Dhabi | 09:55 |
| QTR | 1074 | Doha | 11:00 | THY 764 | Istanbul | 21:30 | KAC 101 | London | 10:05 |
| SYR | 341 | Damascus | 11:00 | KAC 676 | Dubai | 21:45 | FDB 5056 | Dubai | 10:15 |
| JZR | 1736 | Cairo | 11:05 | KAC 622 | Doha | 21:50 | THY 6564 | Hanoi | 10:20 |
| SAW | 701 | Damascus | 12:30 | GFA 219 | Bahrain | 21:50 | SAW 704 | Damascus | 10:30 |
| ETH | 3620 | Addis Ababa | 12:30 | KAC 564 | Amman | 21:55 | KAC 515 | Tehran | 10:35 |
| THY | 766 | Istanbul | 12:30 | KAC 162 | Geneva | 22:00 | KAC 155 | Istanbul | 10:40 |
| JZR | 410 | Delhi | 12:30 | QTR 1082 | Doha | 22:05 | KAC 617 | Doha | 10:40 |
| KAC | 614 | Bahrain | 12:30 | ETD 309 | Abu Dhabi | 22:15 | IGO 1754 | Ahmedabad | 10:40 |
| UAE | 871 | Dubai | 12:45 | KAC 786 | Jeddah | 22:20 | SVA 513 | Riyadh | 10:55 |
| MSR | 610 | Cairo | 12:45 | AIC 981 | Chennai/Ahmedabad | 22:25 | JZR 723 | Alexandria | 11:20 |
| KAC | 742 | Dammam | 12:55 | JZR 254 | Amman | 23:10 | JZR 221 | Riyadh | 11:20 |
| AXB | 393 | Kozhikode | 13:10 | MSC 405 | Sohag | 23:15 | GFA 214 | Bahrain | 11:35 |
| | | | | MSR 614 | Cairo | 23:30 | MEA 405 | Beirut | 11:55 |
| | | | | FDB 071 | Dubai | 23:35 | | | |



MOSCOW: Russian Muslims pray in the Sobornaya mosque, Moscow Cathedral Mosque in the Russian capital, as Muslims worldwide take part in the month of Ramadan, where they fast between dawn and dusk. — AFP

Most expensive drug: Novartis \$2.125 therapy

ZURICH: Swiss drugmaker Novartis on Friday won US approval for its gene therapy Zolgensma for spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), the leading genetic cause of death in infants, and priced the one-time treatment at a record \$2.125 million. The Food and Drug Administration approved Zolgensma for children under the age of two with SMA, including those not yet showing symptoms.

The approval covers babies with the deadliest form of the inherited disease as well as those with types where debilitating symptoms may set in later. "This is potentially a new standard of care for babies with the most serious form of SMA," said Dr Emmanuelle Tiogson, a pediatric neurologist at Children's Hospital Los Angeles who has provided Zolgensma to patients under an expanded access program. "The job now is trying to negotiate with insurers that this would be a long-term savings."

Novartis executives defended the price, saying that a one-time treatment is more valuable than expensive long-term treatments that cost several hundred thousand dollars a year. Novartis touched off a debate over what gene therapy is worth last year, estimating its treatment would be cost-effective at up to \$5 million per patient. A review in April by an independent US group, the Institute for Clinical and Economic Review (ICER), concluded Novartis' value estimate for Zolgensma was excessive.

But on Friday, ICER said that based on Novartis' additional clinical data, the broad FDA label and its launch price, it believed that the drug fell within the upper bound of its range for cost-effectiveness. Novartis said it was offering health insurers the option of installment payments for Zolgensma as well as refunds if the treatment does not work and upfront discounts for payers who commit to standardized coverage terms.

Novartis Chief Executive Vas Narasimhan has much riding on Zolgensma, describing it as a near cure for SMA

if delivered soon after birth. But data proving its durability extends to only about five years. The therapy uses a virus to provide a normal copy of the SMN1 gene to babies born with a defective gene. It is delivered by infusion.

A rival to biogen

Novartis is expecting European and Japanese approval later this year. Zolgensma will compete with Biogen Inc's Spinraza, the first approved treatment for SMA. The disease often leads to paralysis, breathing difficulty and death within months for babies born with the most serious Type 1 form. SMA affects about one in every 10,000 live births, with 50 percent to 70 percent having Type 1 disease. Spinraza, approved in late 2016, requires infusion into the spinal canal every four months. Its list price of \$750,000 for the initial year and \$375,000 annually thereafter was also deemed excessive by ICER.

Some neurologists see gene therapy becoming the preferred treatment for newborns with severe SMA, while acknowledging that families may choose to wait for long-term safety and efficacy data for Zolgensma. Novartis is looking into whether the death of one severely ill baby treated with Zolgensma was related to the therapy. "Most families will want to do the gene therapy since it avoids the frequent spinal taps," said Dr. Russell Butterfield of the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. Butterfield has received payments from Biogen for consulting.

The FDA said it approved Zolgensma based on clinical trials involving 36 patients aged 2 weeks to 8 months. The agency said patients treated with Zolgensma showed significant improvement in developmental motor milestones such as head control and ability to sit up. The most common side effects of Zolgensma are elevated liver enzymes and vomiting. The FDA is requiring Zolgensma's label to include a warning that acute serious liver injury can occur.

With additional studies underway, Novartis said it has so far treated more than 150 patients with Zolgensma, which was acquired with its \$8.7 billion purchase of AveXis last year. Wall Street analysts have forecast sales of \$2 billion by 2022, according to a Refinitiv survey. Spinraza sales hit \$1.7 billion last year, and are seen rising to \$2.2 billion in 2022. Roche is developing risdiplam, an oral drug, for the condition and plans to file for approval later this year. — Reuters

region is very dangerous and a threat to international peace and security and must be confronted," Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told the official IRNA news agency.

The escalation of the US military presence follows a decision in early May to send an aircraft carrier strike force and B-52 bombers in a show of force against what Washington's leaders believed was an imminent Iranian plan to attack US assets. "This is a prudent response to credible threats from Iran," acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan said Friday.

President Donald Trump, who approved the deployment, called it "protective." "We want to have protection in the Middle East," Trump told reporters as he prepared to set off on a trip to Japan. "We're going to be sending a relatively small number of troops, mostly protective," Trump added. "It'll be about 1,500 people."

Fighter jets, missile battalion

The new deployment includes reconnaissance aircraft, fighter jets and engineers. Six hundred of the personnel belong to a Patriot missile defense battalion that had its deployment in the region extended. Pentagon officials said the move was necessary after multiple threatening actions and several small-in-scope attacks in May by Iranian forces, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, and "proxy" forces.

Those include a rocket launched into the Green Zone in Baghdad, explosive devices that damaged four tankers in Fujairah near the entrance to the Gulf, and a Houthis drone attack against a Saudi oil installation. Iran has denied involvement in any of the attacks. "Americans make such claims to justify their hostile policies and to create tension in the Arabian Gulf," Zarif said.

The initial threat came at the beginning of May, according to Rear Admiral Michael Gilday, director of the Pentagon's Joint Staff. The US caught the IRGC attempting to covertly deploy "modified dhows capable of launching cruise missiles," he said, referring to small traditional boats. "We view this as a campaign," Gilday told reporters. The moves "are all part of a dangerous and escalatory strategy by Iran to threaten global trade and to destabilize the region."

'Highest levels'

"We believe with a high degree of confidence that this stems back to the leadership of Iran at the highest levels, and that all of the attacks... have been attributed to Iran through their proxies or their forces," Gilday said, citing still-secret US intelligence. US officials said the aim of the deployment was both to extend greater protection to the 70,000 US forces in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and to deliver a message to Iran to refrain from attacks — Agencies

New troops counter Iran

Meanwhile, US is deploying 1,500 additional troops to the Middle East to counter "credible threats" from Iran in a move denounced by Tehran yesterday as "a threat to international peace". "Increased US presence in our

Ramadan - 'Then & Now' Kuwaiti style...

Continued from Page 1

Greesh

Numerous traditional Kuwaiti practices have gone out of existence, and most of the new generation does not know anything about the customs of the past; they are now reduced to sweet memories. Among these forgotten events is the day of Greesh. This name was designated for the last day before the start of the Holy month. The family would meet for lunch before they began the 30 days of fasting/worship.

On this day, an elaborate lunch was prepared and all the family members would gather around for this meal. Even today, everywhere there is the pleasant aroma of traditional Kuwaiti food coming from the neighboring houses. Lunch is served immediately after Dhuhr (the afternoon prayer), and neighbors exchange dishes with each other minutes before lunch.

After the Dhuhr prayer, all the family members gather around a table that includes a variety of dishes that are either cooked at home, or presented by neighbors and relatives. During this family meal, people joke, reminding each other that within a few hours they would be entering the Holy month of Ramadan. Nowadays, people organize this event in the offices too - with their colleagues, to share the happiness they feel.

The cannon

Every day, children celebrate the firing of the cannon to break the fast at sunset, which is called Al-Waaridah. In the afternoon, they gather around the cannon, and when it is fired, all of them cheer with joy. This happens today too but only at the Capital Governorate HQ.

Abu Tabeelah (Man of the drum)

This was the person who would awaken people to have their Suhoor (the pre-dawn meal before daybreak) every night. I remember him staying up late at night, and moving around the neighborhood repeating God's names to motivate people to wake up and have their Suhoor. Some people would serve him dishes like Harees and Tashreeba, and so on, until the end of Ramadan. In the end, he bid farewell to the month in a melancholic tone, saying, "Farewell, farewell Ramadan, farewell the month of fasting!" Alas, 'Abu Tabeelah' is no more today.

Meals in Ramadan

Kuwaiti cuisine has retained various dishes over the decades that are passed from generation to generation. The two most important among these dishes, which are found at every meal in Kuwait is Harees (made of mashed

wheat with meat, to which a mixture of sugar and clarified butter and sprinkled with ground cinnamon), and Jareesh (a bit similar to Harees with one main difference - it is a savoury dish).

Another popular dish that is served at Iftaar in every household is Tashreeba which is a yeast bread cut into small pieces, with gravy containing gourd, potatoes and dry lemons from Oman. The Kuwaiti people prefer Tashreeba because it is easily made, easily digested and has a delicious taste. Special sweets are made during Ramadan.

The most popular among them is Gaymaat, which is made of milk, cardamom, butter, saffron and fermented dough cut into small bite-size balls and fried in boiling fat until they turn golden, then placed in sugar syrup or molasses. The Kuwaiti sweets are distinctive for their sweet taste and rich aroma, as they are made of fragrant and flavorful spices like cardamom, saffron, and ground cinnamon.

They also have delicious coffee, which is boiled with saffron. In the past, the Kuwaiti people used to serve special dishes in their Ramadan gatherings, particularly in the diwans that stay open till the late hours of the night called Ghabqah. However, the Ghabqah nowadays differs in its form and content from that of the past. Today, the Ghabqah is served very late, close to the time of Suhoor. The Ghabqah in the past was served not later than ten in the night, and contained popular snacks like Bajillah, Nakhi, Muhalabiyah, KhubzAr-Ruqaaq and special Kuwaiti sweets like Zalabiyah, Gaymaat and Ghurayyibah.

The Night of Al-Qadr

Like Muslims all over the world, the night of Al-Qadr has a special place in the hearts of the Kuwaiti people. Thousands of them long for it every year and gather in the Masjids to pray for relief from worries and woes, and to safeguard Kuwait from evil. Special preparations are made for the last ten nights of prayer.

Another distinct practice that takes place in most mosques during the blessed month of Ramadan is Ihtikaaf, where men leave everything behind, abandon the comfort they enjoy at home and reside in the mosque in order to devote and dedicate themselves for worship during the last ten nights of Ramadan. Many mosques around the country distribute the Iftaar meal (the meal at sunset to break their fast) throughout the month and particularly during the last ten days of Ramadan.

Courtesy of the TIES Center: the TIES Center aims at empower Kuwait's expats through social and educational services that promote a positive and productive role in society, and to facilitate opportunities for intra- and inter-faith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, you can contact TIES at Tel: 25231015/6; Hotline: 94079777; e-mail: info@tiescenter.net.

mood of the country and her party," said Nigel Farage, whose new Brexit Party is predicted to emphatically win the contest in Britain.

The beleaguered leader had previously vowed to step aside once her unpopular EU divorce deal had passed parliament, and this week launched a short-lived bid for lawmakers to approve it in early June. MPs have overwhelmingly rejected the agreement three times, weakening May on each occasion. Her latest effort to force it through the House of Commons, which included giving MPs the option of holding a referendum on it, proved her final undoing, prompted a furious reaction from Conservatives, including cabinet members.

Her departure kickstarts a Conservative Party leadership contest-already unofficially under way-that is expected to encompass more than a dozen candidates and favor an ardent Brexiteer. Tory MPs will hold a series of votes to whittle the contenders down to a final two that will be put to the party's more than 100,000 members. Johnson is the membership's favorite, but numerous Conservative lawmakers are thought to hold serious reservations about his suitability for the top job.

May was the surprise victor in the 2016 leadership contest to replace then prime minister David Cameron after he quit following the EU referendum. Despite having campaigned to Remain, she embraced the cause with the mantra "Brexit means Brexit". However the decision to hold a disastrous snap election in June 2017, when she lost her parliamentary majority, left her stymied. Her dimly dysfunctional government saw 36 ministerial resignations-a modern record.

May will leave office without any significant achievements-other than her bungled handling of Brexit, according to political analysts. "She doesn't really have a legacy," said Simon Usherwood, of the University of Surrey. "I think anybody in her position would have had great difficulty." Others were more brutal in their assessment. "It was only an impossible job because she made it one," said Tim Bale of Queen Mary University of London. — AFP

Tearful May quits after three years...

Continued from Page 1

withdrawal strategy, is the immediate front-runner to succeed her. He said Friday that under his leadership Britain would leave the EU with or without a deal on October 31 — the latest deadline agreed with Brussels after Brexit was twice delayed.

"The way to get a good deal is to prepare for a no-deal situation," he told an economic conference in Switzerland, according to Bloomberg. "To get things done you need to be prepared to walk away." The pound wobbled as analysts said her imminent departure amplified the chances of leaving the EU without a deal. However, EU leaders struck a defiantly contrasting tone.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said the withdrawal plan agreed was "not up for renegotiation". German Chancellor Angela Merkel said she "respects" May's decision and would keep working towards an "orderly" Brexit, while Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar warned the saga was entering "a phase that may be a very dangerous one for Ireland". May received more sympathy from Brexit-backing US President Donald Trump, who said "I feel badly for Theresa. I like her very much. She is a good woman."

May was pushed into the humiliating spectacle of a hastily arranged resignation announcement following a meeting with the Conservative Party's committee chief in charge of leadership elections. She had been under rising pressure following months of Brexit-fuelled political paralysis, which intensified following disastrous results in the May 2 English local elections.

The Conservatives are expected to fare even worse in this week's European Parliament elections when results are announced. "Politically she misjudged the

Sports

Story blasts walk-off as Colorado Rockies drop reeling Orioles

D-backs bust out bats, hammer Giants 18-2

DENVER: Trevor Story hit two home runs, including a two-run, walk-off homer in the ninth inning, and the Colorado Rockies rallied to beat the Baltimore Orioles 8-6 on Friday night in Denver. Nolan Arenado also homered twice for the Rockies, and Scott Oberg (2-0) pitched the ninth to get the win. Keon Broxton, Dwight Smith Jr. and Renato Nunez went deep for the Orioles, who have lost seven straight. John Means scattered seven hits over his five innings for Baltimore, giving up three runs. Ryan McMahon started the rally in the ninth with a single off Mychal Givens (0-3). One out later, Story homered to right to win it. It was the second walk-off homer of his career.

ASTROS 4, RED SOX 3

Wade Miley worked six strong innings, Jake Marisnick clubbed a home run, and Houston capitalized on spotty defense from visiting Boston in the opener of a three-game series between the last two World Series champions. Miley (5-2) was strong early and resilient late, striking out five of his season-high eight batters during his first trip through the Red Sox order. In his rematch with Red Sox ace Chris Sale, Miley allowed one run, four hits and two walks on 102 pitches, including 61 strikes. He struck out eight batters. The Red Sox committed three errors behind Sale (1-6), who gave up four runs, two earned, in six innings.

DIAMONDBACKS 18, GIANTS 2

Arizona smashed four home runs and posted its highest run total of the season while snapping a five-game losing streak with a blowout win at San Francisco. Ildemaro Vargas went 5-for-6, including a solo home run, as Arizona rapped off 21 hits, tying the franchise record for a nine-inning game. Arizona's other homers were three-run shots, from Adam Jones, Eduardo Escobar and Ketel Marte. Nick Ahmed had three singles, a double and a bases-loaded walk. Jones also had four hits. Arizona became the first team to have six consecutive multi-run innings in a game since the Diamondbacks did it against the St. Louis Cardinals on July 27, 2000, according to STATS.

RANGERS 4, ANGELS 3

Hunter Pence's two-run single in the seventh inning erased a deficit and lifted Texas to a win over Los Angeles in Anaheim, Calif. It was the Rangers' fifth victory in a row and eighth win in the past nine games. Pence, Shin-Soo Choo and Isiah Kiner-Falefa each had two hits in the game while helping send the Angels to their fifth loss in a row. Drew Smyly (1-3) threw six innings of three-run ball. Shawn Kelley earned his fifth save of the season, striking out Mike Trout for the final out with a runner on base.

A'S 6, MARINERS 2

Matt Olson and Mark Canha hit back-to-back home runs as Oakland defeated visiting Seattle for its seventh consecutive victory. Stephen Piscotty also homered for the A's, who earned their first win in five meetings with Seattle this season. The Mariners, who took their fourth consecutive defeat and lost for the seventh time in eight games, left 15 runners on base. Lou Trivino (2-0) earned the victory with a 1 1/3 perfect innings of relief. A's starter Daniel Mengden threw 99 pitches in four innings, allowing one run on five hits with five walks and four strikeouts. He got out of several jams, stranding nine runners on base.

DODGERS 10, PIRATES 2

David Freese hit a grand slam, and Cody Bellinger cracked his 18th home run as visiting Los Angeles clobbered Pittsburgh in a faceoff of sluggers and early MVP contenders in Bellinger and the Pirates' Josh Bell. Bellinger, who entered the game hitting .394, was 1-for-5 with the homer, a two-run shot. Bell, who began the game with a .339 batting average, went 1-for-4 with a double. The Dodgers, who have won eight straight games against the Pirates, piled up 13 hits. Los Angeles starter Walker Buehler (5-1) allowed one run and five hits in six innings, with six strikeouts and one walk.

REDS 6, CUBS 5

Eugenio Suarez hit a two-run home run in the top of the ninth inning to give visiting Cincinnati its first lead of the game, and the bullpen made it hold for a win against Chicago in the opener of a three-game series. Willson Contreras gave the Cubs a 5-4 lead in the eighth with a two-out, pinch-hit RBI single on an 0-2 pitch from David Hernandez (1-2). Raisel Iglesias pitched the ninth for his 11th save. Steve Cishek (1-2) was three outs from his fifth save for Chicago, but he walked Joey Votto to start the inning before Suarez hit his towering blast to center.

TWINS 11, WHITE SOX 4

Eddie Rosario, Miguel Sano and Max Kepler each hit home runs as Minnesota became just the second team in major league history to reach the 100-homer mark in the first 50 games of the season, helping produce a win over Chicago in Minneapolis. The Twins, coming in off their second eight-homer game of the season in a 16-7 win over the Los Angeles Angels on Thursday, increased their 2019 total to 101. They joined the 1999 Seattle Mariners (102) as the only teams in major league history to hit the century mark in their first 50 games. Minnesota, which improved to a major-league-best 34-16, has scored 300 runs this season and has produced at least 10 runs in a game six times. Jose Berrios (7-2) picked up the victory, overcoming a



DENVER: Jonathan Villar #2 of the Baltimore Orioles turns the first half of a double play to end the second inning against David Dahl #26 of the Colorado Rockies at Coors Field in Denver, Colorado. — AFP

four-run second inning that saw Chicago bat around. He gave up just the four runs (one earned) in 6 2/3 innings.

PADRES 6, BLUE JAYS 3

Hunter Renfro hit a go-ahead, three-run homer in the eighth inning, and visiting San Diego defeated Toronto. Matt Wisler (2-1) pitched one-third of an inning to get the win. Toronto reliever Daniel Hudson (3-2) walked Manny Machado with one out in the eighth and threw errantly to second on Eric Hosmer's comebacker to put runners at the corners for Renfro, who hit his 12th homer this season. Robbie Erlin pitched a perfect eighth for the Padres. Craig Stammen came in for the ninth to earn his second save of the season after pitching around a hit batter and striking out one.

PHILLIES 6, BREWERS 4

Rhys Hoskins went 2-for-4 with a home run, lifting Philadelphia past host Milwaukee in the opener of a three-game series. Andrew McCutchen and Scott Kingery each added two hits, including an RBI double apiece, to help the Phillies win for the sixth time in eight games. Phillies starter Jerad Eickhoff lasted only three innings as he allowed five hits and four runs. Vince Velasquez (2-2) tossed two scoreless innings, and the Philadelphia bullpen blanked Milwaukee for six innings. Orlando Arcia and Christian Yelich each homered for

the Brewers, who got two hits apiece from Ryan Braun and Yasmani Grandal.

BRAVES 5, CARDINALS 2

Dansby Swanson hit two home runs, and Atlanta beat host St. Louis Cardinals 5-2 for their eighth win in 10 games. Swanson launched a solo homer in the sixth inning, part of back-to-back home runs with Freddie Freeman. He added a two-run shot to dead center field in the eighth, giving him 10 homers this season and three over his past three games. The two-homer game was Swanson's first since August 2018 at Pittsburgh. The consecutive homers by Freeman and Swanson marked the second time in three days the Braves have gone back-to-back.

TIGERS 9, METS 8

JaCoby Jones collected a career-high four RBIs, when his two-run double in the seventh inning gave visiting Detroit the lead for good in a wild win over New York. The Tigers snapped a nine-game losing streak and ended the Mets' four-game winning streak. Jones, who also had a two-run homer in the second, entered Friday with three career three-RBI games. His go-ahead double off Drew Gagnon (3-1) provided the final lead change in a hectic sequence in which the Mets took the lead three times and the Tigers tied the score twice between the fourth and sixth. Buck

Farmer (3-3) earned the win despite allowing one run in the sixth.

INDIANS 3, RAYS 1

Roberto Perez's infield single plated the go-ahead run with two outs in the eighth inning as host Cleveland snapped a season-high four-game losing skid with a victory over Tampa Bay. Jordan Luplow belted a solo homer, and Shane Bieber struck out 10 in a no-decision for the Indians, who evened their four-game series with Tampa Bay at one victory apiece. Avisail Garcia had an RBI single in the first inning, and Tommy Pham doubled to extend his hitting streak to 10 games for the Rays, who have dropped three of their past five games.

NATIONALS 12, MARLINS 10

Juan Soto and Matt Adams hit back-to-back homers in the eighth inning to lift Washington to victory over visiting Miami, snapping a five-game losing streak. With Washington trailing 9-8, Adam Eaton and Anthony Rendon walked with one out against Nick Anderson (1-2) before Tayron Guerrero came on to face Soto, who lifted a three-run shot to left center on a 100 mph fastball. Adams followed with his 100th career homer to right-center. The Marlins had taken the lead on Starlin Castro's single in the top of the eighth. Eaton and Anthony Rendon also homered for Washington. — Reuters

Omega gets on board with Alinghi

Omega and Alinghi have joined forces in a brand new sailing partnership, just days before the launch of the GC32 season in Villasimius.

For more than 25 years, the prestigious Swiss watchmaker has shown a proud commitment to the world of sailing and it will continue that passion by accompanying the Alinghi team on its competitive circuits.

Ernesto Bertarelli, founder and skipper of Alinghi said, "Alinghi and Omega share the same dedication to innovation, technology and speed. We are proud to represent Switzerland together and I am delighted to combine the excellence and know-how of the renowned watchmaker with the skill and success of Alinghi on the water. In this 50th anniversary year of Apollo 11 and the OMEGA Speedmaster's legendary role aboard that mission, I can recall when we won the America's Cup under the Swiss colours. In the sailing world, that was comparable to the first steps on the moon. Since then, our team has always striven for perfection. With a new partner sharing this same vision, I look forward to writing an exciting new chapter in our story with OMEGA by our side."

Raynald Aeschlimann, President and CEO of Omega said, "We are truly honoured to begin this partnership with Alinghi. Beyond sharing the same nationality, our two brands are inhabited by the same pioneering spirit and a passion for invention. Alinghi has shown great vision throughout its history and OMEGA is looking forward to supporting the team in future competitions."



Kuwait to partake in Winter Olympics qualifiers: IIHF

KUWAIT: The International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) agreed yesterday on the participation of Kuwait ice hockey team in the upcoming Winter Olympic Games in Beijing 2022. IIHF have granted Kuwait two membership votes in its annual Congress meeting in Slovakia with the participation of 107 national federations on the sidelines of the world

championship," said head of Kuwait winter games club Fuhaid Al-Ajmi. "Those votes mean having full membership in the IIHF alongside with the biggest federations in the world after fulfilling their terms," Al-Ajmi continued. Al-Ajmi noted that the Kuwaiti team will participate in the Olympic qualifiers held in Hong Kong this coming November. — KUNA

China reach Sudirman Cup final with clinical display

NANNING: Hosts China closed in on an 11th Sudirman Cup title as they ruthlessly dismantled Thailand to reach today's final of the mixed-team badminton world championship. China's comfortable 3-0 victory sets them up for a tournament decider against top seeds Japan or Indonesia, who play their semi-final later on Saturday.

China went 2-0 ahead in just 94 minutes thanks to their world number one mixed doubles pair Zheng Siwei and Huang Yaqiong, and second-ranked Shi Yuqi in the men's singles.

The tie was over when the men's doubles world champions Li Junhui and Liu Yuchen triumphed.

Shi did not have it all his own way against 18th-ranked Kantaphon Wangcharoen, who squandered three opportunities to clinch the second game and force a decider. It was a turning point and Shi held his nerve before closing out victory 21-15, 26-24 to thrill the home crowd and snuff out the brief Thai resistance.

"It was a very tough second game," said Shi, beaten in last year's world championship final by Kento Momota. The top two in men's badminton will meet once more on Sunday if, as expected, Japan beat Indonesia.

"The lead changed hands many times and neither of us could open up a big lead," added Shi, who has inherited the mantle of China's top men's player with Lin Dan approaching retirement.

"In the end I managed to overcome the pressure." — AFP

Sports

Boos no bother to Smith as he scores hundred against England

Smith's 116 was the centrepiece for Australia in a World Cup warm-up

SOUTHAMPTON: Steve Smith said he had no problems being jeered by spectators as he marked his first match against England following a year-long ban for ball-tampering with a hundred at Southampton yesterday.

Smith's 116 was the centrepiece of Australia's 297 for nine against England in a World Cup warm-up at Hampshire's headquarters. "I'm pretty chilled, everyone's entitled to their opinion," Smith told Sky Sports during the innings break when asked about the crowd's taunts.

"I'm just happy to be back playing. Fortunately, I was able to contribute today and hopefully I can take this form into the World Cup." If the sound of Smith and team-mate David Warner being booed was a sign of things to come, England will hope the former Australia captain's innings is not an omen for a season that includes both the World Cup and a five-Test Ashes series.

Smith and Warner only returned to international duty earlier this month after they both completed 12-month suspensions for their roles in a ball-tampering scandal in South Africa. The disgraced duo's first match in England this tour was a hastily arranged, unofficial warm-up match against the West Indies on the nursery ground at Southampton on Wednesday.

But that fixture was played in front of fewer than 30 spectators whereas there were several thousand in the main arena yesterday. Warner was booed first by spectators on Saturday when he walked out to open the innings with captain Aaron Finch after Australia lost the toss.

'GET 'EM STEVIE'

And when the left-hander arrived at the crease, one fan shouted: "Get off Warner you cheat." Warner's dismissal for 43, caught in the deep by Jonny Bairstow off Liam Plunkett, was greeted by immediate cheers from England fans.

But there were more boos as he returned to the pavilion to be replaced by Smith, coming in with Australia 82 for two in the 17th over. The BBC reported there were a few chants of "cheat, cheat, cheat", although a lone Australia fan shouted "Get 'em Stevie!". There was, however, the customary round of applause from the crowd for a batsman reaching his fifty when Smith got to the landmark. Long a thorn in England's side, Smith went to 99 with a superb carved six over third man off Ben Stokes.

The next ball delivery saw Smith complete a 94-ball hundred, including eight fours, prompting yet more boos as well as clapping to acknowledge his century.

Smith's innings ended in bizarre fashion when, off the penultimate ball of the innings, third umpire Joel Wilson ruled he'd been caught and bowled by Tom Curran off what looked to be a bump ball.

Earlier, injury-prone England fast bowler Mark Wood could only manage 3.1 overs before going off with what a team spokesman said was "left foot discomfort". Liam Dawson then split the skin on his right finger, with England saying the spinner would not bat on his Hampshire home ground.

World Cup favourites England, fresh from a 4-0 series rout of Pakistan, had gone into Saturday's



SOUTHAMPTON: Australia's Steve Smith plays a shot during the 2019 Cricket World Cup warm up match between England and Australia at the Rose Bowl in Southampton, southern England, yesterday. — AFP

match without one-day international captain Eoin Morgan after he suffered a finger injury during fielding practice on Friday.

Morgan, however, is expected to be fit to lead England in the opening match of the World Cup against South Africa at the Oval on Thursday. — AFP

Afghanistan celebrates win with pride and gunfire

KABUL: Afghanistan's victory over Pakistan in a warmup match for the Cricket World Cup on Friday was greeted with prolonged volleys of celebratory gunfire and prompted a rare show of unity in a country split by increasingly bitter political divisions.

Lifted by a controlled 74 not out by Hashmatullah Shahidi and a quickfire 49 from Hazratullah Zazai, the Blue Tigers chased down Pakistan's total of 262 to win by three wickets in a timely boost before the World Cup starts on Thursday.

For Afghanistan, still searching for peace after decades of war, the victory was especially sweet because it came against Pakistan. Many Afghans accuse their neighbour of supporting the Taliban and fuelling instability in their country, a charge which Pakistan, for its part, denies.

As the match concluded, automatic gunfire rang out across Kabul as fans rushed into the streets of the Afghan capital in now a familiar celebration of cricket success. The rise of Afghan cricket has been a remarkable by-product of the decades of turmoil that forced millions into refugee camps across the border in Pakistan, where young men uprooted from home and with little to occupy them learned the sport.

On social media, politicians set aside brawls in parliament and bitter accusations of corruption, incompetence and nepotism to hail the team under Gulbadin



BRISTOL: Afghanistan's Rashid Khan (C) and Afghanistan's Hashmatullah Shahidi (R) shakes hands with Pakistan's Wahab Riaz at the end of play during the 2019 Cricket World Cup warm up match between Pakistan and Afghanistan at Bristol County Ground in Bristol, southwest England. — AFP

Naib who hope to make the semi-finals.

"We, the Afghans, defeated Pakistan in cricket," tweeted Amrullah Saleh, a former intelligence chief now running on President Ashraf Ghani's team for elections in September. "Yes it happened this evening and a massive mark was registered in history."

Similar messages came from a range of other officials and political figures. In a sporting concession, Gen. Asif Ghafoor, the powerful head of the Pakistani

military communications wing, sent a tweet saying "Well played Afgan Cricket Team".

Amid the congratulations, there was also criticism of the gunfire which regularly greets sporting success. "Celebrating with gunfire is a shame, those who are interested in gunshots can join ANDSF, we need them on the battlefield," said Abdul Moqim Abdulrahimzai, a senior official in the interior ministry, referring to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. — Reuters

World Cup dream Taylor-made for Black Caps great

WELLINGTON: Ross Taylor has been rejected, written off and wracked by injury but the veteran New Zealand batsman is in the form of his life and focused on capping a late career surge by finally lifting the World Cup.

While Taylor has made no formal retirement announcement, he openly acknowledges that, at 35, his fourth World Cup in England and Wales will probably be his last. "England is a great tour to go on. The bus trips, playing at those traditional grounds—I couldn't think of a better place to be if it is your last World Cup," he said.

Despite his age, Taylor remains pivotal to the Black Caps' hopes of going one better than their appearance in the 2015 tournament final and claiming a maiden title. He is New Zealand's most prolific run-scorer in one-day internationals, with 8,026 in 203 innings, giving him the highest ODI average of any Black Cap at 48.34.

The right-handed Taylor, who also has more ODI hundreds (20) than any other Kiwi, has hit new heights late in his 13-year career. Taylor's batting figures at the start of his international career were respectable but his run-scoring over the past few years has been eye-catching. He averaged over 60 in ODIs in 2017 and more than 90 last year.

Those returns are not bad for a player who only a few years ago was being quietly pushed by the selectors towards becoming a Test-only batsman due to a perception his scoring rate had become too slow for limited-overs cricket.

CLEAR VISION

The problem, it turned out, was not slowing reflexes but a growth in the corner of Taylor's left eye called a pterygium, better known as "surfer's eye". While not life-threatening, it obscured Taylor's vision at the crease and his scores showed a sharp upward tick once it was surgically removed in late 2016.

It's not the first time the quietly spoken Taylor has



Ross Taylor

endured questionable treatment from Kiwi administrators. When he was dropped as New Zealand captain in 2012 for the more charismatic Brendon McCullum, many Black Caps fans accepted the decision but felt the way it was handled was clumsy, at best.

Rather than raging about his demotion, Taylor knuckled down and offered support to McCullum and then to current captain Kane Williamson as they set about moulding the Black Caps into a tight ODI unit.

Taylor's importance was demonstrated when he overcame cramps and injury to hit a career-best 181 not out against England in Dunedin in March last year. Taylor hurt his thigh diving to avoid a run out and was left grimacing with pain after every shot, eventually giving up on limping between the wickets in favour of planting his one good leg at the crease and bludgeoning boundaries.

It earned a win for the New Zealanders and was later recognised by Cricinfo as the ODI innings of the year. Such individual accolades mean little, however, when Taylor's team continues to fall just short on the international stage. — AFP

Cricket World Cup: 5 memorable moments

LONDON: The Cricket World Cup has produced many thrilling contests in its 44-year history. AFP Sports recalls five of the most memorable moments:

1975: Gilmour's great day

Tournament hosts England were well aware of the threat posed by fearsome fast bowlers Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson ahead of a World Cup semi-final against old rivals Australia. But instead they were undone by a sensational burst of left-arm swing bowling from Gary Gilmour as the 23-year-old took six for 14, with England all out for just 93.

Gilmour's work was far from finished, however. Australia collapsed in turn and were 39 for six, after Chris Old had taken three wickets on his Headingley home ground, when Gilmour came into bat. But his 28 not out and an unbroken stand with Doug Walters saw Australia into the final.

1983: Kapil's 'unseen' hundred

Zimbabwe, who had already beaten Australia on the back of a fine all-round performance by future England coach Duncan Fletcher, were on the verge of another shock win when they reduced India to 17 for five. But India captain Kapil Dev responded with a stunning knock of 175 off 138 balls—an innings only seen by spectators at the Nevill Ground in Tunbridge Wells as a strike by BBC technicians meant the match was not broadcast on television.

An eventual total of 266 proved too much for Zimbabwe, with Kapil's century an example of the inspirational leadership that would see India crowned champions a week later.

1999: Australia 'win' in a tie

Perhaps the most thrilling World Cup game of them all, this Edgbaston semi-final saw Australia make 213, with South Africa paceman Shaun Pollock taking five for 36.

Jonty Rhodes and Jacques Kallis took the Proteas most of the way towards chasing down a target, with their side needing nine off the last over and then one run with one wicket left.

But when Lance Klusener hit the ball to mid-off and set off for a single, non-striker Allan Donald did not hear the call then dropped his bat. Mark Waugh fielded the ball, threw it to bowler Damien Fleming, who in turn rolled it down the pitch where wicket-keeper Adam Gilchrist completed a run-out. Although the match was tied, Australia advanced into the final thanks to a superior net run-rate.

2011: O'Brien overwhelms England

England seemed to have done enough with the bat against Ireland, then a non-Test nation, when they made 327 for eight—a total no side had ever previously chased down in a World Cup match.

But on a never-to-be-forgotten night in Bangalore, up stepped Kevin O'Brien to hit the quickest century in World Cup history, off just 50 balls, including 13 fours and six sixes.

Ireland, who had been 111 for five, went on to complete a stunning three-wicket win.

2015: 'Old boy' breaks South Africa's hearts

Fifties from Faf du Plessis and AB de Villiers took South Africa to 281 for five in an Auckland semi-final innings reduced by rain to 43 overs per side. The Black Caps then saw all-rounder Grant Elliott, born in Johannesburg but who had left for New Zealand in 2001, play the innings of his life.

New Zealand still needed five to win with two balls left when Elliott settled the issue with a remarkable six over mid-on off fast bowler Dale Steyn. — AFP

S Africa's Rabada ready for England challenge

CARDIFF: South Africa speedster Kagiso Rabada conceded feeling rusty in their warm-up match against Sri Lanka but was relieved that he did not feel any pain on his return to action from a back injury. A key cog in South Africa's bid for a maiden World Cup title, Rabada returned home from the Indian Premier League (IPL) earlier this month to avoid aggravating a back problem ahead of the showpiece tournament.

The right-arm pacesman returned figures of 7-0-40-1 in their 87-run victory against 1996 champions Sri Lanka on Friday and was not unhappy with the outing. "I felt a bit rusty, but it was good to get a run out in the middle and get a feel for things again," he said. "There's no pain. I'm feeling all right, just rusty in terms of my bowling smoothness. But it's all a work in progress. That's why we have warm-up games so it'll be a challenge for me to get ready before the tournament starts."

Skipper Faf du Plessis hoped Rabada would get better as the tournament progressed. "KG has been slowly building up, working on his action and working on his run-up. Today was the first time he was bowling at full intensity," du Plessis said.

Rabada headlines what is one of the best pace attacks in the tournament who will begin their campaign on Thursday against an England side teeming with explosive strokeplayers. "England is going to be a stiff challenge, but an enjoyable one," said Rabada, who turned 24 yesterday.

"It's crunch time - the first game of the World Cup and it's going to go down in history. They're a strong team, with good batsmen and bowlers. Multiple players from our team have played against England, we're familiar with them and that helps. "On the day, we have to rock up. With the quality they possess, we need to make sure we are on top." — Reuters

Sports

Holders US shrug off weight of World Cup expectations

Physically, this is the fittest and sharpest I've ever felt: Lloyd

NEW YORK: Few of the 24 women's World Cup teams arriving in France for next month's tournament will bear the weight of expectation quite like reigning champions the United States.

The three-times winners will be aiming not only to retain the trophy they won in 2015 but also build on their legacy as soccer's dominant women's team and further cement their role as leaders in the fight for gender equality.

In March, they sued the US Soccer Federation with allegations of gender discrimination with all 28 members of the squad named as plaintiffs in federal court. But if the pressure on the squad in the build-up to the World Cup is beginning to grate on the players at all, 36-year-old co-captain Carli Lloyd is not showing it.

"Physically, this is the fittest I've ever felt, sharpest I've ever felt," 36-year-old midfielder Lloyd said at a media event on Friday. "I feel at ease, I feel calm, I feel hungry, I feel motivated and I just feel excited."

Lloyd, along with striker Alex Morgan, 29, and attacking midfielder Megan Rapinoe, 33, are among the veterans critical not only on the pitch but off it, as the U.S. bring new faces to the World Cup stage, said head coach Jill Ellis.

"It falls on those players to share their experiences, make sure there's a push when there needs to be a push and make sure there's an arm around the shoulder when that's needed as well," said Ellis, who oversaw the World Cup triumph four years ago.

MORE EXPERIENCED

The trio of co-captains bring a welcome dose of sta-

bility to the team, which failed to medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics. "When you look at 2016, we had a lot (of the) players that we have now but those are players that barely had 10 caps on the team up to that point. Now I think (the team) is a little more experienced," said Morgan, who was in the 2011 and 2015 squads.

"I understand that when you look at literal terms yes we're defending champions, but I don't feel like going into this tournament we're looking at defending anything because this is four years we're talking about. There's so many things that can change."

Defender Becky Sauerbrunn, another stalwart at 33, said the current U.S. team was full of younger players, alongside the more experienced squad members, and they would all be looking to make their own history at the tournament in France.

"This team is (a) new identity. It's revamped, it's got a very young, energetic, majority to it," said Sauerbrunn. "It's a new team, we're going to try to create our own legacy." Much is expected of 21-year-old forward Mallory Pugh, while 26-year-old defender Crystal Dunn has plenty to prove, having been the last player cut from the 2015 World Cup squad.

The Americans are overwhelming favourites to top their World Cup group, having been handed a favourable draw that includes long-term rivals Sweden alongside Chile and Thailand, who the U.S. will play in their first match on June 11.

"All of us are solely focused on the first game against Thailand and, you know, in a major tournament like this, you can't get too far ahead of yourself," said Lloyd, who scored a hat-trick in the first



NEW YORK: The United States Women's National Team poses during their Media Day ahead of the 2019 Women's World Cup at Twitter NYC on May 24, 2019 in New York City. — AFP

16 minutes of the final four years ago.

"It's just kind of weathering the storm. Winning, whether that's pretty, ugly - just finding a way to

win." The World Cup kicks off on June 7 when hosts France face South Korea at the Parc des Princes in Paris. — Reuters

Al-Arabi club wins int'l award for stadium development project

KUWAIT: Al-Arabi Sports Club won yesterday an award presented by the Netherlands World Stadium Congress 2019 for its design for Sabah Al-Salem Stadium. Kuwait's Public Authority for Sports Deputy Director General Sheikh Homoud Mubarak Al-Sabah expressed to KUNA in a statement his pride and happiness for this win.

Sheikh Homoud also said that this win puts Kuwait on the international scale for developing stadiums as it helps in achieving sustainable development and realizing Kuwait's Vision 2035.

The new Sabah Al-Salem stadium contains 30 thousand shaded seats, 333 VIP seats, 76 seats for media personnel, 390 seats for the disabled, and 654 cabin seats. — KUNA



Niko Kovac eyes double after 'intense' season

BERLIN: Cup specialist Niko Kovac is hoping to end a turbulent first season in charge of Bayern Munich with a domestic double when his side face RB Leipzig in the German Cup final in Berlin yesterday.

The Bayern boss has been under pressure lately amid rumours that he may be sacked at the end of the season, but has said that he is focusing on football ahead of final. "I want to throw myself into the task (of winning the cup), everything else, everything concerning my position, is secondary," he said on Friday.

Just hours earlier on the other side of Berlin, Bayern CEO Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said that Kovac's job did not depend on the outcome of the final. Kovac admitted that it had been an "intense" season, and said that winning the league title last weekend had lifted a weight off his shoulders.

"The season was long, and when you reach your goal you feel more comfortable and the tension drops. But we have had time to relax with our families and now we are focused on tomorrow," he said.

Saturday will be a third return home in three years for native Berliner Kovac, who led former club Eintracht Frankfurt to back-to-back cup finals in 2017 and 2018, and delivered a shock victory over Bayern last year.

"Last year shows that there are no favourites in a cup final" Kovac warned on Friday. "Both teams will want to win and you need a little bit of luck." The Bayern coach heaped praise on Leipzig, saying that they were the "hardest opponent we could have got in the final".

He said that he would have to pick his best team for the game, suggesting that departing veterans Arjen Robben and Franck Ribery would start on the bench in their final game for Bayern. "It will be their last game so it is a difficult decision to make," he said, hinting that the likes of Serge Gnabry and Kingsley Coman would be in the starting line-up.

"I know what it means to end your playing career, but we also have players who have played really well since January." Leipzig coach Ralf Rangnick, meanwhile, said that it did not matter to his team whether Robben and Ribery began the game or not.

"If they come off the bench, we will have to play well, just as we will do from the beginning." Leipzig are targeting a first major trophy of their ten-year history, and Rangnick said his side hoped to use the final as a springboard to challenge Bayern for further domestic titles in future.

"We have always been knocked out early in the cup before, so we are happy to get this far," he said. "Bayern remain the benchmark for everyone, but we hope to narrow the gap, that is our ambition."

"We need to keep making clever signings. If we had had one or two players more at times this year, we might even have been in the title race." Leipzig finished third in the Bundesliga, 12 points behind champions Bayern.

After a narrow 1-0 defeat to the Bavarians in December, they managed to postpone Bayern's title celebrations with a 0-0 draw in Leipzig two weeks ago. "We only conceded one goal against them this season, but we also didn't score any," said Rangnick. "If we are going to beat them on Saturday, we will need to score at least one, maybe even two or three goals." — AFP

| Live | | Matches on TV |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| | | (Local Timings) |
| ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE | | |
| Torino FC v SS Lazio | 16:00 | beIN SPORTS HD 4 |
| UC Sampdoria v Juventus FC | 19:00 | beIN SPORTS HD 4 |
| ACF Fiorentina v Genoa CFC | 21:30 | beIN SPORTS HD 10 |
| Atalanta v US Sassuolo Calcio | 21:30 | beIN SPORTS HD 3 |
| Internazionale Milano v Empoli | 21:30 | beIN SPORTS HD 4 |
| AS Roma v Parma Calcio 1913 | 21:30 | beIN SPORTS HD 2 |
| Spal v AC Milan | 21:30 | beIN SPORTS HD 5 |
| Cagliari Calcio v Udinese Calcio | 21:30 | beIN SPORTS |

Messi finishes Europe's top scorer for third year

BARCELONA: Lionel Messi has become the first player to win Europe's Golden Shoe award for three straight years after his nearest challenger Kylian Mbappe failed to score the four goals he needed in Paris St Germain's final league match of the season on Friday.

Messi earned the honour, which goes to the leading scorer in league matches in Europe's top divisions, for a record-extending sixth time after finding the net 36 times for Barcelona, while Mbappe ended the campaign on 33 goals after scoring PSG's only goal in a 3-1 loss at Stade de Reims.

While Messi's goal haul helped his side clinch the La Liga title last month the 31-year-old Argentine said earlier on Friday that he was not giving the Golden Shoe race much thought with the side still coming to terms with their Champions League semi-final elimination to Liverpool.

"I haven't been thinking about that prize at all, we are still coping with what happened against Liverpool and I'm not thinking about personal awards," Messi told a news conference ahead of Copa del Rey final against Valencia. — Reuters

Former Tottenham manager Gross aims to end Zamalek trophy drought

JOHANNESBURG: Former Tottenham Hotspur manager Christian Gross believes the 16-year African trophy drought of famed Egyptian club Zamalek will end today near ancient Mediterranean city Alexandria.

Coached by Gross, Zamalek lost 1-0 away to Moroccan outfit Renaissance Berkane last Sunday in the first leg of the CAF Confederation Cup final, the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League. The 64-year-old Swiss is convinced the 'White Knights' can overcome the deficit at the 86,000-seat Borg el Arab Stadium, with the crowd restricted to 60,000 for security reasons.

In 2003, Zamalek won a ninth African competition by beating Wydad Casablanca of Morocco 3-1 in the CAF Super Cup match. However, the closest they have come to African glory since was finishing runners-up to South African side Mamelodi Sundowns in the 2016 CAF Champions League final. "I am very sad we conceded a goal right at the end," said Gross, referring to the stoppage-time winner of Togo-born Kodjo Fo-Doh Laba in the first leg of the final. "But we can come back at home and turn things around. We will fight to win the Confederation Cup for the sake of our supporters."

"We had several good scoring chances in Morocco, but could not convert them. I am sure it will be a different story in Alexandria." "While Berkane are strong opponents

with quality players, I promise our supporters we will give them something to cheer about."

Gross became Tottenham manager in November 1997 and two losses in three matches at the start of the 1998/1999 season triggered his dismissal.

He achieved only 10 victories in 30 matches at the London club and was the target of constant ridicule by sections of the media, particularly over his poor grasp of English. After Tottenham, he coached clubs in Switzerland, Germany and Saudi Arabia with more success before being hired by Zamalek in July last year.

Gross inherited a team that had lived in the shadows of fellow Egyptian club and arch rivals Al-Ahly for more than a decade. While Zamalek last lifted an African trophy in 2003, Ahly have won 11 CAF titles in the past 16 years, including the Champions League five times.

Berkane, based in the citrus fruit-producing northeastern region of Morocco, are appearing in an African final for the first time after a last-eight exit from the 2018 Confederation Cup. Their best known figure until recently was not a player, but an official as club chairman Faouzi Lekjaa is a vice-president of the Cairo-based Confederation of African Football (CAF).

But Laba is rising from anonymity with his eight Confederation Cup goals making him the leading scorer this season, one ahead of Sudanese Waleed Bakhet. Berkane coach Mounir Jaouani is convinced the late Laba first-leg winner is going to prove decisive, labelling it "the goal that wins the title." "We realise the second leg is going to be difficult, but the Confederation Cup is staying in Morocco," he promised. Raja Casablanca won the 2018 final. The second leg kicks off at 2200 local time (2000 GMT) to allow players and supporters to eat and drink after the sunrise-to-sunset fast during the Muslim holy period of Ramadan. — AFP

25 Story blasts walk-off as Colorado Rockies drop reeling Orioles



26 Boos no bother to Smith as he scores hundred against England



27 Holders US shrug off weight of World Cup expectations



MONACO: First placed Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton runs towards fans as he celebrates winning the pole position after the qualifying session at the Monaco street circuit yesterday in Monaco, ahead of the Monaco Formula 1 Grand Prix. — AFP

Hamilton snatches dramatic Monaco GP pole

Leclerc qualified 16th after strategic muddle by Ferrari in opening part of qualifying

MONACO: Lewis Hamilton snatched a dramatic pole position for yesterday's Monaco Grand Prix with an all-time circuit record lap in the final seconds to outpace Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas by 0.086 seconds.

The defending five-time champion and series leader clocked an unprecedented lap in 1min 10.166sec to end Bottas' run of three successive poles as Mercedes, mourning the death this week of non-executive chairman Niki Lauda, produced a record-equalling 62nd front row lockout.

It was an emotional Hamilton's second pole in Monaco and the 84th of his career as he dug deep in the final seconds to find the speed required to grab the prime grid position from his team-mate. "Whoohoo!" shouted Hamilton on team radio. "That's what I am talking about..."

Max Verstappen was third for Red Bull ahead of four-time champion Sebastian Vettel of Ferrari, Pierre Gasly in the second Red Bull and Kevin Magnussen for Haas.

Last year's race winner Daniel Ricciardo was seventh for Renault ahead of Daniel Kyvyat of Toro Rosso, Carlos Sainz of McLaren and Alex Albon in the second Toro Rosso. "This is the race that every driver dreams of, even as a kid," said Hamilton.

"We've arrived with a great car, a great battle with Valtteri and I think the desire and the will to get this pole. I've had to dig deeper than ever before. "We all take our cars, fast or slow, to the limit and here, at the limit, it's like wrestling a bull. I had an oversteer moment in the Rascasse and I just held on."

Bottas said: "I'm disappointed. I felt after the first lap there were plenty of places to improve, but I had traffic and couldn't get the tyres up to temperature." Luckless local hero Charles Leclerc qualified 16th after a strategic muddle by Ferrari in the opening part of qualifying.

After Vettel's crash in the morning's final free practice session, Q1 began cautiously in the warmest conditions of the weekend, the track registering 44

degrees Celsius under a hazy sun. Mercedes, as they feared, found the conditions testing and required longer to bring their tyres alive, but were soon first and third with Bottas and Hamilton sandwiching Verstappen.

Vettel then bounced his left rear wheel off the barriers in the swimming pool complex, requiring a rapid pit-stop. He emerged with seconds remaining on shiny new 'softs' as Hamilton topped Bottas, but faced a desperate rush to re-climb from 17th - and exceeded expectations by going fastest in a frantic finale.

Leclerc was left standing in the Ferrari garage as he tumbled down the timesheets to finish 16th, the team not keeping him out after he missed a signal to the weighbridge. He was pushed back to the scales, to avoid any penalty, but it was another example of Ferrari's operational and decision-making failings.

"I need explanations," said Leclerc. "The problem was not the weighbridge and I have had no real answers. It is very difficult to take as we had plenty

of time and enough fuel... Now, I must take risks in the race."

Out with an upset Leclerc, who was fastest in the morning, went Sergio Perez, Lance Stroll, George Russell and Robert Kubica. Q2 then began with a blistering record lap from Bottas in 1:10.701. Hamilton was one-tenth down for second with Verstappen third ahead of Kyvyat.

With four minutes remaining, all 15 returned for a final flurry in which Verstappen topped Bottas in 1:10.618 - a record that suggested he might repeat Red Bull's success, with Ricciardo, last year.

Out went Nico Hulkenberg, Lando Norris, Romain Grosjean, Kimi Raikkonen and his Alfa team-mate Antonio Giovinazzi, all bickering about the traffic and blocking before the top ten shootout.

On his first run, Bottas laid down a marker in a record 1:10.252 to lead the way ahead of Verstappen as Hamilton struggled for a clean lap, but all that changed on his final run. — AFP

Federer and Nadal threaten Djokovic bid for historic Slam

PARIS: Novak Djokovic can become only the second man in history to have twice held all four Grand Slam titles at the same time with victory at the French Open. However, a returning Roger Federer and rejuvenated Rafael Nadal will once again stand in his way.

World number one Djokovic completed his first private stranglehold of all four Slams with victory at Roland Garros in 2016. Having clinched the 2018 Wimbledon and US Open titles and then a seventh Australian Open crown in January this year, the Serb is tantalisingly close to another 'Djoko Slam'.

Federer and Nadal, with 20 and 17 career Grand Slam titles each respectively, may be ahead of 15-time

major winner Djokovic in total hauls. However, they have never managed to hold all four of the sport's greatest prizes at the same time.

It is such a rare feat that only Don Budge (1938) and Rod Laver (1962 and 1969) — all calendar Grand Slams-have pulled off the sweep in the sport's history. Djokovic, who turned 32 on Wednesday, is playing down his potential date with destiny.

After losing to Nadal in the Italian Open final last weekend, the Serb was in no doubt that it was the Spaniard who would likely be celebrating a 12th Roland Garros title in a little over two weeks' time.

"Nadal, number one favourite, without a doubt-then everyone else," he said. However, he admits his Paris triumph of 2016 which gave him his first sweep, is fuelling his bid for more history. "There is an extra motivation and incentive to win Roland Garros because of the opportunity to hold all four Slams, something I did three years ago, and that gives me obviously enough reason to believe I can do it again."

Twelve months ago, such confidence would have appeared reckless when he was shocked by Italian

journeyman Marco Cecchinato in the quarter-finals, a defeat which sent him crashing out of the top 20 for the first time in over a decade.

This time around he starts his campaign against Poland's Hubert Hurkacz, the world number 43 with a potential quarter-final against Germany's Alexander Zverev who has still to get past the last eight at a Slam.

Federer is returning to Roland Garros for the first time since 2015 having turned his back on clay court tennis to focus on Wimbledon.

10TH ANNIVERSARY

This year marks the 10th anniversary of his one and only Paris triumph and should the 37-year-old defy the odds and clinch the 2019 title he would become the oldest Grand Slam champion of all time.

However, Federer admits his hopes of seeing off Nadal and Djokovic are slim. "I feel like I'm playing good tennis, but is it enough against the absolute top guys when it really comes to the crunch? I'm not sure if it's in my racquet," he said Friday.

The Swiss star faces Italy's Lorenzo Sonego, ranked at 73 in the first round on Sunday and could meet Nadal in the semi-finals. Nadal, whose record at Roland Garros stands at a staggering 11 titles and a win-loss record of 86-2, claimed a ninth Italian Open title and a record 34th Masters last week.

"I don't care if I'm the favourite," said Nadal who starts against German qualifier Yannick Hanfmann, the world 184 who has never won a Grand Slam match. "I care about feeling well and playing well."

Nadal's three-set win over Djokovic in Rome was timely as it was his first title of 2019 and had followed three successive semi-final losses at Monte Carlo, Barcelona and Madrid. The last two of those were against Dominic Thiem and Stefanos Tsitsipas, both of whom play with a one-handed backhand, just like Federer.

Thiem, the 2018 runner-up to Nadal at Roland Garros, has defeated the Spaniard four times on clay. "There is a new wave coming through with the one-handed backhand that can counter some of Rafa's spins and lefty play," said Federer. — AFP