

5 Four years since Kuwaiti went missing in Romania



24 Khamenei urges Iran's Guards to develop advanced weapons



27 Saudi national football team makes first visit to West Bank



Special Supplement Inside

Lawmaker vows to grill Finance Minister Hajraf

MP Ashour urges measures against Jordan

Residential areas littered with trash



By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: For many days, Kuwait residents have noticed huge amount of trash around the trash bins. People have been calling the hotline of Kuwait Municipality to complain about the bad smell coming from the trash across Kuwait residential areas. The areas include: Salwa, Salmiya, Khaitan, Mahboula, and Hawally.

Along the street in Salwa (Block 4), there is a huge trash which has been there for over two weeks. When Kuwait Times called Hawally governorate's hotline, the staff said that they will inform the department in Salwa. He pro-

vided a phone number for Salwa department - but nobody answered the call.

Bad attitude is also to be blamed. Some people started throwing organic trash including food wastes on top of the old furniture around the trash bins. This made the situation even worse, thus resulting in air pollution. Salah from the Municipality hotline explained yesterday that the call center has received several calls because of the pollution in those areas.

"People are calling us complaining of the trash in the streets. But I assured them that the problem will end within days. Municipality's

cleaners are responsible for the trash inside the bins, while the pick-up vehicles collect the huge ones - next to the bins (especially the huge pieces of furniture or other big stuff)," he told the Kuwait Times.

"The issue is that the Municipality has a contract with a company which is in charge of operating the vehicles that remove the 'big-size' waste. This contract had ended and we are now transferring to the new company, and this process will finish within two or three days," added Salah. He urged people to be patient and to avoid throwing organic waste randomly in the street.

KUWAIT: MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said yesterday that his planned grilling against Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf will likely be one of the largest in Kuwait's history and will include wide-ranging issues. The lawmaker said in a statement that the grilling will be more than 100 pages and will include issues regarding the country's fiscal position, state budget, sovereign fund investments, the pension agency and the so-called actuarial deficit in addition to banks and companies in which the state has stakes in them.

He did not provide specific details on the issues but Adasani had in the past spoken about alleged violations in various financial bodies under the supervision of the Finance Minister. Adasani had also vowed to grill the ministers of Interior, Commerce and Industry and even the Prime Minister himself over a variety of issues. Some of these grillings are expected to be filed even before the start of the new Assembly term on October 29.

In a related issue, Hajraf said in a statement yesterday that he has rejected proposals by state departments and ministries for their projections for the 2020/2021 state budget in which spending is projected to jump to a record high KD 27.7 billion. The minister said in the statement that he has rejected those proposals and urged all state bodies to submit more realistic proposals.

In the meantime, the Assembly's

Financial and Economic Affairs committee yesterday agreed to keep a 42-year old system at the Public Institute for Social Security or the pension agency that allows pensioners to cash part of their retirement. Head of the committee MP Salah Khorshed said that the committee also decided to reduce interest taken on such service from up to 14 percent to between 4 percent and 6 percent. Khorshed also said the panel asked the pension agency to create a new system to provide such service in accordance with Islamic Sharia rules but with interest remaining around 6 percent.

Also, MP Saleh Ashour yesterday strongly lashed out at Jordan and called for stopping all aid and loans to the Arab nation after a group of Jordanian crowds chanted in praise of former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein during a football game between Jordan and Kuwait last week. Jordan's King Abdullah II and top government officials apologized for the crowd's misbehavior while authorities said they arrested at least two people.

But Ashour said this was not the first time that crowds in Jordan have praised Saddam Hussein who in August 1990 ordered his troops to invade Kuwait before a US-led international coalition drove them out seven months later. Ashour said that all forms of aid to Jordan must be suspended and warned that he will call for forming a committee to investigate the issue.

Kuwait City air quality 'unhealthy'

KUWAIT: Kuwait City ranked seventh worldwide yesterday in the global index that measures the most polluted cities and those with the worst air quality levels. Air Visual - an international air quality monitor, showed that Kuwait City scored 157 in the air quality index (AQI), and described the city's air quality as 'unhealthy.' Meanwhile, the US Embassy's air quality monitor also recorded 164 AQI for Kuwait City, which classified it 'unhealthy'. This means that "everyone may begin to experience health effect."

World AQI Ranking		
17:44, Oct 13		
MAJOR CITY		US AQI
1	Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia	190
2	Delhi, India	168
3	Dhaka, Bangladesh	164
4	Tashkent, Uzbekistan	161
5	Kolkata, India	160
6	Lahore, Pakistan	159
7	Kuwait City, Kuwait	156
8	Hanoi, Vietnam	154
9	Milano, Italy	151
10	Santiago, Chile	149

Security cooperation: Broadening alliances

By Fawaz M Al-Sabah and Rolf Schwarz

In June 2004, at its Istanbul summit, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) launched a special partnership with the Gulf region, called the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). (See Page 10)



NAGANO: This aerial view shows flooded homes beside the collapsed bank of the Chikuma River in Nagano prefecture yesterday after Typhoon Hagibis swept through central and eastern Japan. — AFP

Saudi launches new logistics zone, eyes private investors

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia yesterday launched a new logistics zone open to private investors in the Red Sea port city of Jeddah, as part of a wider industrial initiative to diversify the economy away from oil and create jobs for Saudis. The Al Khomra zone - which will support activities around shipping, freight distribution and transport of goods - extends over 2.3 million square meters in Jeddah, home to one of the kingdom's largest ports.

As the biggest logistics zone in the country, it hopes to turn Saudi Arabia into a global logistics hub and create 10,000 direct jobs, said Minister of Transport Nabeel Al-Amudi. It is part of the broader National Industrial Development and Logistics Program (NIDLP), which aims to create 1.6 million jobs and attract investments worth 1.6 trillion riyals (\$427 billion) over the

next decade. Of that, 135 billion riyals is earmarked for investment in the logistics sector.

Under its ambitious reform strategy, the kingdom plans to have the private sector operate much of its transport infrastructure, including airports and sea ports, with the government keeping a role as regulator. Details of what the government plans to offer investors in Al-Khomra were not disclosed, but the Saudi Ports Authority said the zone would offer opportunities to investors on a lease basis. "Investment in the logistics zone in Al-Khomra and other ports will total 7 billion Saudi riyals," said Saad Al-Khalb, president of the Saudi Ports Authority, without giving further details.

Al-Khomra joins other logistics zones in the kingdom - the King Abdullah Economic City north of Jeddah has its

Continued on Page 24

IS families flee; Turkey advances deep into Syria

QAMISHLI: Turkish forces and their proxies pushed deep into Syria yesterday, moving closer to completing their assault's initial phase, while Washington announced it was pulling out 1,000 troops from the country's north. The Kurdish administration in northern Syria said that Turkish bombardment near a camp for the displaced led to nearly 800 relatives of IS members fleeing.

Fighting raged but Turkish-backed forces made significant progress along the border on the fifth day of an offensive that has provoked an international outcry and left dozens of civilians and fighters dead. Kurdish authorities and foreign powers have warned repeatedly that the hostilities could undermine the fight against the Islamic State group (IS) and

allow jihadists to break out of captivity.

Fighting has engulfed the area since Wednesday when Ankara launched a long-threatened offensive against the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), who it considers "terrorists" linked to insurgents inside Turkey. US Defense Secretary Mark Esper said yesterday that President Donald Trump had ordered the withdrawal of up to 1,000 troops from northern Syria.

"I can't give a timeline because it changes hourly. We want to make sure that we do so in a very safe, deliberate manner," he told the CBS network. Trump has been accused of abandoning a loyal ally in the fight against IS after ordering American troops to pull back from the border, which Ankara took as a green light to move in.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor reported yesterday that 19 more civilians had been killed in fighting. More than 50 civilians have now died on the Syrian side, with Turkish reports putting the number of civilians

Continued on Page 24

26 die as Hagibis slams Japan; Amir sends condolences

TOKYO: Tens of thousands of rescuers were working through the night to reach people feared trapped in Japan by landslides and floods caused by a powerful typhoon that killed at least 26, officials and local media said. Typhoon Hagibis moved away from land yesterday morning, but while it largely spared the capital it left a trail of destruction in surrounding regions.

More than 100,000 rescuers - including 31,000 troops - were working through the night to reach people feared trapped after torrential rain caused landslides and filled rivers until they burst their banks. The destruction forced the Rugby World Cup being hosted by Japan to cancel several games, but the "Brave Blossoms", as the national team is known, lifted spirits with a stunning 28-21 victory over Scotland yesterday that puts them into the quarter-finals of the tournament for the first time.

The government put the death toll at 14, with 11 people missing, but local media said at least 26 people had been killed, and at least 15 were still unaccounted for. Rivers overspilled their banks at close to dozen locations - including in central Japan's Nagano, where a levee

Continued on Page 24

Kuwait's Deputy Amir meets state officials at Seif Palace

Prime Minister receives Royal Dutch Shell Chairman



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with President of the Judicial Higher Council, President of the Court of Cassation, and President of the Constitutional Court Yousuf Jassem Al-Mutawaa.



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



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



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



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of the Board of Directors of Royal Dutch Shell Charles O Holliday and the Executive Director of Shell Kuwait Walid Al-Nader.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Seif Palace His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Deputy Amir also received the President of the Judicial Higher Council, President of the Court of Cassation, and President of the Constitutional Court Yousuf Jassem Al-Mutawaa. Also, His Highness the Crown Prince received Acting National Assembly Speaker Dr Oudah Al-

Rouai. Furthermore, His Highness the Deputy Amir received First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.

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

Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Ali Al-Fadhel, accompanied by the Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Hashem Sayed Hashem. Hashem was accompanied by Chairman of the Board of Directors of Royal Dutch Shell Charles O Holliday and the Executive Director of Shell Kuwait Walid Al-Nader, marking the occasion of hosting Kuwait Oil and Gas Conference. — KUNA

Kuwaiti Speaker partakes in Arab talks ahead of IPU meeting

BELGRADE: The Arab group participating in the 141st session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) conference in Belgrade, Serbia held a coordination meeting on Saturday in the presence of Kuwaiti Parliament Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. The meeting, chaired by Jordanian Parliament Speaker Atif Tarawneh, witnessed an exchange of views on the conference agenda, said the Kuwait-based 'Al-Dostoor' news network. The meeting also dealt with emergency items expected to be put forward and unify the Arab position on them in addition to the Arab nominations in the conference committees, it added. The meeting was attended by Parliamentary Undersecretary MP Rakan Al-Nisf, Treasurer of the Division Mohammad Al-Dalal, members of the division MPs Al-Humaidi Al-Subaie, Safa Al-Hashem, and Secretary General of the National Assembly Allam Al-Kandari.

Earlier, Ghanem chaired a coordinative meeting for lawmakers from the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council on the fringes of Inter-Parliamentary Union talks in Belgrade. The lawmakers of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Bahrain and Oman exchanged viewpoints over matters scheduled on the agenda of Sunday's IPU meeting. They discussed unifying their positions on urgent matters and applications made by Gulf Arab and Arab lawmakers for vacant positions within the global parliamentary organization. — KUNA



BELGRADE: Kuwaiti Parliament Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem attends a meeting for the Arab group participating in the 141st session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) conference. — KUNA photos



Kuwaiti Parliament Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem chairs Gulf talks ahead of the IPU meeting.

Kuwaiti FM meets Jordanian counterpart

CAIRO: Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met Saturday with Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Al-Safadi at the headquarters of the Arab League in Cairo. Meeting on

the sidelines of the Arab League' meeting at the ministerial level in its extraordinary session to discuss the Turkish military interventions in northeastern Syria, the two sides discussed the distinguished bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries. The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Ambassador Fahad Al-Awadhi, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Office of Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Foreign Minister Saleh Al-Loghani and Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the Arab League Ahmad Al-Bakr. — KUNA



CAIRO: Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Al-Safadi. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait govt rejects parliamentary request to discuss reducing gas, energy prices

Civil aviation workers stage sit-in to demand 'financial rights'

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: In a step that precedes the convening of the first session of the National Assembly's new term on October 29th, the government rejected a parliamentary request to discuss restoring the previous prices of gas and energy to their original rates before they were hiked back in 2016. "The government maintains belief that the gas price increase came after a comprehensive market study, and has not led to financial problems for the public or increase in commodity prices as was rumored before the new prices were made official," official government sources said.

The sources, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, further explained that the government reserves the right to increase or reduce gas prices, noting that the National Assembly "does not have the authority" in this case to force the government to reduce prices. "That would be considered a flagrant violation of the constitutional that forbids Parliament from interfering in the executive authority's jurisdiction," they explained. And while indicating that the government has no current plans to further increase prices - at least not after "careful studies are made," the sources ruled out the possibility that the government might yield to parliamentary pressure and reduce prices any time soon.



As for the electricity and water tariffs' increase, the sources explained that it came after the National Assembly passed a law two years ago based on a draft law submitted by the government, which recommended the increase to stop "squandering of heavily-subsidized energy resources."

Labor protest

Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) employees staged a sit-in yesterday to demand what they described as their 'financial rights.'

Policeman's offender remanded in custody

'civilized labor action.' They further warned that they will continue their action in case their demands are not met, and might escalate their protest into a total strike.

Sources said meanwhile that the protesting employees had received 'positive signals' from officials before breaking up their sit-in. DGCA had confirmed in a statement later yesterday its keenness on protecting employees' rights, earnings, supervision, and working hours in accordance with the Civil Service Commission. In a press release and in response to employee protest at the administration building, the DGCA said its



The National Assembly.

decisions aims to organize work by developing and improving services for passengers at Kuwait International Airport.

The DGCA administration has opened its doors to the president and members of the union of workers at the airport to listen to their demands and proposals, Director General of DGCA Yusif Al-Fawzan added in the press release. Fawzan explained that law No. (36) for 2019 is scheduled to be implemented in beginning of October,

which aims to establish control over working hours and observations from the State Audit Bureau. In addition, no allowances will be affected before October 1, he said, adding that all staff must cooperate and work together to raise the reputation of Kuwait International Airport.

Police offender remanded

The public prosecution remanded in custody a ruling family member accused of

insulting a traffic police officer through an audio clip that circulated on social media, although the Sheikh denied the charges. Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah had earlier received Lt Col Saleh Al-Rashed from the traffic department, who was allegedly insulted for not accepting an illegal transaction. The minister reportedly praised the officer, saying that he "gave good example of complying with the law and self-control."

Watchdog refers health ministry official to prosecution

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) referred an assistant undersecretary at the Health Ministry to the public prosecution, the watchdog's official spokesman Dr Mohammad Buzubar said yesterday.

Nazaha received information about an official and another person signing contracts by direct order without going through the usual procedures, that besides not obtaining approvals from the concerned supervisory authorities about the contracts project, which enabled others to take public funds and harming health ministry interests, Buzubar explained.

He further indicated that it became clear from investigations and eye witness statements that a suspected crime to ease taking public funds and deliberate harm to public funds was present. "Those are punishable crimes according to items 10 and 11 of law 1/1993 regarding protection of public funds, article 22 of law 2/2016 to establish Nazaha, and articles 47, 48 of law 16/1960 regarding issuing the penal code," he noted.

"Nazaha will continue its efforts of examining all claims it receives and appreciates the role of informants who help the authority to obtain necessary information about corruption incidents," Buzubar said.



stressing the authority's commitment to confidentiality and protecting informants.

Entertainment City

The Municipal Council's Capital Governorate Committee approved a proposal of developing the Entertainment City, and the Public Authority Roads and Transport's request to allocate a site for a reservoir to collect rain water with an area of 5,655 square meters in Nahda, in addition to the Social Affairs Ministry's request to allocate a land to build a cooking gas branch in Girmata. Chairman of the Committee Hassan Kamal said meanwhile that the committee postponed the proposal of Municipal Council Chairman Osama Al-Otaibi, Deputy Chairman Abdullah Al-Mahri and councilmember Meshaal Al-Hamadhan regarding the study of re-introducing the heritage village project in Sharq.

KISR initiative looks for tech savvy youth

KUWAIT: Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) has launched a new initiative aiming to encourage youngsters to embrace technology, the research body said yesterday. The initiative, known as 'KFAS INSPO,' entails a series of lectures given by Kuwaiti tech experts, KISR said in a statement, pointing out that the endeavor mainly deals with leveling up tech knowhow in this day and age of fast moving technology. It also features candid interviews with Kuwaitis who have chalked



up notable achievements in the world of technology and scientific research, added the statement. On the initiative, KISR said it fits the research body's strategy for the next few years, which revolves around plans to keep abreast of cutting-edge technology in efforts to move closer towards a knowledge-based economy. It went on to cite another concurrent initiative with a similar objective, extolling the benefits of tech connectivity and easy access to knowledge in everyday life. — KUNA

KRCS demands more action to avert disasters

KUWAIT: It is imperative to generate awareness over the measures that need to be taken in order to reduce vulnerability in the face of natural disasters, Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) said yesterday. It is important to educate the masses about the systematic approach of assessing and reducing the risks of disaster, according to KISR's emergency management director Yousef Al-Miraj. He highlighted the dire need to start adopting these measures as soon as possible, on a day the United

Nations has observed as a vehicle to promote a global culture of natural disaster reduction. The KRCS official cited the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which sets seven global targets in a framework approved by the UN in 2015 as part of efforts to alleviate disaster risk and impacts. Reducing disaster risk should be the focal point of national charities' agendas, added the official, saying Kuwait's efforts to come to the aid of countries plagued by natural disasters are nothing short of praiseworthy. — KUNA



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KISR
Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research

up notable achievements in the world of technology and scientific research, added the statement. On the initiative, KISR said it fits the research body's strategy for the next few years, which revolves around plans to keep abreast of cutting-edge technology in efforts to move closer towards a knowledge-based economy. It went on to cite another concurrent initiative with a similar objective, extolling the benefits of tech connectivity and easy access to knowledge in everyday life. — KUNA

KRCS
Kuwait Red Crescent Society

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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Gardeners working near a road in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Medical institute signs deal to train Kuwaiti doctors in the UK

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KUWAIT: Health Minister Sheikh Dr Bassel Al-Sabah yesterday ratified an agreement between Kuwait Institute for Medical Specializations (KIMS) and Health Education England (HEE). In a statement to the press, the minister said this agreement is a first in the field of medical education between Kuwait and the UK and is part of a MoU signed in 2013.

He revealed talks are in progress to sign another MoU, by which 20 Kuwaiti doctors be sent annually to train in

the UK. HEE's main mission is to support the delivery of excellent healthcare and health improvement to the patients and public of England. Originally established as a Special Health Authority in 2012, HEE is now a Non-Departmental Public Body of the UK's National Health Service, with more than 160,000 students currently studying to be part of future workforce, including doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics and physiotherapists among other medical and paramedical professions. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Health Minister Sheikh Dr Bassel Al-Sabah with officials from Kuwait Institute for Medical Specializations (KIMS) and Health Education England (HEE). — KUNA

More than 400,000 diabetic patients in Kuwait, says doctor

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait has one of the highest rates of diabetes in the world with the number of diabetics in the country ranging between 400,000 and 430,000, a Kuwaiti Endocrinologist said yesterday, adding that there is also a large number of people in Kuwait who are 'pre-diabetic' or at risk of becoming diabetic.

Head of the Kuwait Diabetes Society Dr Waleed Al-Dhahi made that statement during a seminar titled 'the use of technology to improve monitoring of diabetes,' which was held in the presence of Leeds University Professor Dr Ramiz Ajjan.

Dr Dhahi said many studies proved that controlling blood sugar levels leads to reducing its related complications to nerves, blood vessels, eyes, feet and the body in general. He further noted that checking blood levels at home is not less important than laboratory tests, because both are 'road maps' that help doctors prescribe the correct medicine, which in turn helps in easily controlling blood levels. "All patients should monitor their blood sugar levels at home," Dr Dhahi said, adding that there are new monitors available in Kuwait today with non-invasive techniques that use probes and are easy to use.



KUWAIT: A group photo on the sidelines of the seminar.

Local

Four years since Kuwaiti businessman went missing in Romania, family remains hopeful

Kuwait exploring every possible effort to know his whereabouts

Legalese

Forced labor

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed



I love Kuwait. I love it unconditionally. Kuwait is one of the first spaces, places, concepts, communities, etc that I felt that I was a part of and that I belonged to. Kuwait is the place that I wake up every morning, aspiring to inspire its communities. I aspire to inspire the people to be just, fair and loving.

And because I love Kuwait and I feel that I belong to it, I want it to become the best that it can be. I believe that the community and the people can make it the best. So forced labor needs to be abolished, and Kuwaiti organizations (both governmental and non-governmental) are addressing the issue. With that said, I want to speak about it again. Thank you to my readers that continue to trust me and keep sharing their stories. Here are a few stories that were shared with me:

Change of job

Question: I have some questions for you. I am currently in Kuwait. I came through an oil company as a sales representative, but now the kafeel wants to use me as a mandoub (representative). But I don't want the mandoub job.

(1) Does he have the right to force me to take the offer?

(2) He's saying if I don't take the offer, he may not renew my residency when it expires. If this happens, what steps can I take against him for my residency to be renewed?

Fajer: This is a major issue we need to speak about. Although the law in Kuwait under no circumstances allows an employer to treat an employee like this, many people that get away with it are getting away with it because they use control/power and leverage that. Your employer has no right to do this, but he is using the fact that you want to stay in Kuwait to his leverage, by stating he would not renew your visa if you do not work as a mandoub. You can complain at shuoon (Public Authority for Manpower), but keep in mind you might not be able to transfer your visa!

18 hours a day

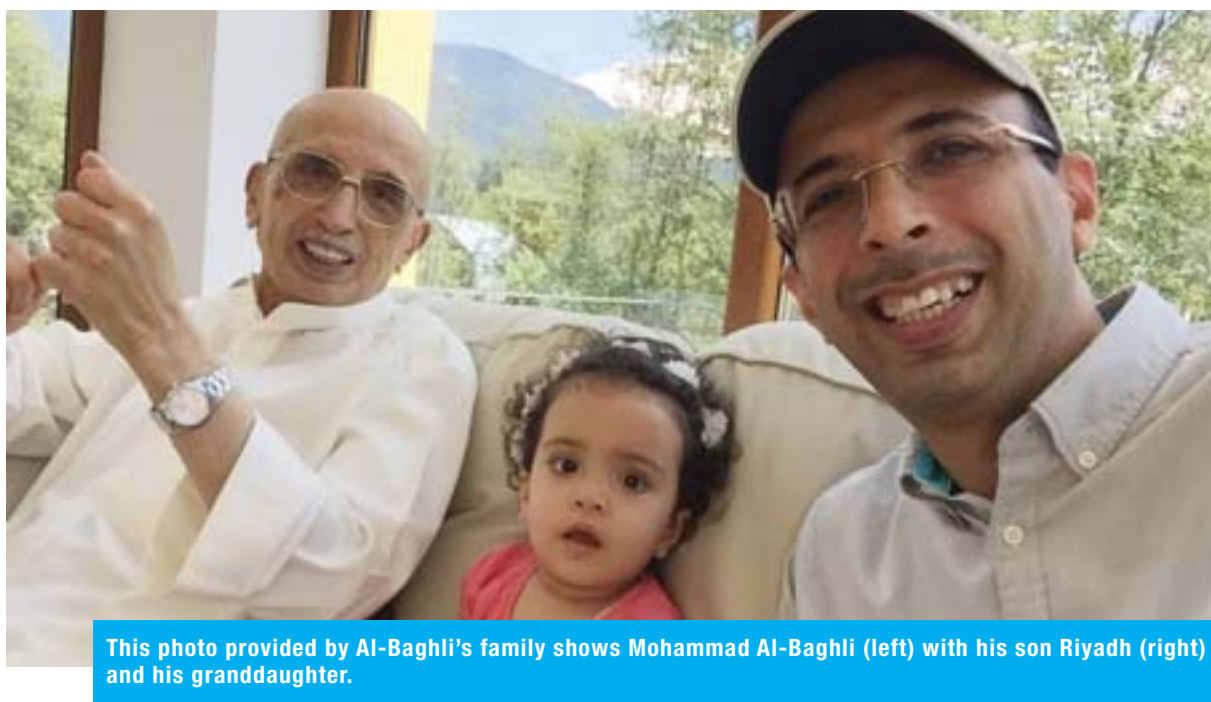
Question: I am being forced to work 7 days a week, 18 hours a day, as a domestic worker. I understand as a domestic worker, I work inside a house, but I am wondering though do I really have to work these many hours?

Fajer: No, you should not be working these many hours. This is what the law states:

- An hour-long break after five hours of work.
- Not more than 12 hours of work a day.
- A full day off every week.
- The right to keep your passport.
- The right to leave the house on your day off (should never be locked in).
- The right to change jobs when your contract ends or to leave to work for another employer without paying a so-called 'transfer fee'.
- The right to receive your salary on time.

If you are a business owner, or if you own a home, please try to do the right thing - treat your employees right, and make sure that you are following the law. In fact, give them more than what the law grants them, because how you treat people around you, especially those that you have power over, defines the person you are. So be nice and kind, and respect everyone.

For questions or queries, please email us at info@ftl-legal.com.



This photo provided by Al-Baghli's family shows Mohammad Al-Baghli (left) with his son Riyadh (right) and his granddaughter.

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti businessman Mohammad Al-Baghli has been missing in Romania for more than four years despite efforts by government and private institutions to know his whereabouts. Since his disappearance in a Romanian village on August 5, 2015, authorities in the State of Kuwait have been exploring every possible effort to know his whereabouts. However, all bids have so far failed. His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah instructed the foreign and interior ministries to do whatever they could to search for Baghli hand-in-hand with Romanian authorities. It has been over 1,500 days since the disappearance of 83-year-old Baghli, and concern of his family and friends is growing over his health and fate.

Kuwaiti and Romanian media have shed light on ordeal of Baghli, a matter that triggered a campaign on social media. However, more needs to be done either in Kuwait or in the European country. Riyadh, Mohammad Al-Baghli's son, has been using all media means, especially Twitter, to keep the cause of his father alive and to remind the public about this crisis. Riyadh posts almost daily tweets to exert some kind of pressure on Romanian authorities to know

whereabouts of his father. "Father, we miss you... today marks 50 months since your disappearance in Romania and we pray for Allah for solace for you and us... We hope official efforts contribute to resolution of humanitarian issue and to exercise pressure on relevant authorities in Romania," said Riyadh in one of his tweets.

Riyadh also posted, last May, a link of a documentary produced by his family in Romania, which showed Kuwaiti and Romanian media talking about his father. The documentary marked 1,461 days of Al-Baghli's disappearance. "We are experiencing a real crisis that is hard to explain, and I have not lost faith that my father will one day return," Riyadh said in a statement to the press yesterday. "We did not expect his disappearance to last beyond two or three days, or even a week... but to be four years, this is beyond imagination," he said. Riyadh thanked the official Kuwaiti authorities for their relentless efforts to search for his father, who used to spend his summer vacation with his family in the Romanian village of Cheia in Prahova County since 1993. He urged the Kuwaiti government anew to exercise pressure on the Romanian authorities to speed up the search for his father. —KUNA

Finance Ministry 'lays accurate basis' for budget estimations

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Finance Minister Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf stressed yesterday on the importance of the ministry's role as the country's financial director for laying safe and accurate bases for budget estimations according to four pillars: sustainability, effectiveness, modification and commitment.

Hajraf said in a statement after the ministry's public meeting, that after sending the budget estimations to the government agencies for the year (2020/2021) that the expenses volume reached KD 27.7 billion (around \$91 billion), which is 'an amount in any case unacceptable.' "The ministry rejected all these budgets for lack of objectiveness on which these amounts were estimated, noting that last year was estimated at KD 30.5 billion (around \$100 billion) and was eventually reduced to KD 22.5 billion (around \$73 billion)," he added. He pointed out that the ministry aims to achieve financial balance in the budget through the cooperation of all governmental bodies, and seeks to control expenses realistically.

Hajraf explained that achieving this goal requires the concerted efforts of everyone to work as a team within the framework of the directives of the Cabinet. He invited all government agencies to workshops separately, starting tomorrow, in order to allow each side to submit its budget in accordance with the listed priorities to support the budget. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Authorities found \$300,000 in cash hidden in a detergent box with an Iraqi passenger who attempted to smuggle them to his home country. Customs officers found the cash with the passenger while searching a bus, before the man was taken for questioning for failure to declare possession of it. The money was sent to the relevant authorities for further action. —By Hanan Al-Saadoun

Team formed to overcome obstacles in housing projects

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Jenan Boushehri announced yesterday the formation of coordinating team to overcome any hurdle facing housing projects in Kuwait. The team includes members of the Municipal Council, technical staff of Kuwait Municipality and the Public Authority for Housing Welfare, said the minister after participating in a workshop for the committee of practicing engineering professions in the municipal council. She pointed out that

the workshop discussed several important topics, including facing problems in residential areas in Kuwait, as well as projects that will help, it will be set up in the next phase. In addition the workshop dealt with ways to activate services in housing neighborhoods and vital usage of renewable energy and the modification of construction in residential units. The workshop is proof of municipal council's keenness to push forward in housing projects, which is an important issue for Kuwait, Boushehri added. — KUNA



Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Jenan Boushehri in a group photo with members of the Municipal Council.

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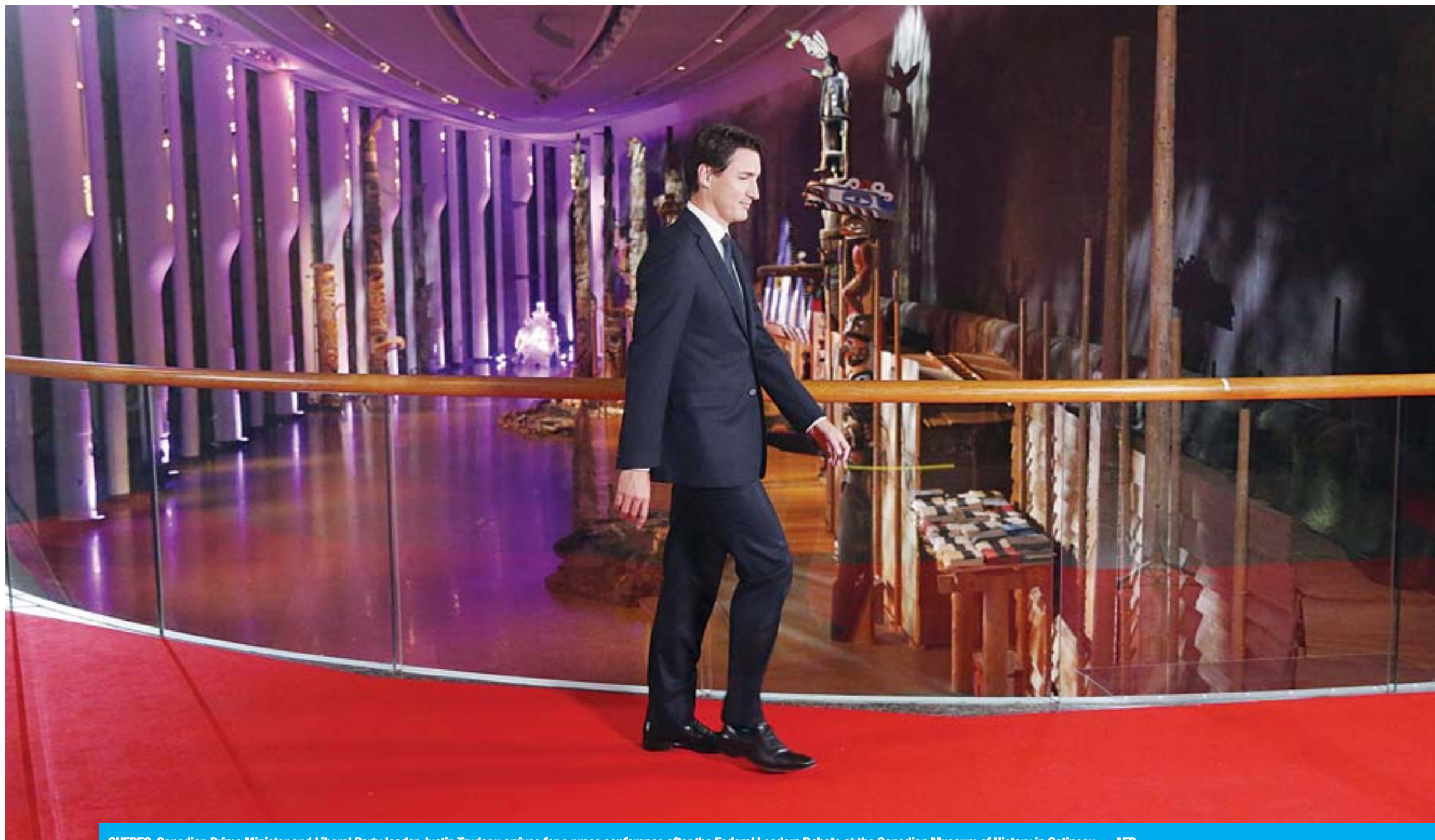
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Nepal hopes for Chinese finance during Xi visit

From transport to games, Poland makes its mark



QUEBEC: Canadian Prime Minister and Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau arrives for a press conference after the Federal Leaders Debate at the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau. —AFP

Trudeau in fight of his political life

‘The Liberals’ support is close to a historic low’

OTTAWA: The gloves have come off as Justin Trudeau struggles to hold onto his parliamentary majority heading into the last week of a tight campaign before Canada's October 21 general election. The latest polls put his Liberals in a dead heat with the Conservatives, led by Andrew Scheer. With only 32 percent support each, however, neither of the frontrunners is poised to win enough of the 338 seats up for grabs for an absolute majority in the House of Commons.

Barring a trip-up over the coming days, whoever wins the most votes may have to seek the backing of one or more minor parties to form the next government. “Not since the 1980s have I seen an election campaign where the two major parties are so close, and where neither of them has really managed to captivate voters,” said Christian Bourque of polling firm Leger. “The Liberals’ support is close to a historic low, which means Trudeau has not been able to convince enough progressive voters to stick with him,” he said.

“Meanwhile, the Conservatives have been unable to

attract centrist voters (beyond their base) over to their side.” A lack of a defining issue, he noted, has been problematic for all parties in this election, but more so for the two mainstays that have led Canada since confederation in 1867. “The traditional main parties are struggling to captivate, inspire and motivate voters to come out and cast a ballot,” said Bourque. The Liberals, who won 184 seats in the last election with 40 percent of the popular vote trouncing the Tories on 99 seats, have sought to make climate action a key issue this time.

Mudslinging

Trudeau defended his record: introduction of a carbon tax to curb global warming, a strong economy with near-record low unemployment, and new trade pacts with Europe and Pacific nations, as well as the United States and Mexico. The Conservatives, meanwhile, have stood alone among all of the parties in pledging austerity measures to return to a balanced budget within five years.

With time running out to sway voters, what started as polite discourse over policies turned to mudslinging. Trudeau evoked the boogymen of past and current Conservative parties, accusing Scheer and his Tories of fostering “politics of fear and division” and secretly planning to slash billions in social and infrastructure spending. The full Conservative platform was only released late Friday, just before the Canadian Thanksgiving weekend. Scheer retorted that Trudeau is a “compulsive liar,” “a phoney and a fraud.”

He raised Trudeau's wearing of blackface makeup, his meddling in the criminal prosecution of engineering giant SNC-Lavalin and his firing of the nation's first indigenous attorney general “for not going along with his corruption.” “Who do you trust to put more money in your pockets so you can get ahead?” Scheer said at a campaign stop on Saturday. Scheer, untested since taking the reins of his party two years ago, has struggled to overcome his bland image of a minivan-driving dad of five trying to take down the Trudeau dynasty.

Smaller parties to gain?

Disillusion with Trudeau, meanwhile, rather than helping Scheer, has boosted the fortunes of New Democrats, which were buoyed also by its rookie leader Jagmeet Singh's rousing debate performances. Also on his left flank, Trudeau has had to contend with criticisms from the Green Party for having nationalized a pipeline project to move oil from Alberta to Pacific tidewater for shipping overseas, and the revival of the separatist Bloc in the key battleground of Quebec.

The Bloc had been presumed dead after being reduced to 10 seats in 2015 — two short of official party status. Quebec separatism — after two failed referendums in 1980 and 1995 on splitting away from the rest of Canada — is a no-go nowadays. But the Bloc has tapped into lingering Quebec nationalism, arguing that it is best positioned to defend the province's interests within the federation. During the last week of campaigning, Bourque predicted all of the parties would sharpen their personal attacks on rival leaders. —AFP

Impeachment probe overshadows US Democratic race

WASHINGTON: Joe Biden faces scrutiny over Ukraine, Elizabeth Warren is surging and Bernie Sanders had a heart attack, but recent developments in the Democratic presidential battle are getting minimal attention, swamped by Washington's impeachment obsession. Most Democratic candidates are pounding the pavement in early voting states like Iowa, but they are finding little oxygen for the nomination race.

Broadcast and cable news have been dominated by a burgeoning Ukraine scandal that has engulfed the White House and prompted House Democrats to launch an impeachment investigation of possible abuse of power by Trump. The drama threatens to overshadow what could be a pivotal moment in the Democratic nomination race: Tuesday's three-hour debate with the party's top 12 candidates. The fourth showdown of the cycle will feature the Democratic dozen clashing on everything from health care and climate to jobs, gun control and foreign policy, as they seek to catch fire with voters.

Under normal circumstances the pre-debate chatter would center around whether Biden gets more aggressive against rising star Warren, if Sanders can rebound after health problems, or how second-tier candidates like Senator Kamala Harris or ex-congressman Beto O'Rourke can mount a comeback. But talk of Trump's fate is the stark new reality, and for lesser Democratic candidates struggling for a breakout moment, their path to the nomination just got harder.

“There is a lot of this impeachment inquiry taking over the narrative, and we're going to see how these Democrats will be able to shape that to their advantage,”

McKinney said. Biden, director of the Political Communication Institute at University of Missouri, told AFP. The candidate most impacted by the Ukraine crisis is Biden. A whistleblower complaint at the center of the inquiry alleged that Trump pressured Ukraine's leader on a July 25 call to investigate the US president's Democratic rival, Trump says he acted appropriately, but he has relentlessly hammered Biden and his son as “corrupt.”

Biden, Warren face attacks

McKinney said Biden could flip the attention to his advantage, convincing voters that he's the Democrat Trump fears most in 2020. “Biden must demonstrate his aggressiveness and ability to take on the issue of Donald Trump coming at him directly about him and his son,” McKinney said. He has. Saying Trump “betrayed this nation,” Biden on Wednesday called for the president's impeachment for the first time. “Let me make something clear to President Trump: I'm not going anywhere,” he added Friday on Twitter. “You're not going to destroy me.”

Warren called for Trump's impeachment months ago, perhaps signaling that, while Biden earlier hedged his bets, she recognized the urgency that a growing number of Democrats feel about ousting Trump. The 70-year-old progressive senator has surged in recent weeks, drawing virtually even with Biden in polling — and raising the likelihood that debate rivals will go after her.

Onstage Democrats may also pounce on Biden, and argue that his son's work for a Ukrainian energy company while Biden was vice president has at least the appearance of a conflict of interest. The impeachment saga shook up the campaign trail for all candidates, and they have been recalibrating accordingly. Sanders acknowledged as much on September 24, when the liberal senator who supports Trump's impeachment spoke of its risks.

“This is a complicated issue from a political point of view,” Sanders told reporters in Davenport, Iowa. One week later the 78-year-old suffered a mild



HOUSTON: In this file photo taken on September 12, 2019 Democratic presidential hopefuls Former Vice President Joe Biden (L) and Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren participate in the third Democratic primary debate of the 2020 presidential campaign season hosted by ABC News in partnership with Univision at Texas Southern University. —AFP

heart attack, slowing his campaign just when he needed a fresh boost. “I'm feeling great and we're going to run a vigorous campaign,” Sanders told CNN Thursday. The setback put the health and age of not only Sanders, but Biden — who turns 77 next month and has been criticized for lacking vitality in debates — into the spotlight.

Sanders must “convince voters that he's not out of it,” and the debate is a chance to do that, McKinney said. If he does not, and “if Warren is able to solidify...

the progressive wing, we could see a continuation of her rise and a taking over of Joe Biden,” he added. While Warren has gained steam, the air has wheezed out of many low-polling candidates, who are grasping for anything to revive their flat-lining campaigns.

But the impeachment fracas could benefit one new face on stage: Tom Steyer. The billionaire activist, making his debate debut Tuesday, has spent two years advocating for Trump's removal from office. —AFP

International

Pentagon says up to 1,000 troops to withdraw from northern Syria

Fifth day of an offensive that has provoked an international outcry

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon said yesterday President Donald Trump had ordered the withdrawal of up to 1,000 troops from northern Syria — almost the entire ground force in war-torn country — amid an intensifying Turkish assault on Kurdish forces. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said the move came after the US learned that Turkey was pressing further into Syria than had been expected.

And the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are seeking a deal with the Syrian regime and Russia to counter-attack against the Turks in the north, Esper added. “We find ourselves as we have American forces likely caught between two opposing advancing armies and it’s a very untenable situation,” Esper told CBS’s Face the Nation. “So I spoke with the president last night after discussions with the rest of the national security team and he directed that we begin a deliberate withdrawal of forces from northern Syria.”

Esper said he was unable to provide a timeline because of the rapidly changing situation on the ground, but added that the withdrawal would be carried out in a “very safe, deliberate manner.” “Look it’s a very terrible situation over there. A situation caused by the Turks... Despite our opposition they decided to make this incursion into Syria,” Esper told CBS. “And at this point in time in the last 24 hours we learned that they likely intend to expand their attack further south than originally planned and to the west. “We also have learned in the last 24 hours that the... SDF are looking to cut a deal, if you will, with the Syrians and the Russians to counter-attack against the Turks in the north.”

‘Immediate defensive action’

Asked if troops would be leaving the country altogether, Esper clarified that the withdrawal was just from northern Syria, “which is where most of our forces are.” Fighting raged along the border on the fifth day of an offensive that has provoked an international outcry and left dozens of civilians and fighters dead.

Ankara launched the long-threatened offensive against the SDF, which it considers “terrorists” linked to insurgents inside Turkey, after Trump ordered American special forces serving as a trip wire against Turkish action to pull back from the border. The US withdrawal provoked a bipartisan firestorm of outrage and accusations that Trump was abandoning a loyal ally in the fight against Islamic State militants. Trump tweeted Sunday that it was “very smart not to be involved in the intense fighting along the Turkish Border, for a change.” “The Kurds and Turkey have been fighting for many years... Others may want to come in and fight for one side or the other. Let them! We are monitoring the situation closely. Endless Wars!” he said. Hundreds of relatives of foreign jihadists escaped from a displacement camp in northern Syria, Kurdish authorities said Sunday, as the number of people fleeing the Turkish assault soared to 130,000.

US troops near the northern border came under artillery fire from Turkish positions on Friday, the Pentagon said, warning that the US was prepared to meet aggression with “immediate defensive action.” The US military confirmed an explosion within a few hundred meters of its post near the town of Kobani, in an area “known by the Turks to have US forces present.” Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin announced Friday that Trump had authorized — but not yet activated —



This picture taken on October 12, 2019 from Turkey near the town of Suruc shows a US observation post near the Syrian town of Kobani Kobane where the Pentagon said an explosion occurred “within a few hundred meters.” —AFP

new sanctions to dissuade Turkey from further offensive military action. “We can shut down all US dollar transactions with the entire government of Turkey,”

Mnuchin told ABC yesterday. “It’s something we may do. There’s full authority and something at a moment’s notice the president can tell me to do.” —AFP

Media mogul, academic face off as Tunisians choose president

TUNIS: Tunisians voted yesterday in a presidential runoff pitting a conservative academic against a media magnate fresh out of jail, reflecting a shift in the country’s post-revolution political landscape. The political newcomers swept aside the old guard in the first round, highlighting voter anger over a stagnant economy, high unemployment and poor public services in the cradle of the Arab Spring.

Adding controversy and suspense to the contest, presidential contender Nabil Karoui only walked free on Wednesday, having spent more than a month behind bars on suspicion of money-laundering. “Here’s to this derby ending in Tunisia’s favor,” said Najoua Nahali, 53, holding up her ink-stained finger after voting in central Tunis. The vote, Tunisia’s second free presidential election since the 2011 revolt, follows the death of president Beji Caid Essebsi in July.

The 56-year-old business tycoon portrays himself as a bulwark against political Islam, which he accuses his rival Kais Saied of supporting. Saied, a constitutional law expert, called for Tunisians “to make a choice today in complete freedom”. “You have created a new concept of revolution, let your conscience guide you and you will win your sovereignty,” he said. The 61-year-old independent candidate campaigned upon the values of the 2011 revolution, based on opposition to westernized and corrupt elites, and in favor of radical decentralization.

On Friday night, the two candidates went head-to-head in a rare television debate, a last bid to woo voters. Karoui appeared relaxed, if at times hesitant. Speaking in Tunisian dialect, he stuck to his key themes of economic liberalization and fighting poverty. Serious but also at ease, Saied criticized the country’s partisan system, in classical Arabic. The runoff outcome remains uncertain, with a ban on opinion polls, but Karoui received a boost with his newly formed party, Qalb Tounes (Heart of Tunis), coming second in legislative elections a week earlier.

Saied topped the first round in the presidential election, held on September 15, with 18.4 percent of votes, while Karoui followed with 15.6 percent. Nearly half of eligible voters cast their ballots in that round. “Rendezvous with history”, headlined Tunisia’s La Presse newspaper on Sunday, while French language daily Le Temps said absent voters “will be in the wrong”. Officials said turnout in the runoff was 17.8 percent by noon, higher than at the same time during the first round.



TUNIS: Tunisia's presidential candidate Nabil Karoui casts his ballot at a polling station in the capital Tunis during the second round of the presidential election. —AFP

anti-establishment figures, the contrast between them is sharp, with Saied nicknamed “Robocop” for his rigid and austere manner. A social conservative, he has defended the death penalty, criminalization of homosexuality and a sexual assault law that punishes unmarried couples who engage in public displays of affection. Saied taught at the Tunis faculty of judicial and political sciences for nearly two decades.

He launched an unorthodox election campaign that saw him shun mass rallies and instead canvass door-to-door. Karoui presents himself as a candidate for the poor but spent most of his campaign imprisoned on money-laundering and tax-evasion charges. He was released on his fourth appeal in court after threatening to contest the results. The appeal of flamboyant Karoui, who always appears in designer suits, stems

largely from his media empire and philanthropic activity.

After the 2011 uprising that toppled longtime dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the Nessma TV channel that Karoui founded turned from entertainment programming towards news, becoming one of Tunisia’s largest private broadcasters. His arrest in the run-up to the election cemented his status as an outsider — despite being a longtime key supporter of Essebsi, whose death on July 25 brought forward the polls. Karoui says the allegations against him are politically motivated. Although now a free man, he is still under investigation for fraud and banned from travelling abroad. But if he wins the runoff, Karoui will receive immunity “and all the legal proceedings against him... will be suspended until the end of his mandate”, constitutional law professor Salsabil Klibi said. —AFP

Egypt arrests two more prominent activists in sweep

CAIRO: Egypt has detained two prominent activists who played key roles in the 2011 revolution, activists and a rights group said, the latest in a wave of arrests in recent weeks. Blogger and journalist Esraa Abdel Fattah, 41, was detained on Saturday evening, a fellow activist said. Mohamed Salah wrote on his Facebook page that shortly after meeting Abdel Fattah “two cars full of plainclothes police officers took her in one car and me in another.”

He added: “They left me after an hour on the highway after they blindfolded and beat me.” Abdel Fattah is best known for co-founding the 6th of April movement in 2008. The youth movement was instrumental in mobilizing millions of Egyptians in the uprising that toppled long-time autocrat Hosni Mubarak in 2011. Abdel Fattah’s whereabouts is currently unknown, according to local watchdog group, the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedom.

Abdallah Said, another political activist and official with the opposition Bread and Freedom party, was also detained from his home early yesterday, according to a note posted by his party on social media. Other officials from the leftist party have also been rounded up in recent weeks. Authorities have not commented to AFP about the recent arrests. In the last three weeks, authorities have detained about 3,000 people, including well-known academics, activists and lawyers, according to rights groups.

Activists say the crackdown is one of the worst since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi took power in 2014. While some detainees have been released, no high-profile figures have been freed, according to a list maintained by rights monitors. The sweeping arrests came after rare protests in September called for the removal of Sisi, in defiance of a ban on demonstrations. —AFP

Firefighters curb California blazes

LOS ANGELES: Wildfires raging across southern California abated on Saturday with evacuation orders lifted after 100,000 people were forced to flee their homes. A fire that had burned rapidly through the San Fernando Valley in greater Los Angeles was the strongest of several across southern California.

By Saturday, it had consumed 8,000 acres about 20 miles north of downtown Los Angeles, fire officials said, adding that the blaze was about 33 percent contained. All residents were allowed to return to their homes on Saturday as cooler temperatures and lighter winds improved the outlook. “We are prepared for any flare-ups as they occur,” Los Angeles fire captain Branden Silverman told local media. One man in his 50s died of a heart attack as he struggled to save his home, fire officials said.

Sharp contrast

While the candidates are both seen as

Israel asks Putin to pardon woman jailed for cannabis

JERUSALEM: Israeli President Reuven Rivlin yesterday appealed to his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to pardon an Israeli-American jailed for smuggling cannabis who is reportedly caught up in a prisoner exchange request. Naama Issachar was caught with nine grams of the drug in her checked luggage while transiting from India to Israel at Moscow’s Sheremetyevo airport in April.

The 26-year-old was sentenced to seven-and-a-half years in jail by a Russian court on Friday, with Moscow reportedly seeking an exchange of a prisoner set to be extradited by Israel to the United States for her release. “Naama made a grave mistake and has admitted her crime, but in the case of a young woman with no criminal record, the severe sentence handed down will have a deeply destructive impact on her life,” Rivlin wrote in a letter to Putin distributed by his office. “I am appealing to your mercy and compassion with a request for your personal intervention to grant her an extraordinary pardon.”

Russian and Israeli media have reported that Moscow is seeking an

exchange to prevent Israel from extraditing Aleksey Burkov, a Russian citizen detained in Israel since 2015 for alleged cyber crimes and credit card fraud. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu raised her detention with Putin ahead of the verdict and criticized the sentence requested by prosecutors as disproportionate. On Friday, Netanyahu’s office seemed to acknowledge the prisoner exchange request, citing an Israeli supreme court ruling allowing the extradition.

“Judicial authorities in Israel have made it unequivocally clear that there is no possibility of preventing the extradition of Burkov following the supreme court ruling that he is subject to extradition,” it said in a statement. After the sentencing, Issachar’s mother Yaffa said she was “shocked that Russia decided to abduct Naama and hold her as a hostage.” Russia has harsh laws on recreational drug use and possession of even a small amount is punishable by a long jail sentence.

According to a Council of Europe report from 2017, Russia has the highest number of people per capita imprisoned for drug crimes in Europe — around a quarter of the prison population. Israel has partially decriminalized recreational marijuana use, setting fines and treatment for initial offenders instead of criminal procedures. —AFP

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International

Britain’s Johnson pushes for last-ditch Brexit deal

They have very little time left to succeed

LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson was to brief his ministers yesterday on progress in Britain's last-ditch efforts to strike a new Brexit agreement with the EU. Negotiators went behind closed doors for intensive talks in Brussels after Johnson outlined a new set of divorce terms to Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar on Thursday. But they have very little time left to succeed.

EU leaders will meet in Brussels on Thursday and Friday for a summit held under the pressures of the October 31 Brexit deadline just two weeks away. They would ideally like to have a full proposal to vote on by then. But the sides are trying to achieve in a few days what they had failed to in the more than three years since Britons first voted to leave the European Union after nearly 50 years. German Chancellor Angela Merkel will discuss the available options with French President Emmanuel Macron late Sunday and Johnson is to brief his cabinet at lunchtime.

European officials said the bloc's Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier will also brief EU ambassadors on the state of play yesterday evening. The few details that have leaked out suggest a compromise around the contentious Irish border issue that keeps Britain's Northern Ireland partially aligned with EU customs rules. Whether such a fudge suits both Brussels and the more ardent Brexit backers in parliament who must still approve a deal should become clearer in the coming days.

Johnson rose to power in July on a promise not to extend Brexit for a third time — even for a few weeks. Breaking that pledge could come back to haunt him in an early general election that most predict for the coming months. “Getting Brexit done by 31 October is absolutely crucial,” Johnson reaffirmed in a statement yesterday.

Parliamentary pressure

Ireland's Varadkar hinted on Thursday that he could support the talks running on up to the October 31 deadline if a deal seemed within reach. But Britain will only avoid a chaotic breakup with its closest trading partners if the agreement is also passed by the parliament in London — something it has failed to do three times.

Johnson heads a minority government and must rely on the full backing of not only his own fractured Conservatives but also Northern Ireland's small Democratic Unionist Party. DUP's parliamentary leader Nigel Dodds warned Johnson that “Northern Ireland must remain entirely in the customs union of the United Kingdom” and not the EU.

“And Boris Johnson knows it very well,” Dodds told Italy's La Repubblica newspaper. The comments do not necessarily rule out DUP support. UK media are presenting Johnson's mooted compromise as a “double customs” plan that could be interpreted to mean that Northern Ireland is leaving EU rules. But the details are still under discussion and the prime minister's allies are urging lawmakers to give the British leader a chance.

The government's parliament representative, Jacob Rees-Mogg, a leading member of the Conservatives' anti-EU lobby, insisted that Johnson has the Brexit credentials to succeed. “I think he is somebody that even the most arch-euroscptic, even a member of the Brexit Party, can trust and have confidence in,” Rees-Mogg told Sky television.

Main opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn signaled yesterday that he would wait for the outcome of the EU summit before trying to



BRUSSELS: In this file photo taken on October 09, 2019 Anti-Brexit activists protest near the European Parliament. —AFP

force an early election. “We will look at any deal that comes up before we trigger an election,” Corbyn told Sky. Johnson is under parliamentary orders to seek a Brexit extension if no deal

emerges by Saturday. He has promised to both follow the law and yet get Britain out by October 31 — a contradiction that might end up being settled in court. —AFP

Hungary opposition eyes Budapest, gains in elections

BUDAPEST: Hungarians go to the polls yesterday in municipal elections seen as a rare chance for the beleaguered opposition to roll back the power of nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban. Opposition parties across the political spectrum have joined forces, potentially denying Orban's right-wing Fidesz party a landslide win for the first time in almost a decade.

Since Orban came to power in 2010, he has overhauled election rules, making it more difficult for opposition parties to compete individually against Fidesz. The main battleground is the capital Budapest, where Gergely Karacsony, 44, is neck-and-neck in polling for the mayor's post with the Fidesz-backed incumbent Istvan Tarlos, who like Orban has been in office since 2010. Karacsony has compared the Budapest race to the Istanbul mayoral election in March, in

which the candidate of Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan's party was defeated by the opposition challenger.

“Istanbul voted against an aggressive illiberal power in many ways similar to Orban's regime,” Karacsony told AFP. After sweeping to power, Orban pushed through swathes of new legislation, including measures that critics at home and abroad say have neutered key democratic institutions such as the media and the judiciary in the EU member state. Critics say some of those reforms helped Fidesz to rout opposition parties at parliamentary, European and local elections despite around half of the electorate often voting against it.

Now, in many municipalities just one opposition challenger is lining up against Fidesz. Outside the capital tight races are also forecast in several currently Fidesz-run cities like Miskolc, Pecs, and Szombathely, as well as in most of Budapest's 23 district municipalities. Hopes of opposition gains increased last week after a sex scandal involving a Fidesz mayor erupted, threatening to erode the party's support nationwide. An anonymous blogger posted explicit pictures and videos of the mayor of the western city of Győr taking part in an orgy on a yacht in Croatia. —AFP

From transport to games, Poland makes its mark

WARSAW: Poland, which held its elections yesterday, is a member of NATO and the European Union. In the past, it was invaded by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union during World War II, then spent decades under communism. Here are five things to know about this central European country of 38 million people:

- Non-stop growth**
Poland has posted continuous economic growth since the 1989 fall of communism and is currently the seventh biggest economy in the EU, which it joined in 2004. It is Europe's largest producer of poultry, apples, raspberries and potatoes. The country is also an industrial giant, notably thanks to cheap labor. About a third of the EU's international transport is carried out by Polish firms. Poland has also made a name for itself in the video game industry, with hits like “The Witcher”, “Dying Light” and “This War of Mine”. Next year's release “Cyberpunk 2077” has already been crowned the “most wanted game” by gamers around the world.
- Majority Catholic**
More than 90 percent of Poles declare themselves Catholic, but only 38 percent attend Sunday mass. The Church is still going strong in rural areas but is losing its appeal in big cities. Clergy sex scandals have recently tainted its image, though the Church still enjoys close ties with the governing conservatives. Both called LGBT rights a threat to the traditional family ahead of the general election.
- Migration**
The governing conservative Law and



WARSAW: A man is seen at a polling station in Warsaw during the parliamentary elections. —AFP

Justice (PiS) party rejected the EU's migrant quotas, but the country has welcomed Ukrainians and other foreign workers. After around two million Poles emigrated to the West when Poland joined the EU in 2004, some 1.2 million Ukrainians came to replace them. The services industry relies heavily on the foreign workforce. According to estimates from an employer's association, Poland will require a total of five million foreign workers by 2050. Facing a shortage of skilled workers it already surpassed the United States in 2017 as the top temporary labour migration destination, according to the OECD.

Jewish history

Poland was for centuries considered a safe haven for Jews chased out of Western Europe. By 1939, there were 3.3 million of them living in the country, or around 10 percent of the entire Polish population. It was Europe's largest Jewish

community at the time. But Poland's 1,000-year Jewish history was cut short by Nazi Germany. During World War II, six million Poles died, half of them Jews killed in the Holocaust. Of the few who remained, most emigrated, with the last wave taking place after the communist regime orchestrated an anti-Semitic campaign in 1968. Today, an estimated 8,000-12,000 Jews live in Poland.

Marriage medal

Poland is likely the world's only country to give out presidential medals to couples who survive 50 years of marriage. The marital medal was introduced in 1960 under Communist rule and is very much a product of its time. Poland's communist party leader at the time, Wladyslaw Gomulka, was himself happily married and frowned upon divorce and sexual debauchery. Tens of thousands of marital medals are still given out each year, despite higher divorce rates today. —AFP

Pope elevates British convert to sainthood

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis created five new saints yesterday, including Britain's Cardinal John Henry Newman — one of the Catholic Church's most renowned converts — and a nun dubbed the “Mother Teresa of Brazil”. Heads of state from across the world attended the canonization ceremony, which also raised a Swiss laywoman plus two other nuns — an Indian and an Italian — to the highest position within the Church.

“Today we give thanks to the Lord for our new Saints,” the pope told the faithful on Saint Peter's Square. “They walked by faith and now we invoke their intercession.” Prince Charles, future head of the Church of England, led the British delegation honoring Newman, a 19th-century Anglican theologian who went on to become one of the Catholic Church's leading thinkers.

Francis quoted Newman describing “the holiness of ordinary life” in which, “the Christian is cheerful, easy, kind, gentle, courteous, candid, unassuming; has no pretence... with so little that is unusual... that he may easily be taken at first sight for an ordinary man.” Born in 1801, Newman attempted to “renew” the Anglican Church, before becoming convinced that Catholicism was the only true faith and converting aged 44, rising through the hierarchy to become a cardinal. Giant portraits of the new saints were hung from Saint Peter's Basilica for the ceremony which attracted tens of thousands of pilgrims.

‘Miracles’

The pope noted that three of the new saints were religious women, showing “that the consecrated life is a journey of love at the existential peripheries of the world”. But the fourth, Marguerite Bays, was a seamstress, a laywoman from

Switzerland known for bearing the stigmata — wounds corresponding to the injuries Christ suffered on the cross.

“She speaks to us of the power of simple prayer, enduring patience and silent self-giving,” Francis said. Born in 1815, the second of seven children, Bays showed an intense faith from very early on, often breaking off from playing with other village youngsters in order to pray quietly, according to the Vatican. Despite suggestions she should become a nun, she instead began an apprenticeship as a seamstress aged 15.

Bays underwent surgery for bowel cancer in 1853, and prayed to the Virgin Mary to heal her, offering to swap her disease for the pains experienced by Jesus. The Church says she was cured but given the stigmata in exchange. Every Friday, she would be immobilized in “ecstasy” as she relived the suffering in body and mind, it says.

Most new saints must have two “miracles” to their names — usually scientifically inexplicable healings, attributed to prayers. Newman is credited with curing an American man from Boston with a debilitating spinal disorder, who claimed in 2001 he could suddenly walk again after praying to the British cardinal. His second “miracle” — the inexplicable healing of a woman with a “life-threatening pregnancy” — was approved this year.

Bays was canonized alongside Brazilian Sister Dulce Lopes Pontes, who was a member of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and considered a “mother of the poor”. Born in 1914 into an upper middle-class family in Salvador, she started a health clinic for poor workers and opened a school, a hospital, and an orphanage, as well as care centers for the elderly and disabled. Sister Dulce, dubbed the “good angel of Bahia”, was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1988. She was visited in hospital the year before her death by Pope John Paul II, who called her work “an example for humanity”. Tens of thousands of people attended her funeral in 1992. —AFP

Message from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Embassy

On October 10, 1945, the WPK (Workers' Party of Korea), which organizes and guides all victories of the people of the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), was founded. The WPK is guided by Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism, the essence of which is the Juche idea and the Songun idea: the Juche idea, which clarifies that the masses of the people are the masters of the revolution and construction and that they are also the motive force of the revolution and construction, and the Songun idea, which clarifies that the revolution and construction should be advanced with the army as the main force on the principle of giving precedence to military affairs, were advanced by President Kim

Il Sung in June 1930, when Korea was under Japanese military occupation (1905-1945).

Carrying forward the ideas and cause of President Kim Il Sung, Chairman Kim Jong Il applied these ideas in a thoroughgoing way in the whole period of leading the WPK. Having advanced the policy of modelling the whole Party on Kimilsungism and consistently advocated it, he formulated the Songun idea as well as the Juche idea as the great guiding ideology of the WPK after the demise of President Kim Il Sung (July 8, 1994) and led the building and activities of the WPK to be conducted as required by the Juche idea and the Songun idea.

Thanks to this, the WPK was further consolidated as an ideologically pure body equipped with the Juche idea and the Songun idea and demonstrated its might as a party that steadfastly adheres to its principle whatever the tempest of history. It could also invariably hold fast to the banner of socialism without any slightest deviation and vacillation in the closing years of the last century amid the

harshest isolate-and-stifle schemes resorted to by the allied imperialist forces. Sure enough, the Juche idea and the Songun idea are recognized by the progressive peoples of the world as the guiding ideology of the cause of independence of mankind.

The WPK's unity, whose foundation had been provided by President Kim Il Sung, its founder, was consolidated by Chairman Kim Jong Il. He attached great importance to solidifying the WPK's organizational and ideological unity based on one ideology and pure moral obligation and led the efforts to this end.

The rock-solid unity of the WPK reached a higher stage thanks to Songun politics which Chairman Kim Jong Il formulated in a comprehensive way in the mid-1990s. With the achieving of oneness in ideas and working style between the service personnel and civilians based on the revolutionary soldier spirit and consolidation of the whole society as a powerful socio-political force, the single-hearted unity of the society of the DPRK reached a new, higher stage.

International

Mozambique election will test country's fragile peace

Frelimo will have to loosen its stranglehold on power

MAPUTO: Mozambique holds a general election on Tuesday that will test the country's fragile peace as the Frelimo party, faced with economic crisis and chronic conflict, prepares to relinquish at least some control after 44 years in power.

The impoverished southern African nation has seen one of the most violent campaigns in its brief and turbulent history, raising fears that the presidential, parliamentary and provincial polls could be marred by bloodshed. Frelimo has ruled Mozambique since independence from Portugal in 1975 and — barring a major upset — is expected to again beat its arch-rival Renamo, a former rebel group turned opposition party.

Frelimo and Renamo, who fought a brutal civil war from 1975-1992 that left a nearly million people dead, signed a peace deal in August hoping to turn the page on decades of conflict. But an armed breakaway faction of Renamo has splintered off, rejecting the treaty and threatening to attack campaign events. “This election will be a test for democracy,” said Ericino de Salema of the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa. “For the first time, the political geography of the country may change substantially, it may even lead to confrontation.”

A bitter, violent campaign

Under the peace deal, Frelimo will have to loosen its stranglehold on power. Mozambique's 13 million voters, out of a population of nearly 30 million, will elect provincial governors for the first time — they were previously appointed by the government — who will have expanded powers. Renamo is expected to gain control of between three to five of the country's 10 provinces.

“For the very first time, the ruling party is facing the risk of losing something... and there is no way they are going to let it go,” said Zenaida Machado of Human Rights Watch. “These elections are on track to be one

of the most violent that we have ever seen.” The increasingly bitter campaign has seen candidates threatened, election material destroyed, and clashes break out between supporters of both sides. The lowest point was the brutal murder of a prominent election observer, with four police officers suspected of being responsible. Civil society groups have already denounced numerous irregularities, including thousands of “ghost voters” on the electoral roll, and intend to deploy thousands of observers for the vote.

Cyclone, conflict and scandal

Frelimo enters the election in an unprecedented position of weakness after its worst-ever performance at the ballot box last year, winning 51.8 percent of votes in local elections. The party's popularity took a hit when it was revealed the government had secretly borrowed \$2 billion, sparking one of Mozambique's worst financial crisis. For one of the world's poorest countries, which is heavily reliant on aid, the “hidden debt” scandal severely tarnished the regime's image in the eyes of donors and investors.

Mozambique is also still picking up the pieces after Cyclone Idai decimated the second city of Beira in March, leaving nearly two million people displaced. And the government has struggled to respond to an insurrection by a shadowy jihadist group that has killed hundreds of people in the northernmost Cabo Delgado province since 2017. President Filipe Nyusi, who hails from the province, has vowed to restore order, but with little success.

The violence has threatened to delay the exploitation of vast gas reserves in the north, which could pose a problem for Nyusi, who has touted future “petrodollars” in his campaign speeches. Renamo leader Ossufo Momade has had his own difficulties. Only rising to prominence after the death of long-time leader Afonso



MATOLA: Mozambican ruling Party FRELIMO (Mozambique Liberation Front) supporters attend their party's last campaign rally before the country's general election. — AFP

Dhlakama in 2016, Momade pushed for the peace deal but has struggled to rally his party behind it, with the breakaway faction threatening to revive hostilities. With tensions so high, some fear a return to the bad old days.

“Renamo didn't hand over its weapons. It therefore shouldn't surprise anyone if it decides to resort to violence again,” warned Machado. Nyusi, who is running for his second five-year term in office, urged calm as he

wrapped up his campaign on the outskirts of capital Maputo on Saturday. “We call on our supporters not to respond to provocation and to avoid violence,” he told thousands of supporters. At his own rally in the central city of Nacala, Momade pledged that his party would win and “put an end to corruption”. “Let's remove Frelimo from power so we can give Mozambicans back their dignity,” he said. — AFP

Nepal hopes for Chinese finance during Xi visit

KATHMANDU: Nepal rolled out the red carpet on Saturday for China's President Xi Jinping but rounded up Tibetans to prevent protests during the first state visit by a Chinese leader in 23 years. Xi landed following two days of talks in neighboring India, and is expected to use his time in Kathmandu to push Beijing's controversial Belt and Road infrastructure projects.

Although India has traditionally been Nepal's main ally, China has intensified its presence in the impoverished Himalayan nation, pumping millions of dollars into projects ranging from roads to hydropower plants. President Bidhya Devi Bhandari received him at Kathmandu airport to the sounds of the two countries' national anthems, played by an army band.

China's official Xinhua news agency early Sunday reported that, after arriving, Xi said he expected “to upgrade China-Nepal relations, enhance connectivity between the two countries and deliver more benefits” to their peoples. In a signed article published in Nepali newspapers on Friday, Xi said he would use the two-day visit to “renew friendship and explore cooperation with my Nepali friends”.

“It is important that we adopt a strategic and long-term perspective and draw up a blueprint for our bilateral relationship to take it to a new height in this new era,” Xi added. The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), a



KATHMANDU: In this handout photograph released by the The Rising Nepal newspaper and taken on October 13, 2019, China's President Xi Jinping (L) shakes hands with Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli (R) during a bilateral meeting. — AFP

Washington-based pressure group, said at least 18 people were arrested in the days ahead of Xi's arrival. These included two Nepali shopkeepers selling bags with Tibetan flags or slogans. Fourteen remained in detention on Saturday.

In 1959, Beijing sent soldiers to crush a revolt in Tibet against Chinese rule, leaving the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, fleeing to India where he remains. Nepal is home to around 20,000 exiled Tibetans, but under pressure from Beijing the communist government has taken an increasingly hardline stance on their activities. “There is heavy police presence. It is an intimidating situation. We've been asked to stay in,” one Tibetan told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. Nepalese authorities declined to comment.

'Focus on connectivity'

In 2017, Nepal signed up to China's Belt and Road initiative, a vast global infrastructure program, which includes the building or upgrading of highways and airports in the country. “A trans-Himalayan connectivity network is thus taking shape, which will serve not just our two countries but also the region as a whole,” Xi said in his article. Landlocked Nepal, sandwiched between India and China, is seeking closer ties and much-needed energy and infrastructure investment from Beijing.

Nepal's Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali said Xi's visit holds “historic significance” for Nepal. “Our priority is to create opportunities for Nepal, joining it to China's development. We are focusing on connectivity between the two countries,” he said. — AFP



SRINAGAR: In this file photo taken on September 3, 2019, people gather to make calls at a makeshift phone booth set up by Indian security forces outside a camp during a lockdown. — AFP

Tourists welcome

The New Delhi government imposed a mobile phone and internet blackout as part of a huge security clampdown to back its annulment of Kashmir's constitutionally guaranteed autonomy. Tens of thousands of extra troops were also sent in an operation that critics said virtually cut off Kashmir from the outside world. Knsal said restrictions on public movement had been lifted in “99 percent” of Kashmir but gave no indication on whether internet services would also be restored. The government, however, on Thursday lifted restrictions on tourists travelling to the region

and released three politicians among hundreds of people detained after August 5. Kansal said all those detained would be released gradually after their cases are reviewed.

The leader of the opposition Congress party in the region, GA Mir, was skeptical of the government's announcement. “We have been hearing for days that they would restore mobile phones. So unless they actually do this on Monday, this is just another one of their announcements,” he told AFP. He also questioned the move to lift restrictions for tourists, when authorities have been saying throughout the clampdown that “life is normal” in Kashmir. — AFP

Blacklisted Chinese AI firms: What you should know

BEIJING: The Chinese high-tech companies blacklisted by Washington over alleged ties to rights abuses are rising stars in China's ambitious drive to overtake the United States in the technology sector. They make surveillance cameras, facial recognition software and other technology that has become ubiquitous in Xinjiang, the heavily policed northwestern region where an estimated one million mostly Muslim minorities, like ethnic Uighurs, are held in internment camps. The eight firms were added on Monday to a list of 28 entities that US companies are barred from selling components to without government approval. Here is a look at the companies targeted:

Hikvision

One of the world's largest suppliers of surveillance equipment, Hikvision is the poster child of Chinese tech firms benefiting from Xinjiang's booming security apparatus. In 2017, it won at least five security-related contracts totaling 1.85 billion yuan (\$260 million) in Xinjiang — including a “social prevention and control system” featuring tens of thousands of cameras.

But the company also has a global presence, with nearly 30 percent of its revenue last year coming from outside China. Hikvision has said the US listing lacks “factual basis”, and downplayed its impact in a conference call aimed at investors and media on Wednesday. “Currently, the majority of US components can all be directly replaced or replaced with new designs,” said board secretary Huang Fanghong. “If it's necessary, we will design our own chips.”

Rakhine rebels abduct 31 after storming bus

YANGON: Suspected ethnic Rakhine rebels disguised as a sports team stormed a bus in rural Myanmar and took 31 hostages — mostly off-duty firefighters and construction workers — authorities said yesterday. The state-backed Global New Light of Myanmar said the bus — travelling to the Rakhine state capital of Sittwe — was flagged down by a man dressed in civilian attire before 18 rebels in sportswear emerged from the forest and ordered the passengers off at gunpoint.

“We are still following them,” Colonel Win Zaw Oo told AFP, adding the insur-

Megvii

An AI company backed by e-commerce giant Alibaba, Megvii's facial recognition technology is used across a broad range of applications in China, from “smile to pay” mobile payments to identifying individuals for law enforcement. The firm plans to launch an initial public offering (IPO) in Hong Kong but one of its joint sponsors, Goldman Sachs, said it was “evaluating” its role in the wake of the blacklisting.

Megvii said the US move “reflects a misunderstanding of our company”. Only one percent of its 2018 revenue was from projects in Xinjiang, and no revenue was generated from the region in the first six months of 2019, it added.

SenseTime

SenseTime is backed by an illustrious list of investors, including SoftBank, Alibaba, and US chipmaker Qualcomm. Founded by MIT alumnus Tang Xiao'ou — a professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong — the AI company develops facial and image recognition applications, such as crowd monitoring and identity verification for lending apps.

The firm has a research lab in Silicon Valley and is partnering with universities around the world, including MIT, on AI research. In an emailed statement, MIT said it would “review all existing relationships” with organizations added to Washington's entity list, and “modify any interactions, as necessary”. SenseTime said it was “deeply disappointed” by the blacklisting and would “work closely with all relevant authorities to fully understand and resolve the situation”.

Dahua

Dahua Technology is another leading video surveillance equipment provider with an increasing footprint overseas and has projects in Brazil, Italy, and other countries. According to its 2018 financial report, about 36 percent of the Shenzhen-listed company's revenue came from abroad. In August, the US also formally banned Dahua and Hikvision, along with telecom giant Huawei and other firms, from obtaining government contracts. — AFP

gents may have mistaken the firemen for members of the armed forces. The Arakan Army, which is fighting for more autonomy for ethnic Rakhine Buddhists, could not immediately be reached for comment. Myanmar's army has deployed thousands of troops to the state to try to crush the rebels.

Rights groups say Myanmar's military has abducted civilians and tortured detainees, but the army points to targeted shootings, roadside bombings and kidnapping by insurgents. Rakhine state was also the site of a deadly crackdown that in August 2017 drove some 740,000 minority Rohingya Muslims into Bangladesh. A UN fact-finding mission warned in a report published last month that some 600,000 Rohingya remaining in Myanmar still face a “serious risk of genocide”. The area on the Bay of Bengal is highly militarized and difficult for independent media and rights monitors to access. — AFP

Analysis

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The ‘broken system’ starves oil boom of immigrant workers

New Mexico oil man Johnny Vega laid out his predicament as his crew hoisted pipes from a well during the biggest oil boom in US history. The son of a Mexican guestworker, Vega cannot find enough legal workers to meet demand for his oil well service rigs. There is no shortage of Hispanic and Latino immigrant workers without work permits he could hire in Lea County, New Mexico - the No 2 oil-producing county in the United States.

But Vega says he wants to play by the rules, not least because of a heightened risk of company audits by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) under President Donald Trump. As a result, he has equipment that could be generating \$700,000 a month standing idle in his yard. “They’re demanding more rigs, more swabbing units, but you don’t have enough employees,” said Vega, who runs Mico Services with around \$17 million in annual revenues.

“It’s a lack of a system to get legal workers, to have more of a workforce to pull from.” Employers like Vega in the Permian Basin oilfields of New Mexico and Texas say they feel caught between Trump’s support for their industry and his policies focused on tougher immigration enforcement. It’s a dilemma faced in other sectors of the US economy that depend on foreign workers after ICE reported surges of between 300% to 750% in worksite investigations, audits and arrests in fiscal year 2018.

Visas for temporary jobs in sectors like agriculture and hospitality have increased during the Trump administration. Oil companies complain of difficulties gaining work permits for immigrant oil workers, who do not qualify for these temporary visas. The Permian Basin, by far the most productive oil field in the United States, has helped make the country a net exporter of oil. Its output growth has recently slowed, but production is still at all time highs.

The number of rigs drilling for oil in New Mexico hit a record 115 in early October and labor shortages are felt most keenly in service companies like Vega’s that help keep the oil flowing. The Permian Basin is short 15,000 workers, with demand met by paying overtime and shipping workers in and out, according to data from the Permian Strategic Partnership alliance of 19 energy companies.

Dangerous jobs

Thousands of immigrants, mainly from neighboring Mexico, have thronged to the decade-long boom. They often fill the hardest and most dangerous jobs few Americans want, such as using heavy equipment to lift oil well tubing or lay pipeline. For Bob Reid, immigrants provide a solution to labor shortages and a chance for boom-bust oil towns like Hobbs, New Mexico to build a more stable future. “The problem is a broken system that’s preventing them from coming in legally in a way that allows them to pursue a path to citizenship,” said Reid, head of the JF Maddox Foundation, a Hobbs charity.

In Lea County, Hispanics and Latinos now account for as much as 70 percent of the population, compared with 40 percent 20 years ago, based on county school enrollment and other data. About two years ago, ICE stepped up operations in the Permian area, according to Lea County employers. “I know people, my peers, that have been hit by immigration audits, and they were told, specifically, that the Permian Basin was targeted because of the vast amount of workers that were coming here,” said Finn Smith, president of Hobbs-based Watson Hopper Inc.

ICE did not respond to requests for comment on its Permian operations. Two companies in Hobbs, the largest city in Lea County, were recently audited: Mesa Well Services and paving contractor Ramirez & Sons, according to a person with knowledge of the situation and a Ramirez & Sons official. Mesa Well officials were not available for comment. Ramirez & Sons Senior Superintendent David Gallegos said the company was paying around \$40,000 in legal fees to apply for work permits or US citizenship on behalf of five of the employees laid off after the audit.

“They’re worth fighting for,” said Gallegos, a Republican New Mexico state representative, of the “long term” employees who had bought homes in the area. ICE operations, and Trump’s threats of raids, have left many immigrants in Lea County fearful. Some bolt from job sites at rumors of ICE activity, said Maria Romano of New Mexico-based immigrant rights group Somos Un Pueblo Unido. More companies are using the government’s E-Verify immigration background checks to vet new hires, said Romano, whose organization helps immigrants get on a pathway to citizenship.

“It’s now getting very difficult here for anyone who isn’t documented,” said Juan, an unemployed pipeline worker who immigrated to the United States illegally 11 years ago. — Reuters

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Displaced Syrians sit in the back of a pick-up truck as Arab and Kurdish civilians flee amid Turkey's military assault on Kurdish-controlled areas in northeastern Syria in the Syrian border town of Tal Abyad. — AFP

As new exodus unfolds, Syrians fear they will ‘never go home’

Kurdish doctor Farid Mustafa was one of the last to flee Ras Al-Ain as Turkish bombs rained down on the Syrian border town. He fears he may never return home. He escaped on Thursday night with his wife and two small children as warplanes flew in the sky above a line of cars trying to get away from the border. A few people stayed behind to defend their homes.

“We were scared of the plane, not anything else,” he told Reuters. “Also my kids, I swear we’re not even worried about ourselves, but the kids. They were crying.” Some 100,000 people have fled their homes since Turkey mounted its offensive in northeast Syria on Wednesday, moving away from the border and deeper into the region - which the Kurdish YPG militia and its allies control. The exodus is the latest in Syria’s war that has already uprooted more than half of the population - some 11 million people - through years of multi-sided warfare which shattered the country.

Mustafa, with some 30 family members, is now staying at a relative’s house in the city of Hasaka, where many residents have opened up their homes. He fears his Kurdish ethnicity would make him a target if his town of Ras al-Ain falls to Turkish forces and their Syrian rebel allies, enemies of the YPG. “I’m not worried about my house, let it be destroyed,” he said. “But what if my town is gone, what will I do?” he said. Ankara brands the YPG a security threat because of links to the Kurdish PKK which has waged a long insurgency inside Turkey.

Turkey’s offensive, its third into northern Syria, kicked

off after a withdrawal from part of the border of US forces, whose presence had until then deterred such an attack. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which the YPG spearheads, decried the US move as betrayal after they fought alongside each other to crush Islamic State across much of Syria. Still, US forces have not all gone. Dozens of Syrians fled towards one of the US bases outside the mainly Kurdish town of Kobani after it was shelled, some taking their cattle with them, a witness and a local official said.

Kobani was the birthplace of the US-YPG military alliance some five years ago, when Washington intervened with air strikes to help Kurdish fighters turn the tide against Islamic State. Kurdish leaders see their region as a relatively stable part of Syria that has enjoyed autonomy for years, shielded from Turkey and the Damascus government by the presence of US forces. Having lost fighters in the war against Islamic State and played a critical role in helping to defeat the jihadists, long-persecuted Syrian Kurds had hoped to shore up their autonomy within a reformed Syrian state.

That now looks in jeopardy. The Turkish offensive deals yet another blow to an ethnic group left stateless when the Ottoman Empire collapsed a century ago and the Kurds were scattered between Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan says he wants to settle up to two million Syrian refugees, many of them of them Sunni Arabs, into the region targeted in the operation dubbed “Peace Spring”.

Sleeping in the streets

The road to Hasaka was choked by traffic earlier this week as people fled Ras al-Ain. The city is now crammed with people, and authorities do not have enough water tankers, food, or shelter for the influx, said Khaled Ibrahim, a Kurdish official who oversees aid efforts in the northeast. “I saw people who could not make it to Hasaka sleeping in the streets, on the pavement, in the public gardens,” Ibrahim said. The ethnically mixed northeast region is home to some 1.5-2 million people, many of them uprooted from other parts of Syria.

Semira Haj Ali, the head of the education board in the region, said teaching had stopped so that schools could provide shelter. “We opened schools in Hasaka, and even wedding halls, anywhere there’s room, to shelter the displaced families. We are expecting more to come.” Most of the people fleeing so far have come from the border towns of Tel Abyad and Ras al-Ain, the current focal point of the Turkish assault. But people have been on the move elsewhere too. Hemrin Mahmoud and her sister, both pregnant, fled their homes right on the border in Qamishli to safer parts of the city, along with their six children. “Naturally, our husbands stayed in their homes to take up arms. What else are we going to do?” “There was the sound of bullets, my children were afraid, crying, I got them out of the house,” said Mahmoud, 35. They are sheltering at the home of another sister. Walid Mamo, their brother-in-law, said he had stocked up on supplies. “I bought 3,000 lira worth of bread today - 100 loaves. I’ve put them in the freezer,” he said. — Reuters

Security cooperation: Broadening alliances

By Fawaz M Al-Sabah and Rolf Schwarz

In June 2004, at its Istanbul summit, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) launched a special partnership with the Gulf region, called the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). The initiative was part of a broader effort, initiated since the end of the Cold War, to develop partnerships with non-NATO countries. Most importantly, these partnerships aimed to boost partners’ own defense capacities and their military interoperability with NATO, thereby helping the alliance project stability in its immediate and wider neighborhood.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks and in the wake of growing regional fears over Iran’s nuclear program, NATO sought to extend its partnership to the Gulf region with the aim of cooperating in the fight against terrorism and preventing possible nuclear proliferation.

The alliance was in a good position to do so: not only had it successfully transformed itself from a Cold War organization to one dealing with a new set of security challenges for the Euro-Atlantic region - the terrorist threat chief among them - it had also garnered experience in working with the Arab world, having conducted 10 years of Mediterranean Dialogue with Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia.

Senior officials from four Gulf countries showed an interest in cooperation, but the follow-up work was more difficult - especially since few Gulf states had diplomatic representation in Belgium, where NATO is headquartered. Bahrain, for instance, initially had to instruct its ambassador in Paris to follow NATO affairs, and when this approach became too cumbersome, it acted through the head of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) delegation to the European Union in Brussels, a Bahraini diplomat.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) became the first Gulf country to open a liaison arrangement in 2008, sending a senior military person to Brussels, and, in 2012, it opened a distinct diplomatic mission to NATO. Other Gulf states (Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar) have since followed suit. Today, four regional states have joined the ICI, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. Oman and Saudi Arabia, although invited, still remain formally outside.

Nonetheless, they do participate in some ICI activities, such as training courses offered at the NATO Defense College in Rome. The other four Gulf countries have fully embraced the initiative, which offers them practical bilateral security cooperation with NATO.

Most importantly, these states are working with the alliance to achieve interoperability and are seeking to strengthen their own defense capacities and capabilities. To this end, officers from ICI countries are allowed to participate in the Operational Capabilities Concept Evaluation and Feedback program (OCC E&F), which supports them in developing forces that are capable of operating according to NATO standards and procedures.

ICI countries also engage in programs to modernize their security institutions and train their local forces.³ In the future, NATO could invite officers from ICI countries to serve in the International Military Staff. In sum, these efforts aim to increase the Gulf countries’ abilities to



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tackle their regional security challenges - both alone and jointly with NATO.

In the beginning, much of NATO-Gulf cooperation took the form of public diplomacy.

For NATO, it was vital to initiate a process of building mutual understanding of common security threats with the Gulf countries, integrating their militaries but also government officials, opinion leaders, academics, media and civil society representatives. As part of public diplomacy, ICI partners also conducted a series of ambassadorial conferences in the Gulf region. In this context, the North Atlantic Council visited Kuwait in 2006, Bahrain in 2008, the United Arab Emirates in 2009, and Qatar in 2010. In 2009, a Middle East Faculty was established at the NATO Defense College in Rome. A particularly innovative format of cooperation between NATO and the Gulf states within the framework of the ICI was launched in 2009 when a dedicated Middle East Faculty was established at the NATO Defense College in Rome.

In the framework of its Regional Cooperation Course, the faculty offers courses to officers and diplomats from NATO member countries and from the wider Middle East alike, covering security issues that affect both regional states and NATO countries in order to develop a shared understanding that may serve as the basis for concrete security cooperation.

The college also helps NATO to develop in-house expertise on Middle Eastern affairs. Even though they are not members of the ICI, the Gulf states Oman and Saudi Arabia are active participants in these courses.⁶ Most recently, a Kuwaiti officer became the first faculty member from an ICI country to join the teaching staff, which validates regional ownership of this initiative.

In January 2017, this educational outreach was further strengthened when a NATO-ICI Regional Centre was inaugurated in Kuwait. In the context of the inauguration, the North Atlantic Council conducted a meeting with the foreign ministers of ICI countries; this meeting was also attended by Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the secretary general of the GCC.

Just as in Rome, Oman and Saudi Arabia are automatically invited to courses offered at the NATO-ICI Centre and regularly participate in them. The initial hope that collaboration in the framework of the ICI would eventually lead to and facilitate practical cooperation between

NATO and the Gulf countries was, in fact, borne out: ICI countries have increasingly acted as security providers, actively contributing to NATO’s efforts to project stability in the broader Middle East. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan is a case in point: in 2003, ISAF became NATO’s first ground mission outside of Europe; and from early on, it not only involved Afghan authorities but also around 50 non-NATO countries. Gulf countries were chief among them: military cooperation was channeled and facilitated by the ICI, with Gulf countries providing ISAF with essential political and logistical support.

Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates became troop-contributing nations, Kuwait and Qatar provided transport assistance, and all the ICI partners helped provide legitimacy for NATO’s engagement within the wider region. More precisely, Muslim countries’ participation in NATO’s operation helped overcome the prevalent perception that the alliance’s primary target was Islam rather than terrorist extremists. In this context, partnerships with Muslim countries helped boost the acceptance of NATO-led stabilization efforts among local populations.

Qatar and the United Arab Emirates also contributed to another NATO-led operation, namely Operation Unified Protector (OUP) in Libya, launched in 2011, by providing personnel and military aircraft.¹⁰ Thus it is safe to say, as several Gulf officials did during the opening of the NATO-ICI Regional Centre in Kuwait in 2017, that the ICI has actively contributed to global peace and security. Combining public diplomacy, political dialogue, education, and training with practical cooperation, as pursued first in Afghanistan and later in Libya, has helped build a relevant partnership between NATO countries and individual Gulf states - a partnership that has proven its worth on a variety of fronts, most notably in counter-terrorism efforts, as well as in the ambition to work towards greater stability in the broader Middle East.

Yet, further efforts are required. Most importantly, NATO needs to stay active in matters of importance to the countries of the region. In its 2010 Strategic Concept, NATO committed to develop a deeper security partnership with our Gulf partners. Naturally, this also requires NATO to address the concerns of the sub-set of NATO members who prefer to focus on the alliance’s Eastern rather than its Southern flank. Recently, the targeting of oil tankers in the Gulf region, is another opportunity for NATO to play an active role by deploying or leading efforts to secure vital energy supply lines.

As the region will continue to strongly impact Euro-Atlantic security, partnerships with Gulf states and other regional countries will remain of utmost importance. NATO has created innovative tools for managing its relationship with the region. Of these, the country-tailored approach to cooperation that allows partner countries to pick from “a menu” of bilateral activities” has proven particularly helpful.

It has allowed NATO cooperation to meet its partners’ national needs while still contributing to regional security at large. The alliance’s educational outreach to the wider Middle East through its Regional Cooperation Course is another tool of success. It could well serve as a blueprint for engaging other regions of strategic importance. Asia is a case in point, where education on security issues of common concern could help promote greater cooperation with NATO. The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Kuwait National Security Bureau or the State of Kuwait, of the OECD or their Member countries.

Business

MONDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2019

12 Kuwait sees biggest gain in competitiveness scores in GCC



13 Aramco IPO proceeds could help spur non-oil growth



14 Boubyan Bank concludes its induction program



Al-Mudhaf with Al-Khashti, Arnaout and Haddad during the project launch ceremony.

Zain forms strategic partnership with Microsoft and EBLA to serve KCB

Partnership to enable disaster recovery backup system outside Kuwait

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, formed a strategic partnership with Kuwait Credit Bank (KCB), EBLA Computer Consultancy, and Microsoft Kuwait, to enable the disaster recovery backup system project outside Kuwait using Microsoft's cloud services, enabling KCB to retrieve its vital data from the cloud during unexpected emergencies.

The project launch ceremony witnessed the attendance of Kuwait Credit Bank's Vice Chairman and Managing Director Salah Al-Mudhaf, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti, EBLA Computer Consultancy's Chief Executive Officer Hilal Arnaout, and Microsoft Kuwait's Government Sector Manager Ali Haddad. The ceremony also witnessed the presence of KCB's Information Systems team, as well as Business and Government Relations teams from the partners.

Kuwait Credit Bank's Vice Chairman and Managing Director Salah Al-Mudhaf expressed his pleasure on the occasion of launching KCB's Disaster Recovery Backup Site project in collaboration with Microsoft and Dell EMC.

In a press statement following the project launch ceremony, Al-Mudhaf commented: "the finalization of the Disaster Recovery Backup Site project marks our second disaster and emergency site, as the first site was built in Kuwait a year ago, and is fully equipped to exactly match the main site, working in parallel with it around the clock and all year-round".

Al-Mudhaf explained: "the second disaster recovery backup site exclusively saves a backup of our data on Microsoft's cloud (outside Kuwait), making KCB one of the first entities in Kuwait to have a disaster and emergency backup site on the cloud. This also makes KCB the first institution in the State of Kuwait to use Microsoft's Avamar Backup Cloud Technology in collaboration with Dell EMC".

Al-Mudhaf stressed that the new project will ensure the continuation of KCB's offering of its services to the citizens of Kuwait with the same high efficiency in all circumstances and situations. The project will allow KCB to face any attempts to sabotage its equipment, systems, and networks,

while maintaining the safety and security of all its data.

At the same time, Al-Mudhaf pointed out that the project comes as part of KCB's efforts to keep up with the latest technological advancements: "the bank's executive management is keen on implementing saving policies by migrating all staff's emails to Microsoft's Office 365 service on the cloud, which alone saves nearly KD 20,000 annually for every 500 users".

Al-Mudhaf explained that the new feat is added to KCB's long list of achievements, as well as to the successes of the Information Systems team, whom along the years held the responsibility of transforming the bank's transactions from paper to digital. The team also succeeded in preparing and defending the bank's data networks against cyberattacks, an achievement that received great praise from various related entities.

Al-Mudhaf thanked the bank's Information Systems Center for its great and continuous efforts, as well as the Council of Ministers' Central Agency for Information Technology for their support to finalize the disasters and emergency site project.

During the ceremony, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti commented: "today we are proud of announcing yet another strategic partnership that brings Zain together with a leading governmental entity: the Kuwait Credit Bank, as we con-

tinue to expand our strategic partnerships ecosystem with the Kuwaiti public sector".

Al-Khashti added: "we are also pleased to enrich our ongoing partnership with the world's biggest tech leaders at Microsoft, and our colleagues at EBLA Computer Consultancy, with the joint aim of bringing forward the latest tech advancements to Kuwait's enterprise community, both in the public and private sectors".

Al-Khashti explained: "today, Zain and KCB's visions come together to achieve the goals of the Kuwait National Development Plan (New Kuwait 2035) that stems from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's conceptualized vision of a new Kuwait by 2035. Our presence today reflects the joint success of the collaboration between the public and private sectors in achieving the country's developmental goals".

Al-Khashti continued: "Zain's role in this partnership is to offer a high-speed and secure express route to enable KCB's disaster recovery backup system outside Kuwait using Microsoft's cloud services. This service, which Zain offers exclusively in Kuwait, allows KCB to be prepared for any unexpected emergencies by swiftly and securely retrieving its data from the cloud".

Al-Khashti concluded: "Zain's promise will always be to present the best and latest services and solutions to serve the further progress of the enterprise ecosystem in partnership with the country's various insti-



Al-Khashti speaking during the ceremony.

tutions. This stems from our goal to enrich our leadership position as the biggest digital service provider in Kuwait".

EBLA Computer Consultancy's Chief Executive Officer Hilal Arnaout commented: "data is the cornerstone of any organization, and preserving it is a great responsibility that lies upon the Information Systems team. Our gathering today is a success story for KCB, and it came to light because of the collaborative efforts of Kuwait's biggest technology leaders: EBLA, Zain, Al-Diyar Al-Mutahada, and Microsoft Kuwait".

Arnaout added: "EBLA Computer Consultancy enjoys a strategic relationship with Kuwaiti government entities, and we also enjoy a relationship of collaboration and trust with Kuwait Credit Bank. We stress our commitment to support the bank's digital transformation journey in all areas".

Microsoft Kuwait's Government Sector Manager Ali Haddad said: "Microsoft's vision comes together with that of Kuwait Credit Bank, and we are proud of this collaboration that contributes to accelerating KCB's digital transformation by relying on Microsoft Azure's cloud in three key areas: business integration, artificial intelligence,

and developing staff skills".

Haddad continued: "KCB sets the best example in how adopting technology and advanced tools pushes the change, empowerment, enhancement, and transformation wheels. We know how digital transformation contributes in empowering organizations to redesign their tech potential, and how it takes them to new levels. Today Microsoft is proud to support KCB in their digital transformation journey, and we stress our support to the government of Kuwait".

Haddad concluded: "Microsoft values the partnership with the government of Kuwait, represented by the Central Agency for Information Technology, who enabled us to offer other government entities with digital transformation tools, especially Kuwait Credit Bank". Zain is extremely keen on supporting the various developmental projects and initiatives in the country, as such partnerships showcase the collaborative spirit between the public and private sectors. The company is also keen on contributing to the further progress of national economy, reflecting its leadership position as a leading national company in the Kuwaiti private sector.

- **Al-Mudhaf:** KCB one of first entities with emergency backup system on the cloud; project ensures continuation of offering services to citizens with same high efficiency in all circumstances.
- **Al-Khashti:** Zain offers exclusive high-speed and secure express route; company keen on further pushing digital transformation wheel in Kuwait.
- **Arnaout:** EBLA enjoys strategic relationship with Kuwaiti government entities; we stress our support to KCB's digital transformation journey.
- **Haddad:** Microsoft's vision meets KCB's, proud of this collaboration to contribute in pushing digital transformation wheel.

Kuwait sees biggest gain in competitiveness scores in GCC

Gulf countries see overall gain in competitiveness scores in 2019

KUWAIT: Kuwait ranked 46th in the latest competitiveness index rankings climbing eight positions from the previous report, the biggest jump in the GCC. Kuwait ranked first in terms of macroeconomic stability along with Saudi Arabia and UAE. Kuwait was also leading in the GCC on the Health pillar with a global rank of 12th a significant gain as compared to the previous year when the country ranked 38th. The ICT Adoption pillar for Kuwait also witnessed a significant improvement with a 2019 rank of 37th as compared to 62nd in 2018.

On the other hand, Kuwait lacked in terms of Innovation Capability with the corresponding rank of 108, the lowest in the GCC and down 5 positions as compared to 103 in 2018. Kuwait's rank also deteriorated in terms of the Institutions and Infrastructure pillars. On the Institutions pillar, the country ranked 65th as compared to 57 in 2018, a y-o-y drop of 8 positions, whereas for the Infrastructure pillar, Kuwait ranked 66th as compared to 61st in 2018. The latest Global Competitiveness Report for 2019 showed significant changes in the ranking of the top ten economies, although as a group, there was no change in the list of countries. Singapore gained one spot and ranked first globally while last year's top ranker, the US, ranked second. Hong Kong gained four spots this year and ranked third this year while Germany slipped from the third spot last year to the seventh this year, the biggest drop in ranking in the top ten countries. In terms of regional split, the 17 countries in East APAC achieved the highest median score of 73.9 followed by the Europe & North America region which included 39 countries with a score of 70.9.

GCC sees an overall improvement

The GCC countries were largely better-off as compared to last year with average score increasing from 67 last year to 69 in 2019, according to our calculations. From amongst the 12 pillars, the GCC had the highest score for the Macroeconomic Stability pillar, given the solid economic position for a majority of the GCC countries.

UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait represented the frontier on this pillar with a score of 100 closely followed by Qatar at 99. On the other hand, Bahrain and Oman were far from the frontier with scores of 68 and 67. Nevertheless, out of the 12 pillars, the macroeconomic pillar was the only one to see a decline as compared to the previous year while all the other pillars saw improvement in average scores.

The average score for the GCC Health pillar was 85, better than the overall average for the MENA region at 81. The pillar saw improvement as compared to previous year average of 83. In terms of areas of improvement, the GCC region had a poor score for the Innovation Capability pillar at 44, although the average score for this pillar improved as compared to 2018 score of 41.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia climbed 3 positions in 2019, and had global rank of 36 in 2019 as compared to 39 in 2018. Saudi Arabia was the only country in the GCC which saw no adverse change in its ranking as compared to the 2018 ranks. The Kingdom improved ranks on 10 out of 12 pillars while its rank for the Macroeconomic Stability and Market Size pillars remained unchanged as compared to 2018 at 1st position and 17th position, respectively. The Kingdom saw the biggest improvement on the ICT Adoption pillar with the corresponding rank of 38th as compared to 54th position in 2018, an improvement of 16 spots. The rank on the Product Market and Labor Market pillars also improved by 13 positions each to reach 19th and 89th positions in 2019, respectively. The Kingdom's rank was the lowest for the Business Dynamism pillar at 109th position. However, this pillar also witnessed an improvement in ranking by 5 spots as compared to 2018 with the corresponding score improving from 51 in 2018 to 53 in 2019.

UAE

UAE continued to remain at the top with the best rank in the GCC

in 2019. The country climbed two positions in 2019 to reach a rank of 25th backed by a higher score of 75 in 2019 as compared to 73 in 2018. The country saw the biggest improvement on the Skills pillar gaining 14 positions to rank 39th in 2019 as compared to a rank of 53rd in 2018. The pillar's rank improved on the back of higher scores for ease of finding skilled employees and critical thinking in teaching. The rank on the Labor Market pillar improved by 8 positions to reach 34th rank.

According to the sub scores in the report, ranking on this pillar could be further improved by striking a better balance between flexibility that had a higher score and workers' rights and women's participation with the two having much lower scores. On the other hand, the UAE's rank deteriorated on the Health pillar by 13 positions to reach 92nd in 2019. Also, in terms of Market Size, the country's rank declined by 4 positions to reach 32nd in 2019.

Qatar

Qatar gained one spot this year to reach a rank of 29th, the second-best in the GCC after UAE. The improvement in the country's rank came primarily on the back of higher ranks for the Product Market, Financial System and Labor Market pillars. Qatar ranked the second-best in the GCC in terms of ICT adoption with a rank of 8th gaining one position on this pillar. The country saw biggest gains in terms of Product Market and Financial System pillars each gaining 12 positions. On the Product Market pillar, Qatar ranked 13th in 2019 as compared to 25th in 2018.

The improvement in rank on this pillar was supported by higher scores in terms of domestic competition. On the Financial System pillar, the country ranked 22nd in 2019 as compared to 34th in 2018. The rank improved on the back of higher scores for domestic credit to private sector, financing to SMEs and venture capital availability. On the other hand, Qatar's rank receded on the Institutions pillar by 4 positions to rank 35th in 2019.

Bahrain

Bahrain saw the second-best gain in rankings in the GCC with its rank improving by five positions to reach 45th in 2019 in addition to increasing its score from 64 in 2018 to 65 in 2019. Bahrain benefitted from a 30 position jump on the Health pillar with its current ranking at 44th as compared to 74th in 2018. Further support came from Labor Market and Product Market pillars with the respective ranks improving by 13 positions and 10 positions to reach 33rd and 18th, respectively.

The Innovation Capability and Business Dynamism pillars for Bahrain also scaled up on the ranking chart by 7 positions and 6 positions, respectively. On the other hand, the country was adversely affected by a 24 spot slide in its rank on the Skills pillar where it ranked 52nd in 2019. On the ICT Adoption pillar, Bahrain was the only country in the GCC for which the score remained flat resulting in an 8 position drop in its rank that reached 46th globally.

Oman

Oman was the only country in the GCC that saw its rank go down in the latest Global Competitiveness Index rankings. The Sultanate was ranked at 47th last year which slid 6 positions this year to reach 53rd. The country's average score also declined by one to reach 64 in 2019. The biggest impact for Oman came from the Macroeconomic Stability pillar with its rank slipping 61 positions in 2019 to reach 119th as compared to 58th last year. The country continues to face economic pressure due to the decline in oil prices, and was recently downgraded by Moody's to a non-investment grade rating of Ba1 from Baa3. This follows a late last year downgrade by Fitch led by fiscal challenges faced by the country. The Sultanate's rank receded on 9 out of the 12 pillars during 2019 with only the Innovation Capability pillar showing a significant improvement of 29 ranks to reach the 57th position.

Indian property slump leaves beleaguered banks exposed

MUMBAI: India might have thought the worst of a bad loans crisis was past, but a severe cash crunch in the real estate industry could augur fresh strife for its banks. A slump in the residential property market is leaving many builders struggling to repay loans to shadow lenders - housing finance firms outside the regular banking sector that account for over half of the loans to developers.

With about \$10 billion of development loans coming up for repayment in the first half of 2020, according to Fitch Rating's Indian division, the fallout could spread to mainstream banks that have lent money to the shadow lenders or invested in their bonds. Indian financial authorities, including the central bank and government, have said this year that the banking sector's bad loans - totalling more than \$150 billion - are on the decline for the first time in four years after ballooning during a debt crisis.

But the number of property developers falling into bankruptcy has doubled during the past nine months, piling pressure on non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), commonly known as shadow lenders. Potential implosions of these NBFCs could expose banks, according to 12 banking and real estate sources.

A senior banking industry official, declining to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter, said banks would be affected by the property cash crunch in three ways: their lending to NBFCs, their own direct exposure to developers and also individuals who do not repay mortgages. "It will be a triple-whammy," he said.

While the Indian banking system could be hit by billions of dollars of additional soured debt, the cash crunch in the housing market has levied a toll in human misery. Retired Squadron Leader Krishan Mitroo

has paid 90 percent of the cost of his house in Noida, northern India, to developer Jaypee, and the property was supposed to be handed over five years ago. However, Jaypee was forced to delay the project and went into insolvency in 2017.

"The project has been stuck and there is no progress at all. Even the bankruptcy court has not been able to resolve the issue so far, it is just hanging in thin air," Mitroo said. He did not say how much money he had paid, but properties in that project range from about \$56,000 to \$140,000.

Several such projects are stuck across the country and buyers are waiting for new developers to take interest and complete them with the hope that their hard-earned money, which has been stuck for years, won't be lost forever.

Bad loans pile huge

The property sector has been battling a downturn for the last 3-4 years. Things have now, however, hit a critical point due to a liquidity crunch hitting shadow banks that are big lenders to both developers and property buyers. As of June 30, 421 realtors were under the corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP), up from 209 on Sept. 30 last year, data from the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India shows.

Defaults by two housing finance companies, Dewan Housing Finance Corp and Altico Capital, have increased fears of contagion to the banking system. Dewan and Altico did not respond to requests for comment. Shadow lenders will be highly exposed when loans worth roughly 700 billion rupees come up for repayment in the first half of 2020, as many builders may struggle to repay, Fitch's India Ratings said last month.

"The number of stressed assets in real estate are huge," said Rohit Poddar, managing director at Poddar Developers. "The stress now is just the start, only the mid-sized to large developers will survive, others will die." If three-quarters of the high-risk category of outstanding real estate loans is not repaid, that could lead to additional bad debt of \$15 billion on banks' books in the next few years, according to confidential research conducted by one of India's leading real estate consultancies for

an international financial client, and provided to Reuters.

The Nifty Bank index, which surged in late September after the government moved to slash corporate tax rates, gave up more than half those gains as of Friday. Concerns about real estate loans were one factor, according to analysts, but the fall was also driven by low growth in the economy and the overall worsening asset quality of certain lenders.

Banks' gross non-performing assets fell to 9.3 percent of total loans as of March, from 11.5 percent a year earlier, according to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The improvement was bigger than the RBI had expected, having forecast a drop to 10.3 percent by March and saying last December the ratio had fallen for the first time since 2015. The central bank said in June it expected bad loans to continue to fall in the current financial year, both the ratio and absolute sum.

But India still has the highest bad-loan ratio among major economies: by comparison Italy, which has endured a major banking crisis, had a ratio of 9 percent at the end of last year. Yes Bank and IndusInd Bank have the largest direct exposure to the commercial real estate sector and would be susceptible to "asset-quality difficulties" if the real estate sector continues to slow, according to a Moody's report in mid-September, which also said other banks such as ICICI Bank and Axis Bank are likely to feel the pinch. The four banks did not respond to requests for comment on potential difficulties arising from the real-estate exposure covered in the Moody's report.

The chief financial officer of a large public-sector bank said the problems emerging in real estate loan repayments were a major cause of worry. It is unclear what individual banks will do to address the problem. State-owned banks, which dominate the sector, have already received tens of billions of dollars from the government in recent years to shore up their finances.

International banks have a very small presence in the Indian market.

Job losses loom

Indian banks' bad debt pile ballooned as a result of out-of-control lending in 2006-



NEW DELHI: Apartments outside of New Delhi. A slump in the residential property market is leaving many builders struggling to repay loans to shadow lenders. —AFP

11 when the economy grew rapidly, and beyond that. They under-reported their bad loans for years until they were forced by the central bank to recognize and address the issue in 2015.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das touched on the real estate issue this month, saying the central bank would be looking at the sector as part of its six-monthly report on the stability of the financial system. The next report is due to be released in December. The RBI declined to make any further comment on banks' exposure to bad real estate loans.

A rebound in the real estate market could alter the situation, but the outlook is looking increasingly bleak. Several industry sources said builders were struggling to offload properties, even though they are ready to offer buyers up to 25 percent discounts on listed rates. The situation now is so severe that real estate inventories across India are at an all-time high of nearly four years and property prices have not risen in most parts of the country in the last 4-5 years.

Projects worth 1.8 trillion rupees (\$25 billion) are stalled across India, according to property consultancy firm Anarock. As developers go to the wall, more than half a million direct jobs may be lost in the coming months, the National Real Estate

Development Council said. The number of indirect job losses from related industries like cement and steel may be even higher.

Slowing sales are piling on the pain, with buyers staying away because they increasingly can't afford properties. The house price-to-income ratio, which measures the cost of housing versus the change in income levels, rose from 56.1 in March 2015 to 61.5 in March 2019, indicating home purchases have become less affordable.

While consumers are staying away, investors are also wary of residential purchases due to low rental yields and meager-to-negative capital appreciation. "Sluggishness in sales is further raising concerns of the borrowers defaulting on the interest and EMI payments," said Parth Mehta, Managing Director, Paradigm Realty. As the sector gets stressed further, repayments to lenders are likely to get further hit and banks will be increasingly unwilling to lend to property financiers and developers.

Pankaj Kapoor, chief executive of real estate consultancy firm Liases Foras, described the cash crunch in the sector as a "bloodbath" that would deteriorate further.

"This situation is likely to continue for another two years, which means builders may have to offer more discounts." —Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.	
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	304.550
Euro	339.880
Sterling Pound	388.760
Canadian dollar	232.570
Turkish lira	53.430
Swiss Franc	308.870
US Dollar Buying	297.150
ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.810
Indian Rupees	4.298
Pakistani Rupees	1.959
Srilankan Rupees	1.681
Nepali Rupees	2.678
Singapore Dollar	223.850
Hongkong Dollar	38.836
Bangladesh Taka	3.592
Philippine Peso	5.913
Thai Baht	10.046
Malaysian ringgit	77.890
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.268
Qatari Riyal	83.702
Omani Riyal	791.553
Bahraini Dinar	809.220
UAE Dirham	82.972
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	20.900

Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.702
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.223
Tunisian Dinar	111.150
Jordanian Dinar	430.000
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	31.923

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.740
Canadian Dollar	230.725
Sterling Pound	375.885
Euro	333.495
Swiss Frank	307.075
Bahraini Dinar	810.415
UAE Dirhams	83.370
Qatari Riyals	84.610
Saudi Riyals	82.160
Jordanian Dinar	431.105
Egyptian Pound	18.729
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.672
Indian Rupees	4.308
Pakistani Rupees	1.949
Bangladesh Taka	3.609
Philippines Peso	5.872
Cyprus pound	18.130
Japanese Yen	3.815
Syrian Pound	1.595
Nepalese Rupees	2.697
Malaysian Ringgit	73.635

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	43.065
Thai Bhat	10.935
Turkish Lira	54.365
Singapore dollars	220.536

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.378630	0.392530
Czech Korune	0.005040	0.014340
Danish Krone	0.041009	0.046009
Euro	0.329362	0.343062
Georgian Lari	0.121540	0.121540
Hungarian 0.001148	0.001338	
Norwegian Krone	0.029580	0.034780
Romanian Leu	0.065272	0.082122
Russian ruble	0.004766	0.004766
Slovakia	0.009106	0.019106
Swedish Krona	0.027055	0.032055
Swiss Franc	0.299530	0.310530
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.198922	0.210922
New Zealand Dollar	0.187249	0.196749
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.225626	0.234626
US Dollars	0.300450	0.305750
US Dollars Mint	0.300950	0.305750
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.002963	0.003764

Chinese Yuan	0.041661	0.045161
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036955	0.039705
Indian Rupee	0.003685	0.004457
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002738	0.002918
Korean Won	0.000247	0.000262
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069129	0.075129
Nepalese Rupee	0.002626	0.002966
Pakistan Rupee	0.001349	0.002119
Philippine Peso	0.005695	0.005995
Singapore Dollar	0.216837	0.226837
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001319	0.001899
Taiwan	0.009702	0.009882
Thai Baht	0.009665	0.010215
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.801671	0.809733
Egyptian Pound	0.018646	0.021387
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000014	0.000274
Jordanian Dinar	0.424644	0.433644
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Lira	0.000157	0.000257
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021208	0.045208
Omani Riyal	0.785908	0.793812
Qatar Riyal	0.082996	0.083830
Saudi Riyal	0.080127	0.081427
Syrian Pound	0.001291	0.001511
Tunisian Dinar	0.103036	0.110306
Turkish Lira	0.045118	0.054963
UAE Dirhams	0.082285	0.083113
Yemeni Riyal	0.000990	0.001070

Business

Aramco's IPO conundrum

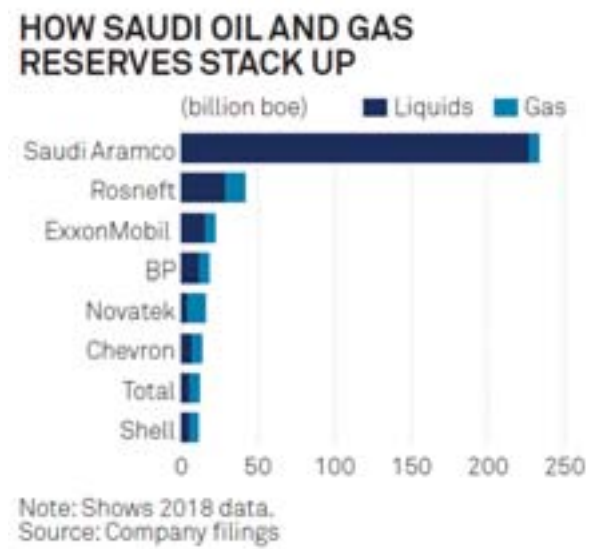
IPO proceeds could help spur non-oil growth as part of 'Vision 2030'

By Dania El Saadi,

KUWAIT: Saudi Aramco, the world's most profitable company and biggest oil producer, is set to go public sometime in 2020 or 2021 in what is billed as the world's largest initial public offering. Despite delays and devastating attacks on two of its key oil sites on September 14, the IPO remains the centerpiece of Saudi Arabia's economic transformation and could raise some \$100 billion to help usher in a new economy less dependent on oil.

With an oil production capacity of about 12 million b/d and posting a profit of \$46.9 billion in the first half of 2019, Aramco is betting institutional investors will rush to buy the 5 percent stake set to be sold by the Saudi government.

Postponed last year for Aramco to absorb petrochemical group SABIC, the timing of the giant IPO remains unclear and hinges on market conditions, the oil price, and return to full production after the attacks, analysts believe.



Aramco has vowed to restore its 12 million b/d of production capacity by the end of November but, at the time of writing, market watchers were mixed on whether the IPO will be pushed back again to let the dust settle on the Abqaiq and Khurais plant attacks.

"2020 is possible, but because of the projected size of

this IPO the banks would need advance notice that it is coming down the pipeline so they can set aside resources," said Ellen Wald, president of Transversal Consulting and author of "Saudi, Inc." a history of the Saudi oil industry. "Of course, the price of oil and the general strength of the equities market also play into timing," she said.

More recently, signs are that Riyadh is moving move aggressively to bring the IPO to fruition.

Aramco's chairman and energy minister, Khalid Al-Falih, was removed from his two posts in September. Yasir Al-Rumayyan, the head of Saudi Arabia's \$320 billion sovereign wealth fund, was appointed Aramco chairman, while Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, the king's son and an oil veteran with over 30 years' experience in the industry, was named energy minister. With Rumayyan dropped into Aramco's board in 2016 when the IPO was announced and the wealth fund tasked with investing the expected bounty from the listing, most observers see the separation of duties as designed to accelerate progress on the Aramco

listing in London or New York.

For that reason, Aramco's IPO is being closely watched by other NOCs as the region's first national oil company to open itself to greater market scrutiny. While the UAE's Abu Dhabi National Oil Company was the first NOC to list a unit in 2017, the company's CEO Sultan al-Jaber has ruled out an IPO for the parent company. ADNOC Distribution was listed on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange and ADNOC has indicated it may list more units in the future.

"There is going to be huge interest in an Aramco IPO even if it is only because of the size and the novelty," said Wald. Indeed, in addition to the integration of SABIC's major petrochemical reach, Aramco is looking to grow its downstream and trading operations at a breakneck pace.

Market grooming

Aramco has already taken a series of steps to groom itself for the IPO. In March, it published earnings figures for the first time. The figures showed it to be the world's

most profitable company, with a net income of \$11 billion in 2018, eclipsing giants such as Google, ExxonMobil, and Amazon. It issued a bond prospectus in April this year for its debut \$12 billion international bond sale, including nuggets of data about its various operations from refineries to pipelines.

This year, Aramco also published the first independent audit of its huge oil and gas reserves. The audit showed Aramco's proved oil reserves at the end of 2017 were 263.1 billion barrels, or 2.2 billion barrels higher than previous estimates. Gas reserves stood at 319.5 trillion standard cubic feet, up from 302.3 trillion standard cubic feet in previous estimates.

But the biggest revelation was in August, when the company held its first ever earnings call with analysts and published its first-half earnings, which showed an 11.5 percent drop in net profit from the year-ago period to \$46.9 billion. Despite the fall, Aramco held on to its rank as the world's most profitable company. Aramco may still need to do more in terms of disclosure to justify a \$2 trillion valuation, but its giant near-term earnings potential, deep asset base and the integration of SABIC could be enough to win over most skeptics.

—Dania El Saadi is Assistant Middle East Editor, S&P Global Platts

SAUDI ARAMCO BY THE NUMBERS



A leadership shakeup and drone attacks focus minds on the long-delayed, era-defining listing of the world's biggest oil producer.

IPO.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has valued Aramco at up to \$2 trillion, making the IPO value around \$100 billion. But most analysts see a valuation of up to \$1.5 trillion as more realistic and are keen for more information to assess its market value. "Greater disclosure will always help," Bernstein Research senior analyst Neil Beveridge said. "A clear and stable dividend policy will be important to attract investors."

Key buyers are expected to be sovereign wealth funds and institutional investors both of which need to meet public or internal disclosure demands.

Regional model

Proceeds of Aramco's IPO will be injected back into the economy, particularly the country's sovereign wealth fund, to help spur non-oil growth as part of the Vision 2030, which seeks to wean the kingdom off oil income. The kingdom is seeking both a domestic and international listing but the jury is still out on whether it will secure a coveted

most profitable company, with a net income of \$11 billion in 2018, eclipsing giants such as Google, ExxonMobil, and Amazon. It issued a bond prospectus in April this year for its debut \$12 billion international bond sale, including nuggets of data about its various operations from refineries to pipelines.

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Al-Danah millionaire will take home the grand prize of KD 1 million

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced October 31 as the last day for customers to open, or deposit into, an Al-Danah account and be eligible for the annual draw. This year's annual Al-Danah draw will take place on January 16, 2020 and will culminate in the announcement of the 2019 Al-Danah millionaire, who will receive the grand prize of KD 1 million in one full payment.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. A minimum of KD 200 is required to open an account and the same amount must be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the Al-Danah account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to the account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the daily draw with in two days. To participate in this year's quarterly and annual draws, customers must keep the balance required by the Al-Danah account. Terms and conditions apply.

The Al-Danah account is the only account that rewards customers for their loyalty by providing loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances gained at the end of the previous year, which are then transferred to

the current year to reward the customer for their loyalty. In this way, all the total chances gained by customers who maintained KD 200 and above in 2018 were added to their 2019 chances as of January 2019. The same process will take place in 2020, in which customers' chances from 2019 will be added to their 2020 chances, increasing the likelihood of winning one of the quarterly draws.

To deposit into an Al-Danah account, you can visit any one of Gulf Bank's ATMs or ITMs, as well as any of the 58 Gulf Bank branches around the country. You also have the option to deposit through Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services, including Selfpay, or by creating a free standing order from other Gulf Bank accounts. Al-Danah also offers several unique services to its clients, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their daily, weekly and yearly chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app. You can also be notified via a free SMS alert with every transaction, a feature all Al-Danah account holders can activate by visiting their nearest branch.

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

- Mohammad Nasser Saleh Ibraheem Al-Dughaisheem
- Shorouq Nasser Mohammed Alali Al-Abdelqader
- Anoushiravan Nazariyan
- Jamil Mohammad Al-Foderi/Hayat Mohammed Jouma
- Mohammad Thabet Hussain Al-Baghli

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD

125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

Global geopolitical tensions cooling

KUWAIT: Currencies trajectory seemed liked a rollercoaster last week with the FX market reacting to every positive and negative headline. The continuous shift between risk aversion and risk taking has become a norm, especially with the unlimited geopolitical tensions globally. Overall, the week ended with a positive sentiment thanks to China's optimistic gesture, in spite of Washington blacklisting 28 Chinese companies earlier in the week. The US Agriculture Department data revealed that China has tremendously increased purchases of US agricultural products lately. Moreover, Trump articulated to reporters that his team had a "very, very good negotiation with China," and reiterated his plans to meet with Vice Premier Liu He. On the other side of the Atlantic, a no-deal Brexit outcome keeps on diminishing. The EU Council President said he had seen "promising signals" about the chance of a fresh Brexit agreement between the UK and the EU.

As optimism was the dominant theme last week, safe haven assets were pressured into the red zone and risk taking thrived. The JPY sank by 1.48 percent versus the dollar in the past five trading days. In regards to the US dollar index, the buck was on the defensive against a basket of currencies. The USD was also pressured by dovish comments from the FED Chairman. On a weekly basis, the USD index fell 0.48 percent. Currencies of export oriented economies (EUR, AUD, CNY, Mexican peso, & Korean won) rose as trade prospects improved.

Observing the equities market, stock indices rallied globally and energy related stocks soared after reports of damage to an Iranian oil tanker. Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index locked a 2.34 percent gain on Friday, its biggest daily increase in more than a month. Japan's Nikkei 225 and South Korea's Kospi rose 1.2 percent and 0.8 percent, respectively. In Europe, the German DAX index rose 347.45 points to 12,511.65.

In the commodities complex, oil prices were supported on several fronts. Improving trade prospects, turbulence in oil-producing countries (Iraq & Ecuador) raised concerns of supply disruption. OPEC hinted at making deeper cuts in supply and an Iranian oil tanker had been struck by missiles in the Red Sea. The price of a Brent crude barrel rose to an 11-day high of \$62.05.

Muted US Inflationary Pressures

Price growth in the American economy remains in a muted state and since the start of the year the central bank has failed to achieve its primary objective to drive inflation to a target of 2 percent. The FED's preferred inflation indicator (Core PCE) is currently at 1.8 percent, which was last released on 27th of September. However, the bad news is that since then, producer price momentum has fallen substantially, indicating that the core PCE has more room to fall. On the wholesale front, annual producer inflation tumbled to 1.4 percent, the lowest reading since November 2016 from 1.8 percent in August. Excluding volatile products, core producer inflation also fell to 2 percent from 2.3 percent. The softness in producer inflation is a reflection of the slump in the manufacturing sector that has seen the frailest activity in 10 years. As for

consumer price growth, the annualized CPI rate remained constant at 1.7 percent versus expectations of 1.8 percent. The monthly CPI rate was the softest reading this year, coming in at 0 percent.

Inflation is clearly cooling down and the latest data from both the manufacturing and service sectors indicate that the US economy is losing momentum. Trade tensions are still in the air and banks in America are facing some short-term liquidity issues, which forced the FED to pump billions of dollars in the banking sector. Moreover, just last week, Jerome Powell highlighted that the central bank is ready to further lower interest rates and will expand its balance sheet by buying more Treasury bonds in order to provide short-term liquidity to banks. The case for a third interest rate cut this year on October 30th is strong, while markets are pricing in a 71 percent chance for a cut.



Federal Reserve Meeting Minutes

At the September meeting, American monetary policy officials have turned out to be more pessimistic when they lowered the overnight rate to a range of 1.75-2 percent. They blamed their negativity on a global slowdown and President Donald Trump's trade wars that may well drag down hiring and the broader economy with it. Looking at recession prospects, several FOMC members mentioned that models assessing recession probabilities had "increased notably in recent months." Weeks after the FED meeting, the ISM's manufacturing barometer heightened investors' concerns that a significant slowdown could hit the economy, while the services PMI plunged 4.2 points. The "dot plot" revealed that five members favored not approving any additional cuts this year, five more seeing an increase ahead, and seven wanting an additional cut. The dot plot indicates that members are extremely divided on the future path of monetary stance. However, since then, the Chairman Jerome Powell has taken a dovish tone towards interest rate and liquidity. In a speech on Tuesday, Powell mentioned that the central bank will likely begin repurchasing Treasury bills to help the banking sector maintain short-term liquidity and most importantly the Bank is ready to further lower rates.

Can Avoid a Recession

The streak of negative data out of the British economy lingers on as the economy contracted by 0.1 percent in August. In Q2 2019, the economy also constricted by 0.2 percent, raising fears of a recession, which is considered as two consecutive

quarters of below zero growth. The manufacturing segment is taking a beating due to Brexit and global uncertainty. Manufacturing production on a monthly basis witnessed a decline of 0.7 percent, way below the 0.1 percent analysts had predicted. Despite the constant theme of frail readings, the economy may easily avoid a recession. In three months into August, the economy grew 0.3 percent and the service sector expanded by 0.4 percent, which roughly accounts to 80 percent of UK's GDP. The Office for National Statistics stated that GDP would need to dive by at least 1.5 percent in September for the economy to constrict in Q3. Such falls are considered extreme and rare, with comparable drops recorded only twice in the past 20 years. Overall, the economy has recuperated some positivity but the underlying trend is towards softer growth. The headwinds from a major global slowdown and Brexit uncertainty point to weaker growth ahead.

The Sterling pound is regularly seen as a Brexit barometer, appreciating and falling on Brexit prospects. Last week was no different; the GBP was the best performing currency in the FX sphere after the Prime Ministers of the UK and Ireland declared they saw a chance of a Brexit deal. The Irish Prime Minister claimed that a withdrawal agreement can be agreed before the end of October and that PM Johnson had shifted his red line towards letting Northern Ireland stay in the EU customs union. It seems that PM Johnson is trying to avoid a Brexit extension, which he promised to avoid by stating leaving the EU "do or die" on October the 31st. Concluding a deal with the EU and passing it through Parliament is not going to be a walk in the park, especially with all the parties involved. The Brexit departure date is October 31st and if Boris fails to obtain a deal by the 19th of October, he will have no choice but to extend the Brexit deadline as the Benn act passed into law. Since the news reached markets, the pound has gained more than 3.42 percent over its dollar counterpart.

Trade Truce or Stimulus?

The greatest contributor to China's GDP, the services sector cooled down to a 7-month low of 51.3 last month, from 52.1 seen in August. The sector is still expanding as the PMI reading is above 50, however the pace of growth has evidently lessened. Firms were pressured due to operating costs (labor, fuel & raw material expenses) soaring to a one-year high. At the same time, companies refrained from increasing prices on their clients, a strategic move to stay competitive in these uncertain times. Since early 2018, Beijing has implemented a mixture of fiscal stimulus and monetary easing to save the economy from a slowdown that incorporated hundreds of billions of dollars in infrastructure spending and tax cuts for companies. However, the aforementioned provisions have been slow to trickle through the economy. The White House has been persistent on China towards trade issues and tariffs keep on rising. Hence, a further downturn could be inevitable without further policy support or a trade pact between the two largest economies, which have been in an immense trade dispute for the past 15 months.

Kuwaiti dinar

USD/KWD opened at 0.30370 yesterday morning.

Business

Fitch affirms Warba Bank ratings at A+

Rating reflects bank's leading position despite its young age

KUWAIT: Fitch Ratings affirmed Warba Bank's credit rating with a stable outlook on Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDRs) which is in line with its Support Rating Floor (SRF) of A+ which reflect the high credit quality and low risk of default.

For Viability Rating "VR", Fitch rated Warba Bank at (BB-) which reflects the increasing market share (4.4 percent) in terms of assets by the end of the first half of the financial year 2019. Fitch Report appraised the Bank's efficient and professional management team and business model adopted by the bank targeting the corporate sector and seize opportunities in the real-estate sector, which in return supported market share growth.

Fitch report underlines that Warba Bank has successfully issued a \$250 million perpetual Tier 1 sukuk

in March 2017 and Capital Increase of a KD90 million rights issue in 2018 to boost its total capital adequacy ratio.

The report stated that the Bank's financing portfolio mostly goes to corporate and that the Bank's main depositors are governmental and semi-governmental entities in addition to some of the largest stable companies, which reflects positively on the risk profile and the ability to keep it contained by the experienced management team leading the Bank.

Commenting on the ratings affirmation, Shaheen Hamad Alghanem - Warb Bank's CEO- said: "the Bank is proud that Fitch affirms the Bank's rating at A+ despite the conditions and challenges facing the global financial sector. Warba Bank - despite its young age-

has become champion in the Islamic Banking Sector capable of accomplishing several achievements in the Kuwaiti banking sector. This clearly underlines our successful strategy through which we aim to present creative Islamic banking services & products according to international standards giving customers exciting banking experience; developing our financing portfolio and expanding our business geographically, -seizing lucrative investment opportunities; and keeping pace with the current trend of the digital banking operations especially the customers daily financial deals".

He added: "Since its inception, Warba Bank has been keen to stand out amongst competitors. The Bank has been able in a short period of time to gain customer's trust - locally and globally- due to our out-of-the-box

banking products and services that met their expectations and needs. This also led to establishing our own digital factory "Al-Wateen" which will serve as the cradle base from which all our digital services and products will be launched to enable us provide our customers with fast, flexible, accessible, time and energy - saving banking experience".

Alghanem stressed that the Bank is proceeding and pursuing the Bank's promising plan to steer more achievements and expansion on domestic, regional and international levels. He said that the Bank strategy embeds further diversifications in its investment portfolio, out of which Warba aims at offering customers the best investment and banking options in compliance with Islamic Sharia.

Al-Tijari announces winners of Al-Najma draws

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

The results of the draw were as follows:

1- Al-Najma weekly account - the prize of KD 5,000 and was for the share of Fahad Fahad Al-Ajmi.

2- The "Salary & Cash on Top campaign" prize of 1,000/- Kuwaiti Dinars and was for the share of Jamal Ahmad Hussain Mohammad.

The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000. Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

As regarding "Salary & Cash on Top" campaign designated for Kuwaiti and expatriate employees as well as the retirees and which is valid until 31 December 2019 and the mechanism of joining this campaign for availing its benefits, the Bank explained that Kuwaiti employees with a salary of KD 500 and above whether newly recruited or in service can transfer their salary to the Bank and avail the benefits of this campaign by getting instant cash gift of KD 250 or an interest free loan 5 times the salary up to KD 10,000, add to this they will automatically enter the weekly draw on KD 1,000. As for the expatriate customers categorized under Premier Banking Account with a salary KD of 1,700 and above, they will get instant cash gift. The retirees with pension KD 1,000 and above will also get an instant cash gift of KD 150 when transferring their pension to the Bank and automatically enter the weekly draw on a prize of KD 1,000 and avail the benefits of this campaign designated for Kuwaiti and expatriate employees working in private and public sector as well as the retirees. Further, the campaign provides customers with the opportunity to get additional benefits and take advantage of the advanced and unrivalled services and products the Bank provides to its customers to meet their needs and expectations.

Infiniti Al-Babtain amazes visitors at the Avenues Motor Show

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babtain Co. (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait, proudly displayed INFINITI QX50 and QX80 at the Avenues Motor Show, from 3 to 12 October. Infiniti Al-Babtain offered exclusive leasing deals to the visitors.

Starting at a leasing price of KD 229 per month, The INFINITI QX50 is the world's first variable compression ratio engine in a production vehicle which was created to fully meet the needs of today's premium car buyers and to deliver on their desire to own the latest masterpiece of technology. The VC-Turbo engine delivers the strong and convincing performance of a V6 and the fuel economy of a 4-cylinder engine - transforming on demand and based on the input of the drivers. Instantly adapting to their needs, the VC-Turbo lets them harness the exhilarating performance of 268 hp and 380 nm at 4,400 rpm of torque.

Developed on an entirely new platform, the QX50 features the sophisticated and assuring INFINITI Intelligent All-Wheel Drive. Drive Assist technologies react instantaneously to critical driving situations, supporting the drivers with a range of empowering 'co-pilot' features, and enabling them to always be in total control. Driver-centric, yet passenger-minded, the QX50 offers a package of technologies to enhance the driving experience, while a calm, connected, and relaxing cabin features an asymmetric layout - designed to meet different needs of the driver and the passengers.

Now at a leasing price of KD 399 per month, the QX80 has a refined and spacious cabin that features high-quality materials, a hand-crafted finish and advanced drive-assist technologies. With a taut yet comfort-oriented suspension, and ample performance from its 5.6-liter V8 engine, the QX80 gives drivers an assured feeling of control and confidence at the wheel. The rear entertainment system has also been upgraded. Higher-resolution screens provide the interface for connectivity and entertainment devices. The system also now supports 31 languages, up from three in the outgoing QX80. Infiniti Al-Babtain encourages its customers to explore the advantage of the exclusive deal by visiting the designated showroom located in Al-Rai.



Boubyan Bank concludes its induction program

KUWAIT: As a part of its plans to enrich the experience of its human resources, Boubyan Bank has recently concluded its fifth induction program for new branch employees in cooperation with ITQAN Academy; the program was designed to

introduce them to Boubyan Bank management systems and the nature of each department tasks.

In a press release recently issued by the bank, Boubyan Bank stressed that such programs reflected the bank's keenness on developing its staff experience, providing new recruits with the knowledge needed to perform their job duties at various branches, and introducing the various types of products the bank offers to its customers, which would reflect positively on the work environment and provide more knowledge for them so that they could provide the highest levels of service to customers.

The statement elaborated that the program had been designed to match the job

nature of bank employees at various levels and that lecturers from various bank departments explain work systems at their respective departments, the role those departments play in the bank's main system and provide practical explanation that would enrich staff expertise and help unleash the true potentials of Kuwaiti youth and enable them to prove themselves in the private sector. The program is fully aligned with the bank's strategy focused on appointing, training, qualifying and retaining efficient national cadres.

Furthermore, the statement explained that the term of the program is 14 days with the participation of 21 of the bank's employees, be they knew or experienced staff, as it

mainly targets explaining work systems at various Boubyan Bank departments.

"Branch staff are particularly important due to their regular contact with customers as they represent the face of the bank in dealing with them, which requires their full knowledge of information related to the banking sector, Boubyan bank or the work in various departments", the statement explained.

It is worth mentioning that the program is regularly organized by Boubyan Bank's Human Resources Group side by side with many other training courses and programs to enrich employees' knowledge and expertise in a manner improves their customer service level.



Bayt.com weekly report

The guidelines to a successful interview

If you have been invited for an interview by an employer then congratulations! All that time and effort you spent on job searching has finally paid off but the journey isn't over yet. You still have to impress in the interview and stand out from the rest of the competition. Your interview is the gate to securing a job and that gate will either close or open depending on how you perform. Below are key points to bear in mind in order to transform your hard-won job interview to a lucrative offer.

1. Practice Makes Perfect

The importance of practice and preparation cannot be emphasized enough. Generally, a job hunter is much more versed in the fine art of interviewing if they have been out looking for jobs and interviewing for a while; it is critical however for newcomers to the interviewing scene to know what to expect, how best to behave in an interview setting and how to answer the questions in a manner that reflects on them most positively. Be updated on current literature.

2. Research Is Your Friend

You are much more likely to impress and convince the employer of your unique suitability for the job if you are intimately familiar with the company, its position in the industry, its product lines and

what may be required for a candidate in your role. Once you can see yourself as part of a "big picture" you can better formulate your answers, prepare your skills inventory and formulate your success stories as they directly relate to the company's requirements.

3. Be Punctual

Respect the interviewer's time. Aim to arrive 15 minutes early and busy yourself with the company or industry literature while you wait. You can also use the time to go over your CV and answers you have prepared so you feel more relaxed and in control during the interview. If disaster strikes and you are running late, make sure to call the interviewer to inform them.

4. Go in with the Goal to Impress

As you have heard a myriad times before, you will not get a second chance to make a first impression so make sure your first impression conveys a successful, enthusiastic, well-mannered professional who will be an asset to the team. Smile and shake hands firmly when you meet the interviewer and be aware that over 60% of the cues being communicated to the interviewer are non-verbal cues. Watch your body language, gestures and tone of voice and bear in mind that the manner in which you are conveying information may be as important as what you are saying. Stay calm and focused and demonstrate self-confidence and professionalism in your answers and how you deliver them. Your attire MUST be professional and you must be well-groomed for your interviews, it is far better to err on the conservative side than to arrive dressed in a slovenly manner and communicate a complete disregard and disrespect for industry norms and the company culture.

5. Make Sure Your Answers Are Concise

Answer the questions directed at you in a precise and succinct manner and make sure you do not ramble or get carried away on an irrelevant and inconsequential tangent. The more you get carried away on a given question the more likely you are to slip up and communicate weaknesses or factoids that are best not brought to bear at the interview stage. Demonstrate clarity of mind and thought process by making your answers simple and to the point - this does not however involve killing the conversation flow with yes/no answers. Aim to keep the conversation going on a pleasant professional respectful tone with answers that illustrate your strengths and experience and keep the interviewer excited to learn more.

6. Bring in Contextual Support

Make sure to support all your answers with accurate facts and figures to gain credibility with the interviewer and show you have a keen eye for the bottom line. Expound in detail on targets achieved or overachieved and talk about measurable milestones and contributions to the bottom line whether they be in terms of money made, money saved, losses averted or otherwise. Be very specific about your skills and describe past success stories that support them in accurate, quantifiable detail.

7. Communicate Your Strengths Effectively

The interviewer is looking to hire a winner who has had a record of achieving success in a similar capacity in the past. Be prepared to elaborate on past successes that bear in a direct manner on the present job and show how those experiences are directly relevant to the role, responsibilities and skillset required for the present job. Keep in mind

that the employer is looking to minimize his/her risk by hiring a candidate who has excelled in a similar or identical role in the past and can bring these skills to bear on the present job. Even if your past job was very different than the present one, you will be able to come up with success stories that relate directly to the job requirements in that they highlight key skills or character traits whether they be creativity, initiative, problem-solving acumen, sales skills, negotiation skills, communication skills etc.

8. Emphasize That You Learn from Your Weakness

Two areas that have no place during the interview stage are your weaknesses and your personal life. Avoid talking about personal matters and answer any question on weaknesses with either a brief explanation of what area you would like to further develop your skills in or by reiterating a key strength of yours that you perhaps take too far. The first shows you know what key skill you need further work on and are willing to take action on it and the second approach reiterates a key point of strength. You may also mention a weakness that is completely unrelated to the position at hand e.g. if you are applying for a creative role in and advertising agency you can mention that your accounting or investment management skills are not your strongest point and you are much more comfortable in a creative role. Whatever you do don't open a can of worms and torpedo your chances of securing the job by dwelling on real weaknesses and shortcomings that directly relate to your ability to excel at the job.

9. Be Attentive and Curious

Have a list of questions prepared beforehand

that are designed to impress the employer and show that you are familiar with current company/industry issues. An appropriate line of questioning can make for excellent conversation and will leave the employer with the impression that you have done your due diligence and researched the company and industry thoroughly. Do not ask about salary and vacations at the early interview stages.

10. Communicate What the Company Does

If you have researched the company, industry and product lines thoroughly you will be able to talk like an insider and impress with your insider's insight on relevant issues. Keep the conversation flow fluid and informative by bringing up facts you have learned about the company and its products and competitors and show how you, armed with your unique skillset and experiences, can positively impact the bottom line.

11. Don't Ask About the Salary Early On

Asking about salary too early in an interview will make you appear mercenary. A potential employer will look for enthusiasm for the job itself, not just the salary on offer. Most serious companies will have a formal wage structure - so don't be afraid to ask about it at the appropriate time. Prior research into realistic salary expectations will also help avoid embarrassment.

12. Don't Oversell

Don't promise what you are not in a position to deliver. Your over confidence will eventually catch you out, with potentially serious consequences, should you actually get the job. Promote your skills enthusiastically but stick to the facts.

What's On

AL SAYER, KFAS, KIC partners for KUBOT challenge



With a vision to enable high school students in Kuwait towards creating challenging environment to gain knowledge and skills in robotics platform, AL SAYER Holding in association with Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), and Kuwait Innovation Center (KIC) launched the innovative Kuwait Robot (KUBOT) challenge.

The launch ceremony was attended by key delegates including Sayer Bader Al Sayer Executive Vice Chairman & Board Member at AL SAYER Holding, Nehad Al Haj Ali Deputy Group Manager Corporate Excellence, Shibu Mohamed Manager CSR representing AL SAYER Holding along with Dr Salam Al-Ablani, Director of the Scientific Culture Directorate KFAS, Dr Bassam Alfeeli Director of Innovation & Enterprise KFAS, Dr Layla Al-Musawi Program Manager Scientific Culture Directorate, Eng Mohammad Al Refaei General Manager KIC, and Eng Mohammad Al Jundub Chief Technology Officer KIC.

According to Sayer Al Sayer, "We have partnered this event to promote the spirit of positivity among students, in order to bring a change in mindset towards new learning and challenges. Such competitions and challenges help the new generation kids to utilize the time and technology effectively molds them from their childhood to eventually bring a big positive impact in the future".

Robotics and Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the future. Challenges like "KUBOT" are to help students to build science, engineering and technology skills. Inspire them to innovate, practice teamwork and develop soft skill

capabilities including self-confidence, communication, and leadership skills. Dr Salam Al-Ablani Director of the Scientific Culture Directorate KFAS, anticipates this competition to raise awareness among students, teachers and schools on the importance of keeping up with modern-day technology in the education and to acquire experience and guidance in the field of robotic hardware and software applications.

"It is really exciting to see the students and their supervisors to face the real challenge scenario to build and program the robot to solve onboard obstacles with simplicity, accuracy and speed," commented Dr Salam. Through this challenge, participants will learn several scientific concepts, including hardware, electrical and electronic components, sensors and controllers that take readings from the environment and turn them into electrical communication signals, principles of robot programming and intelligent algorithms, and most importantly teamwork and collaborative skills to put forward technology to solve problems, and open new way of thinking.

According to Nehad Al Haj Ali, "We have seen the milestones achieved through industry transformation. And over a time, it is getting matured through Industry 4.0 revolutions which actively promote digitalization with logically connected environment to experience an innovative and intelligent automated cycle. Industry is still evolving through internet of things, cloud computing, optimized supply chains, robotics and artificial intelligence to build a knowledge-based economy. And we highly anticipate KUBOT to open a new challenge



to 'Start Your Impossible' for the students to ignite their creativity to experience how technology and robotics could solve real life issues through a simulated automatic environment."

Eng Mohammad Al Refaei General Manager Kuwait Innovation Center announced the participation of 14 schools and 30 students and 14 supervisors from public and private schools for the KUBOT Challenge. At KIC campus they underwent rigorous intensive one-week

training and two weeks of office hours and assistance for an innovative learning on robotic hardware and software coding to face the final competition during 1st week of November 2019.

"I trust this competition will be a promising start for aspiring students and I am confident that they will realize the significance of this field in the future and how it will impact technology evolution for a promising career tomorrow," said Eng Mohammad.

BSK hosts middle phase awards evening 2019



The annual awards evening for year 7-9 students at the British School of Kuwait (BSK) took place in a lavish style in the Al Baraka Ballroom at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, as parents and staff celebrated the many varied achievements of the school year 2018-19 in the presence of BSK Chairman Sadiq Al Mutawa and BSK Founder and Director Madam Vera Al-Mutawa MBE.

The Quran reading was made by Year 8 student, Lujine Abdalla. The evening then got off to a brisk and exciting start with the presentation of the Special Awards, including those for the House Competitions, MUN, Debating, Competitive Mathematics with the UKMT, Hadith recitation, Performance Music, Global Social Leaders and FI in schools. Presentations were made by Madam Vera, BSK Principal Paul Shropshire and the Ambassadors of Canada Louis-Pierre Emond, Malta Patrick Cole; Serbia Vladimir Kohut, Mexico Miguel Angel Isidro Rodriguez, The Netherlands Franc Potuyt and Belgium Piet Heirbaut.

The Middle Phase Head Teacher Nicholas Smith, welcomed parents, staff and students, before delivering his Annual Report, including recent developments and plans for further improvement; FI Racing in Schools, the environmental impact that Global Social Leaders was making and success in the United Kingdom Mathematics Trust Junior Challenge. Extracurricular successes continued in the prestigious Young Musicians of the Gulf com-

petition in Bahrain, and sporting successes both within Kuwait and at the British Schools of the Middle East competition.

Prestigious Subject Awards went to the top student in each subject in each year group, many of whom achieved near to 100% in their end of year examinations. The Roll of Honor was read by Miss Alya Muflihi, the Assistant Head Teacher. The Awards Evening also honored over 120 students who achieved Excellence Awards and Commendations in 2018-19. The Rolls of Honor were read by Assistant Head Teachers, Miss Sophie Ali and Miss Alya Muflihi, and Assistant Middle Phase Coordinator Miss Emma Greaves.

The BSK Concert Orchestra, under the baton of Ms Galina Bojilova, played the rousing Alte Kameraden by Carl Teikeas the Award Winners entered the ballroom. Sarah Aldashti wowed the audience with her rendition on violin of Souvenir de Sarasate by Potstock, and staying with violin, Jaewon Park played the spectacular Hora Martisorului by Grigorac Dinicu, both accompanied by Miss Emily Jeffcott on piano.

Guest of Honor, His Excellency Louis-Pierre Emond, Ambassador of Canada, delivered a very lively speech, focusing on the Middle Phase key values of Resilience, Respect, Honesty, Empathy and Courage. His words were warmly received, touching a chord with parents who value an education that goes beyond the classroom and teaches their children important life lessons.



The final student awards of the evening were the much coveted Head Teachers' Awards. Three such awards were conferred, to one student from each of Years 6, 7 and 8. The role of honor was read by Head Teacher Nicholas Smith. Recipients were Moaaz Helal for Year 6, Ragad Ali for Year 7 and Ria Sharda in Year 8. BSK Principal Paul Shropshire rounded off the evening by proposing a vote of thanks, congratulating the students on their great successes and looking ahead to another year of hard work and exceptional achievements. The evening closed with the students and parents enjoying a sumptuous buffet dinner.

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa reveals Winter Desert Camp Barbeque

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa presents the ultimate al-fresco dining experience with the launch of its Winter Desert Camp Barbeque every Wednesday night. Combining a palatable mix of flavorful BBQ cuisine, wide range of salads, beverages and desserts, the special themed night takes place in a relaxing ambience located directly at the pool side along the Arabian Gulf.

Experience a feast for the senses with a succulent selection of dishes, hot off the grill featuring a bountiful BBQ and showcasing an array of culinary styling, including freshly cooked meats and seafood. Experienced chefs from the hotel will be on hand preparing and serving delicious lamb chops, oriental kebabs, smoked brisket, tuna, salmon, prawn and vegetables sizzling, direct from the griddle.

In addition, the buffet will also comprise of a Burger Bar, Ouzi along with delicious accompaniments including Oriental Mezzeh and American salad. Those with a sweet craving will enjoy a

selection of desserts, ranging from pies, tarts, oriental sweets to an Ice cream and Waffle station. To complete the evening, guests can relax and unwind with their sheesha by the beach.

Speaking about the barbeque nights, Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa General Manager, Savino Leone, said: "We are always looking at creative gastronomic concepts to innovate and elevate our dining offerings to come up with something new for our guests' each year. This year, we are delighted to present the Winter Desert Camp Barbeque and introduce guests to new and memorable dining experiences."

The open-air, casual yet chic atmosphere, offers an idyllic setting to gather with family and friends for a night out. A unique and exhilarating dining experience awaits you and your guests. Winter Desert Camp Barbeque takes place every Wednesday night from 7 pm to 11 pm for everyone to enjoy the lovely outdoor weather.



Notice

The TIES Center invites you to our Tafseer class (Divine Wisdom from the Last Testament) today, at 7 pm. In that class we will focus on verses 16 and 17 of Surat Al-Hashr (The Gathering). We will see the danger the hypocrites of Medina posed, even to their Jewish allies, their false promises, and how they are compared to the Devil who will disassociate himself

from his followers on the judgment day. We will also discuss the various ways satan traps some human beings into disbelief or disobeying Allah (SWT), and what he will tell his followers on the day of judgment. We will learn about the types of guidance from Allah (SWT), how to avoid satan's temptations, and the importance of seeking Allah's protection. We will examine the significance of remembering and mentioning Allah (SWT), how He protects us from the devil, and the fate of the sinners and disbelievers.

Health

Patients back in hospital after 'EVALI' vaping illness

WASHINGTON: Some patients who have been discharged from hospital after recovering from lung injury associated with vaping have had to be readmitted, US officials said Friday as they named the mysterious illness that has killed 26. Authorities issued new clinical guidance and are now referring to the condition as "e-cigarette or vaping product use associated lung injury" or "EVALI."

Around 1,300 people have fallen ill since March, almost all hospitalized, with the rate of new cases showing no signs of slowing despite a series of dire public health warnings. A 17-year-old this week became the youngest person to die from the illness, and 80 percent of cases are among individuals under 35. Anne Schuchat, a senior official with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), told reporters: "We're aware of a handful of individuals who have been readmitted for clinical care after discharge for lung injury. We need to understand these accounts better."

She added the number was "less than five" and the time between discharge and readmission ranged from five to 55 days. It is not yet clear what was responsible, with theories including a resumption of vaping, that the injury had left patients more susceptible to infectious disease, that steroid treatment had made them vulnerable to infection, or steroid treatment was halted too quickly. The CDC recommended every patient return for outpatient follow-up within seven days.

Schuchat told reporters nationwide research suggested products containing THC, particularly those obtained off the street or from unknown sources, were linked to most of the cases and play a major role in the outbreak. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the main psychoactive component of cannabis and more than three-quarters of patients reported using it either exclusively or with nicotine products. Ned Sharpless, the acting head of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), reported that among samples tested of THC containing products, 47 percent contained Vitamin E



In this file photo taken on October 02, 2018 a man is seen exhaling smoke from an electronic cigarette in Washington, DC. — AFP

acetate which is used as a cutting agent and is harmful when vaporized and inhaled.

But authorities cannot definitively exclude nicotine products, since 13 percent of all patients reported nicotine use only. A CDC spokeswoman later told AFP that because the information was self-reported, it was potentially unreliable. "Specifically, patients might not always know what substances they use or might be hesitant to reveal use of substances that are not legal in their state." For now, investigators suspect that some portion of the cases are due to a risky practice linked to the preparation of THC, but cannot say for certain whether other cases have other causes innate to the vaping process. — AFP

Second Ebola vaccine to be used in DR Congo next month

KINSHASA: Doctors will use a second Ebola vaccine from November in three eastern provinces in the Democratic Republic of Congo to fight the deadly virus, medical officials said yesterday. "It's time to use the new Ad26-ZEBOV-GP vaccine, manufactured by Johnson & Johnson's Belgian subsidiary," said Dr. Jean-Jacques Muyembe, who leads the national anti-Ebola operation in the DRC.

It will arrive in the eastern city of Goma, in North Kivu province, on October 18 and be used from the beginning of next month, he added. DRC's latest Ebola epidemic, which began in August 2018, has killed 2,144 people, making it the second deadliest outbreak of the virus, after the West Africa pandemic of 2014-2016.

Muyembe said the communes of Majingo and Kahembe had been selected to receive the vaccine as they were considered the epi-

centers of the epidemic. "We will extend this vaccination to our small traders who often go to Rwanda to protect our neighbors," he added. "If it works well, we will expand vaccination in South Kivu and Ituri." DR Congo's eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu sit on the borders with Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.

The Belgian laboratory will send a batch of 200,000 doses to neighboring Rwanda and 500,000 doses in the DRC, Muyembe said. More than 237,000 people living in active Ebola transmission zones have received a vaccination produced by the pharma giant Merck since August 8, 2018. The J&J vaccine had been rejected by DRC's former health minister Oly Ilunga, who cited the risks of introducing a new product in communities where mistrust of Ebola responders is already high.

But Ilunga's resignation in July appears to have paved the way for approval of the second vaccine. He currently faces charges that he embezzled funds intended for the fight against Ebola. In his letter of resignation Ilunga said "actors who have demonstrated a lack of ethics" want to introduce a second vaccine, but did not elaborate. Muyembe, who took over the Ebola fight in the DRC in July, said "The Johnson & Johnson vaccine has the most science-based data." — AFP

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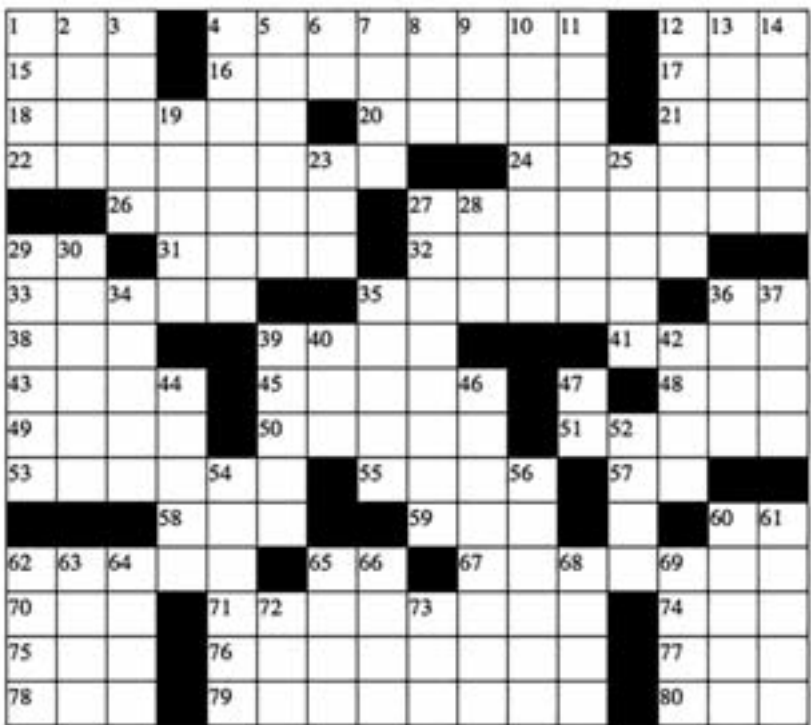
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ACROSS

- 1. Lacking in light.
- 4. Durable fragrant wood.
- 12. The 22nd letter of the Greek alphabet.
- 15. An undergarment worn by women to support their breasts.
- 16. Admonish or counsel in terms of someone's behavior.
- 17. Thigh of a hog (usually smoked).
- 18. Predacious long-bodied large-eyed insect of warm regions.
- 20. A river in southeastern Australia that flows generally northwest to join the Darling River.
- 21. An ester of adenosine that is converted to ATP for energy storage.
- 22. A minute scale (on a plant or fungus).
- 24. Constituting or relating to a tail.
- 26. The brightest star in Virgo.
- 29. The square of a body of any size of type.
- 31. Preparatory school work done outside school (especially at home).
- 32. Of or relating to abasia (inability to walk).
- 33. New Zealand conifer.
- 38. The rate at which heat is produced by an individual in a resting state.
- 41. United States writer (born in Poland) who wrote in Yiddish (1880-1957).
- 43. Type genus of the Amidiace.
- 45. A long steep slope or cliff at the edge of a plateau or ridge.
- 48. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
- 49. An accidental hole that allows something (fluid or light etc.) to enter or escape.
- 50. Engraving or carving in low relief on a stone (as in a brooch or ring).
- 51. Small and round and shiny like a shiny bead or button.
- 53. A landlocked republic in southern central Africa.
- 55. Very light colored.
- 57. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- 58. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
- 59. Type genus of the family: Myacidae.
- 62. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- 67. English writer (born in Scotland) of children's stories (1859-1932).
- 70. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- 71. City in central Iran.
- 74. An anxiety disorder characterized by chronic free-floating anxiety and such symptoms as tension or sweating or trembling of light-headedness or irritability etc that has lasted for more than six months.
- 75. Characteristic of a mob.
- 76. (informal) Diamonds.
- 77. A type of submachine gun that is designed and manufactured in Israel.
- 78. Used of a single unit or thing.
- 79. Made by hand or a hand process.
- 80. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.

DOWN

- 1. A software system that facilitates the creation and maintenance and use of an electronic database.
- 2. A republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
- 3. The (prehensile) extremity of the superior limb.
- 4. Squirrel monkeys.
- 5. Advance evidence for.
- 6. A metric unit of length equal to one billionth of a meter.
- 7. Having finished or arrived at completion.
- 8. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
- 9. The shape of a raised edge of a more or less circular object.
- 10. Given to avoiding association with others.
- 11. Dry red Italian table wine from the Chianti region of Tuscany.
- 12. A family of Afroasiatic tonal languages (mostly two tones) spoken in the regions west and south of Lake Chad in north central Africa.
- 13. Relating to the deepest parts of the ocean (below 6000 meters).
- 14. Express or state indirectly.
- 19. Thin fibrous bark of the paper mulberry and Pipturus albidus.
- 23. The upper side of the thighs of a seated person.
- 25. A city in central New York.
- 27. Absent-minded dreaming while awake.
- 28. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
- 30. American and Asiatic trees having edible one-seeded fruit.
- 34. Of the nature of or undergoing an experiment.
- 35. A device (used by carpenters) that holds things firmly together v l.
- 36. Harsh or corrosive in tone.
- 37. A carriage consisting of two wheels and calash top.
- 39. (computer science) American Standard Code for Information Interchange.
- 40. Fiddler crabs.
- 42. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- 44. Jordan's port.
- 46. Type genus of the Polygalaceae.
- 47. A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
- 52. (used of count nouns) Every one considered individually.
- 54. A tributary of the Ohio River.
- 56. Gained or acquired.
- 60. Affect with wonder.
- 61. Any of several Old World herbs of the genus Medicago having small flowers and trifoliate compound leaves.
- 63. Very dark black.
- 64. A very young child (birth to 1 year) who has not yet begun to walk or talk.
- 65. The complete duration of something.
- 66. A lyric poet.
- 68. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- 69. Largest known toad species.
- 72. A health resort near a spring or at the seaside.
- 73. A metric unit of length equal to ten meters.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Do not take chances or risks just now. Be satisfied with the ordinary and the usual. Someone may try to tell you an untruth today but your mind cuts right through all the window dressing and gets right down to the quick. Before anyone knows it, you have the heart of a matter out front for everyone to see. You would make a great investigator—either in scientific research or undercover work—it makes no difference. Your ability to get to the point is all but phenomenal. You may have some hectic emotional energy just now. It is easy to see what you value and care about these days. Your sense of appreciation is sharpened and in high focus.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You feel a love of order and law—an appreciation for responsibilities and duty. Problems are valued for the lessons they teach, rather than considered as obstacles. Your family members encourage you in your career direction and you may be pleased with the choices you have made over the past years. You will prosper through new insights. The energies at this time are working in your favor and you are open to the learning process. You may make plans for future education that might help you move forward in the business you enjoy. Now is the time to move toward your goals. You take care to recycle and set examples for others.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

The way you deal with necessities and obligations—health and work in particular—is in a state of transformation. Your job situation may change radically. Improvements are in the works. Environmental contaminants connected with your work can be a problem but when you are aware of the environmental issues, you will be able to find help to clean up the problem. You can make these improvements by taking action. You will be pleased with your new accomplishments, during which new insights are in order. There is a revolution of new ideas and ways to do and use things become clear. You are in touch and in harmony with others. You have good support. You are invited to a celebration this evening and this may take place near water.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

There are possibilities that you will run into a snag with a person or become blocked in a situation this morning. Quietly and respectfully stating your opinion may not be the answer in this situation. The problem could be an illness of another person and letting this difficulty slide may be the wiser choice. In-depth discussions and probing conversations find you at your mental best. You may get the feeling that this has turned out to be a very fortunate day. Considering you are either in charge of an auction or perhaps the coordination of a large crowd, you are feeling successful and able to cope with whatever comes across your path.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Although you could overdo and find yourself feeling cross, you can pat yourself on the back for learning how to rise above the profit you have set for yourself at this time. With cold weather approaching you may have decided to complete some building construction or some other project that would create a better way to proceed with repairs on the house, car or shelter provisions. Your expertise is fine-tuned and you could sell ice to an eskimo, if is selling is your goal. Enjoy this busy time but plan your meals wisely and have snacks that are full of protein. You are encouraged in your personal progress—you encourage others. You will benefit from analytical insights, getting to the heart of things, penetrating. This evening you find time to relax.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

There is a push to complete your home chores. Travel opportunities are available all month. This is a great time, when anything is possible. One of the key elements during this time involves your sense of direction. You may want to seriously review a few of your goals. Higher education or philosophical and perhaps religious contacts could have a part in making good things happen at this time. Partnerships, personal relationships or the social scene in general is very important and can have a very decided influence on you. You may find that a more impersonal attitude is the key. Use the recycling facilities in your hometown; pay attention to waste and excess. These small steps will improve the quality of life for yourself and others.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your career or life path, the way you make your living or get through life, is quite unique. There are opportunities now to reach beyond your current situation and to expand your horizons. You may be in some type of service business. You enjoy the interaction you gain from the position you hold. A concierge finds answers for people. The knowledge you have gained through this type of job says that you will also be able to serve yourself. Your approach to any problem is always original and you could invent things or discover new places or develop new ways of doing things. Communications, computers and the whole electronic revolution are perfect career choices for you. Fairness and responsibility to the other people in your life are emphasized.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This is a rewarding day. Others may seek you out for your advice regarding very personal issues. You have a prolific mood-altering way of interacting with others and today you may find depressed conversations easy to manipulate into a most positive outlook. You might consider writing a series on how one might survive or excel in the workplace. You are more talented than you give yourself credit for and you can help many people with an upbeat, matter-of-fact type of thinking. You will find opportunities to cut through the red tape and get at what is beneath and behind the most difficult situations with just the simplest of questions.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

This whole day gives you the opportunity to bring some focus to a family matter. There is new understanding and compassion on the home front. Faith, optimism and a yearning to explore all kinds of new horizons are some of the focal points in your life at this time. Short trips or a vacation may begin today or tomorrow. Travel, education and other ways to stretch your horizons open new doors of opportunity if you are considering a new job. Making a good impression and putting your best foot forward take on a greater importance as you look forward to the next workweek. You may decide to do a little shopping this afternoon.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This is an easy, calm day that you should find running in a smooth manner. Ideas and interaction with family members may be in the forecast sometime during the day. Working with rather than against the flow should be easy to do. A movie or some other entertainment can be enjoyed this afternoon. Others may find you especially witty and perhaps, a bit eccentric. You may have insights regarding your living situation or life circumstances generally. You will have the opportunity to speak up for your family members that may be some distance away. You can expect pleasant surprises this day, along with some extra support.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Ambition and the desire for status can get a little out of touch with reality. Inflated expectations could be a problem unless you get a grip on yourself. Still, you may find that you develop a knack for being in the right place at the right time—and that can win you the admiration of others. You could develop a reputation as a prophet of some kind. You are able to appreciate and value all sorts of people today. Family members may find you especially witty and eccentric this evening. You may have insights or breakthroughs in regard to your living situation or life circumstances. Others value you for your insights. Family and real estate matter the most at this time.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Important financial decisions require more information than you realize. It's important to gather all the facts necessary to give you a realistic idea of whatever subject is at hand. You have a large imagination when it comes to finances—choosing possessions and the material world. A growing sense of idealism affects your productivity and material concerns. You may work to establish some cooperative, communal goals. Social relationships are a special focus. Travel and animated discussions play a part in this and could be less than satisfying in some respects. There is a chance to understand those around you and to have a special time with someone you love. General good feeling and a sense of support and harmony make this a happy time.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Head & Neck

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional word.

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

BRAIN	HAIR	SCALP
CHEEKS	JAW	SKULL
CHIN	LARYNX	TASTE BUDS
EAR LOBES	LIPS	TEETH
EARDRUM	MOUTH	TEMPLES
EARS	NAPE	THROAT
EYEBROWS	NECK	TONGUE
EYELIDS	NOSE	TONSILS
EYES	NOSTRILS	TRACHEA
FOREHEAD	OESOPHAGUS	UVULA
GUMS	PHARYNX	

Hawaii

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

ALOHA	KAHOLAWE	NTHAU	SUGARCANE
ARCHIPELAGO	KAUAI	NORTH SHORE	SURFING
BEACHES	KAYAKING	OAHU	TOURISTS
CANDLING	KONA COAST	PACIFIC OCEAN	TROPICAL
COFFEE	LANAI	PEARL HARBOR	UKELELE
GRASS SKIRT	LIUAI	PINEAPPLES	VACATION
HAWAIIAN	MACADAMIA NUTS	RESORTS	VOLCANOES
HOMOLULU	MANTA RAYS	SAND	WAIKIKI
HULA	MAUI	SCUBA DIVING	WAIHEA BAY
HUMBACK WHALES	MOLOKAI	SNORKELING	WARM
ISLANDS	NAPALI COAST	STATE	WHALE WATCHING

The hidden message is:
THERE ARE ONLY THIRTEEN LETTERS IN THE HAWAIIAN ALPHABET

Daily Sudoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Lifestyle

MONDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2019



A photo shows a balanced stone sculpture made by French artist and rock balancer SP Ranza in Mazamet, southern France. — AFP

ONLINE STREAMING GIANTS BATTLE FOR ASIAN AUDIENCES

Acclaimed director David Michod's epic "The King" was one of four major Netflix productions screened at Asia's largest film festival this week, underlining how streaming services are increasingly challenging Hollywood and traditional media for the attention of artists and viewers. Asia is seen as an important part of the global streaming industry's growth plan. In conjunction with the main event, Busan International Film Festival also hosted its first Asia Contents Awards reflecting how the market is rapidly changing.

"They gave us the resources and the freedom to make this properly," Michod said of working with Netflix. "I like that I don't feel I am sacrificing myself at the altar of the box office," he added. So called over-the-top (OTT) platforms or video-on-demand (VOD) — online services that viewers can access directly such as Amazon Prime, YouTube, Hulu and Apple TV—are booming. Hollywood stars including Julia Roberts, Rooney Mara, Brad Pitt and Will Smith, have embraced streaming as audiences grow.

"If people want to go see (films) on the big screen they can, but my TV at home is amazing," Michod explained. Disney and Apple are set to launch their plat-

forms across Asia Pacific this year, capitalising on growing mobile usage and rapidly improving access to faster speed internet. Vivek Couto, executive director at research group Media Partners Asia, believes the region is "crucial" to the plans of global streaming platforms as there are "massive prospects to go after".

Content boom

Online video revenue—predominantly from film and TV subscriptions as well as advertising—in the region will increase by 24 percent in 2019, making it worth \$27 billion annually, according to a report by Couto's firm. That figure is predicted to hit \$50 billion by 2024. China accounts for around 59 percent of revenue for the region in 2019, according to the report—but its strict regulations make access difficult for outside players with local platforms iQIYI, Tencent Video and Youku dominating.

Google-owned YouTube earns the largest share of revenues in Asia, but Netflix, Amazon Prime and Disney's Indian platform Hotstar have all experienced significant growth in the past few years. "Local content has historically been the preserve of large incumbent TV networks in

markets such as India, Japan and Korea but as content and consumption moves online the availability and creation of premium local content becomes important," said Couto.

He added this would drive up demand, and create opportunities for subscription streaming and for advertisers. HBO Asia had the world premiere of its star-studded Malaysian co-production "The Garden of Evening Mists" at BIFF. The film is pan-Asian by design—starring Malaysian Lee Sinjee, Japan's Hiroshi Abe, and Taiwan's Sylvia Chang—but global in ambition.

"VOD platforms widen the distribution and amplify the presence of these Asian films to global audiences," the film's producers said in a statement to AFP. Netflix is rolling out 17 Asian productions, with the platform's first series from Thailand expected to debut by the end of the year.

Know your audience

Despite the arrival of global giants, local platforms believe they can hold their own. The Southeast Asian HOOQ platform this week announced 19 productions were in the works all made by film-makers from the region. "As a company that is built in Asia for Asians, we believe that local stories are best told by locals," argued Jennifer Batty, the company's chief content officer. Singapore-based documentary streaming service iWonder recently expanded into eight new southeast Asian markets.

"As we expand our offerings, a key focus will be finding documentaries from within those markets, accessing local voices who shine their own unique light on their world," said the platform's co-founder James Bridges. Adapting content to audiences needs will be vital to success. Around 250 million people regularly watch films on their mobile devices in India. In response, Netflix introduced a mobile-only version of its streaming, but Asian firms may have the edge on understanding what local audiences want.

"Where I think companies like ours in Asia have the edge is that we are up with the trends out here instantly. We are addressing the way people watch content in Asia," said Indian producer Ekta Kapoor, managing director of the VoD service ALT Balaji. She added: "We are making shows designed to be watched on mobile devices, not adapted for them. Shorter-form, about local characters and issues. That puts us ahead."—AFP

Kerpow! Girl superheroes fight as much as boys

A new wave of girl cartoon superheroes take no nonsense from anyone and revel in a good fight as much as the boys, a top Hollywood producer says. "Too many shows for girls are less about entertaining them or reflecting them and come across as lectures on how we expect girls to behave," said Lauren Faust, the executive producer of the new hit series, "DC Super Hero Girls". It is not just boys who want to watch their superheroes level up to each other, she told MIPJunior in Cannes, the world's biggest gathering of makers of children's entertainment which ends Sunday.

Faust admitted that "some of the fights get extreme" in her Cartoon Network show, a rebooted version of a DC superhero series now on Netflix. "Girls have been short-changed in the cool stakes" for years by traditional television, said Faust, an Emmy winner who previously worked on "My Little Pony" and "Super Best Friends Forever". "Girls are portrayed as perfect angels all the time," she said.

"That is why (their shows) end up being very soft and very nice and everyone is very concerned about everybody else's feelings all the time," the producer added. But that is not what young teenage girls want from their superheroes, Faust insisted.

Romance? No thanks boys

"It is important to a degree but not really exciting to watch, and is that something that is going to follow you growing up in your life?" Instead Faust said Wonder Woman, Supergirl, Batgirl and the vegan environmental superhero Green Lantern have to overcome their own flaws and weakness as well as their daily teenage struggles before they take on evil.

"Our superheroes also have teenage supervillains and we do not hold back," she said. "We have episodes when they (the baddies) are trying to kill people. "In the pilot when Wonder Woman and Supergirl meet for the first time they get in a fight and Wonder Woman literally pounds Supergirl's face into the floor." In another Supergirl is "knocked across the floor and has a huge shiner for the rest of the episode and she looks very pained. She really got hit."

Faust said her female-dominated creative team was turning the stereotype of cartoon action on its head to draw in just as many boys as girls. The female superheroes team up and often tussle over who is boss with a boy group called the "Invinci-Bros", although Faust is adamant that they will "stay away from romance. I think on girls' shows this becomes too much of a focus." In the past, she said, female cartoon characters tended to be reduced to "liking shopping, makeup and talking a lot on the phone".

She said that she hoped that "DC Super Hero Girls" might help rectify the superhero gender imbalance. "If I was 16 it would really make me mad" to see Superman being so famous while hardly anybody knows who Supergirl is, she said.—AFP



This picture shows South Korean actress Kim Ji-mee, center, speaking during an open talk at the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) in Busan. — AFP

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH



Monday, October 14, 2019

REBECCA'S STORY: RUNNING THROUGH BREAST CANCER

By Rebecca Seago-Coyle

In 2010, I was turning 35 and wanted to mark the year with trying something new, something big, something exciting. Looking back, I realize what 'they' mean by be careful what you ask for. I set a goal to run a marathon, half marathon, century ride, or maybe even a triathlon. I had just started running in late 2009 and was hooked. I figured by setting this goal, it would get me out of my slump and keep me active and in shape.

Let me back up. In early 2009 as I was doing a self-breast exam, I felt a lump. I wasn't too concerned because I knew my mom had several benign lumps and figured it was probably the same. I waited a couple of months until my next woman wellness visit. When I told my doctor about it, she felt the lump too but said women my age (34) get lumps.

I did mention my mom's history and even my aunt, grandmother, and cousin on my dad's side. She responded by saying it only matters if your mom or your sister has any history of breast cancer. I paused a minute, remembering back to my college biology class on genetics and was pretty sure that half the genes come from each parent, but I brushed it off as well. I mean, I was 34. I was active and healthy. Why would I have cancer? Cancer is for older people, right?

No. Fast forward to a year later and I could still feel the lump growing, so I decided to get a second opinion. Luckily (I guess luckily), my new doctor had just

experienced breast cancer with a close friend, so she was a little bit on guard. She mentioned that she didn't think it was cancer but said, "Let's just go through the motions and pretend like it is so we can check all the boxes."

She sent me for an ultra sound and mammogram. The ultrasound technician basically laughed at me and said "This is soooo not cancer. I don't even think we need to do a mammogram." I begged her for it since I was already there and told her about my family history. She went to talk to her supervisor who then agreed to do the test. As it turned out, the mammogram showed some interested areas which warranted a biopsy.

On June 4, 2010 at 1:04 PM, I was at work and had just joined a conference call when my cell phone rang. I figured it would be a quick call saying nope, no cancer. I was wrong. The nurse on the other end said the results were positive. My first thought was, "What was positive? I'm not pregnant." Not to sound naive but the only test in my mind that could be positive was a pregnancy test. But then I realized she wasn't talking about pregnancy. She was talking about cancer. I had to confirm with her, "Are you telling me I have cancer?" "Yes," she said. "Are you telling me I have breast cancer?" "Yes," she said.

I think back to how weird it was that she couldn't say those words, that she made me say them. She rambled on a bit more on the pathology and then said the doctor would like to see my husband and me to discuss a treatment plan. When my husband and I

arrived, the doctor opened his calendar and said he could get me in that Friday for surgery and then we'd start chemo. I asked about reconstruction, but he said that would come later.

I had done enough research over the weekend to know I didn't have to follow that plan. When I told him about my plan for the year of running he told me I would run after he saved my life. I knew right then, we weren't a good fit. So I got a second opinion. As it turns out, my oncologist was a runner and my plastic surgeon was a runner. While they didn't always agree with me, they supported my plans to run through treatment. Running helped me feel normal. It allowed me to continue what I loved doing.

Now, almost 8 years later, I still run and I help mentor newly diagnosed women. I always tell them to make sure you have a good relationship with your doctors and don't give up what you love just because you have cancer. Whatever it is you love doing, that will help get you through. I also learned during my experience that I have to advocate for myself. While doctors mean well, I know my body (since I'm with it all the time) than anyone else.



A picture shows the Eiffel tower illuminated in pink to mark the start of 'Octobre Rose' (Pink October) or Breast Cancer Awareness Month in Paris. — AFP

Men with breast cancer have lower survival rates than women

When doctors and scientists come to his table at national cancer meetings, Michael Singer says he feels a bit like a caged specimen. "They look at me with that bewildered look, 'oh, so this is what a male breast cancer patient looks like,' " quips the retired 59-year-old from the Bronx, NY. With many diseases, women receive procedures and drugs that were largely tested in men. Breast cancer has the opposite problem: Men make up less than 1 percent of breast cancer cases and often receive treatment based on data collected in women.

What's more, breast cancer in men has been rising. Diagnoses have gone from 0.85 per 100,000 men in the United States in 1975 to 1.21 per 100,000 in 2016. This year, an estimated 2,670 U.S. males will develop the disease. And a new analysis confirms what smaller studies have suggested: Men with breast cancer fare worse than their female counterparts.

The study, published September 19 in JAMA Oncology, is the largest of its kind. It analyzed registry data on 1,816,733 U.S. patients - including 16,025 men - who were diagnosed with breast cancer from January 2004 to December 2014. At three and five years after diagnosis, as well as at the end of the study period, men had lower survival rates than women. The disparity remained "even after we adjusted for known contributing factors including clinical predictors, socioeconomic status and access to care," says Xiao-Ou Shu, an epidemiologist at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville who led the research.



To Laura Esserman, a breast oncologist at the University of California, San Francisco, who wasn't involved with the study, "the most striking thing is that there was a difference in treatment." Case in point: Although 84.5 percent of the male breast cancer patients were "hormone-receptor positive" - meaning their tumors grow in response to estrogen or progesterone - only 57.9 percent of those men received standard-of-care endocrine therapy - drugs that stop hormones from helping breast cancer cells grow. By comparison, only 75.8 percent of female breast cancer patients were hormone-receptor positive, yet 70.2 percent of them got endocrine therapy.

Consistent with past analyses, the new study also found that male breast cancer patients were older when diagnosed, and more likely to have advanced disease, compared with women. Singer isn't surprised. Unlike women, who are taught to do breast exams on themselves and advised to have regular mammograms, "guys never touch themselves there," he says. "We're never trained to look for early warning signs."

When Singer noticed a lump below his left nipple, months passed before he brought it up with his doctor in December 2010. "I was embarrassed," he says. "I was ignoring it and hoping it would go away." Weeks later, he learned it was Stage 2 breast cancer and got a mastectomy. "There are some real barriers for lesions to be found in a timely way," says Esserman, who heard Singer speak at a breast cancer charity event in September. "His talk really made me more aware of that, and how important it is to make people feel comfortable bringing this to the attention of their physicians and not be embarrassed."

In addition to shame about having a "woman's disease," Esserman says routine screening, which is done only in women and tends to detect earlier-stage disease, could explain some of the gender disparity in treatment outcomes. Another contributing factor could be compliance with follow-up treatment. After primary treatment, many breast cancer patients get assigned a 5- to 10-year regimen of tamoxifen. This daily pill reduces the risk of cancer recurrence, but also carries side effects such as mood swings, nausea, hot flashes and loss of sex drive. "Right there, you're going to lose most men," Singer says.

Even if compliance were not an issue, some experts note that the molecular pathways that produce endocrine's effects differ between the sexes, and male breast cancer patients could have alternative pathways to drive tumor growth. That means hormone therapies might not work as well in men, says Xiaoxian Bill Li, a breast pathologist at Emory University in Atlanta whose smaller 2017 study indicated that male breast cancer patients have worse outcomes than females, especially for early-stage disease.

To expand treatment options, the Food and Drug Administration issued a draft guidance in August encouraging drug companies to include men in breast cancer studies. (Last year, the FDA released a guidance document to motivate inclusion of pregnant women (SN: 5/30/18) in clinical trials.) And when clinical trial data is scant, the agency occasionally considers other sources of information. In April, for instance, the FDA expanded the indications for the breast cancer drug palbociclib to include men, based on electronic health records and post-marketing data related to patients' real-world experiences.

Recently, the agency approved several breast cancer drugs for both men and women even though the clinical trials had no male participants, because the drugs weren't expected to behave differently between genders, says Richard Pazdur, director of the FDA's Oncology Center of Excellence. "This is huge," Singer says. This is "proof that the tide is turning, that we matter."

New vaccine helps kill cancer cells in breast cancer patient

Lee Mercker, from Florida, US, became the first patient to take part in a Mayo Clinic trial for a new vaccine after being diagnosed in March with early stages of the disease. She told First Coast News she had "DCIS stage zero" breast cancer, meaning the cancer cells had not yet spread. Lee was left with three options - have a lumpectomy where the cancer cells are removed, undergo a mastectomy where the breasts are removed, or join a clinical trial for a potentially life-saving vaccine to kill the cells and prevent them from coming back.

"I signed on the dotted line that day," Lee said of the 12-week trial at the clinics Jacksonville campus. The vaccine worked for Lee as the trial found it had helped kill some of her cancer cells, according to First Coast

News. "It's supposed to stimulate a patient's own immune response so that the immune cells like t-cells would go in and attack the cancer," said Dr. Saranya Chumsri, an oncologist at the world-renowned medical centre.

Lee said the process involved a series of shots and tests. "They always took your blood, you had a physical, they'd make your shot right there on the spot for you," Lee said. "It was three shots, all in a row, alternating arms, four shots, two weeks apart." "It's supposed to be just off the shelf, kind of similar to when you get the flu shot or pneumonia shot," Dr Chumsri said. Lee was still required to get a mastectomy to make sure everything was removed properly. Researchers can view the breast tissue to access how the vaccine works. —AFP



Women on hormone-replacement therapy warned of breast cancer risk

Women who are current or past users of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) to treat symptoms of menopause are reminded to be vigilant for signs of breast cancer, even after stopping HRT, says the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. This is because a new study, published by The Lancet, confirmed that women who use HRT for longer than one year have a higher risk of breast cancer than women who never use HRT.

This known risk of breast cancer gets lower once HRT is stopped, but the new study shows some increased risk remains for more than 10 years compared to women who have never used HRT. The increased risk of breast cancer is seen with all types of HRT, except for topical HRT applied directly onto or into the vagina. Women who use, or are planning to use HRT, should be aware of these new findings when

considering HRT use at their next appointment. Women who have previously used HRT should be vigilant for signs of breast cancer and see a doctor if they notice any changes in their breasts.

The MHRA advises that HRT should only be initiated for relief of menopausal symptoms that adversely affect quality of life. Women should use the lowest effective dose of HRT for the shortest duration and HRT should only be continued as long as the benefit in alleviating menopausal symptoms outweighs the risks associated with treatment. In all cases, a careful appraisal of all the risks and benefits should be undertaken regularly, as a woman's need for treatment and chance of side effects changes over time. Each woman's risk will depend on what type of HRT is used and how long it is used for. Your doctor or nurse can tell you more about your risks. — AFP

Drinking alcohol is clearly linked to an increased risk of breast cancer. The risk increases with the amount of alcohol consumed. Women who have 1 alcoholic drink a day have a small (about 7% to 10%) increase in risk compared with non-drinkers, while women who have 2 to 3 drinks a day have about a 20 percent higher risk than non-drinkers. Alcohol is linked to an increased risk of other types of cancer, too. The American Cancer Society recommends that women who drink have no more than 1 drink a day.

Being overweight or obese after menopause increases breast cancer risk. Before menopause your ovaries make most of your estrogen, and fat tissue makes only a small part of the total amount. After menopause (when the ovaries stop making estrogen), most of a woman's estrogen comes from fat tissue. Having more fat tissue after menopause can raise estrogen levels and increase your chance of getting breast cancer. Also, women who are overweight tend to have higher blood insulin levels. Higher insulin levels have been linked to some cancers, including breast cancer.

Weight might also have different effects on different types of breast cancer. For example, being overweight after menopause is more strongly linked with an increased risk of hormone receptor-positive breast cancer, whereas some research suggests that being overweight before menopause might increase your risk of the less common triple-negative breast cancer. The American Cancer Society recommends you stay at a healthy weight throughout your life and avoid excess weight gain by balancing your food intake with physical activity.

Evidence is growing that regular physical activity reduces breast cancer risk, especially in women past

Women who have not had children or who had their first child after age 30 have a slightly higher breast cancer risk overall. Having many pregnancies and becoming pregnant at an early age reduces breast cancer risk. Still, the effect of pregnancy on breast cancer risk is complex. For example, the risk of breast cancer is higher for about the first decade after having a child, particularly for hormone receptor-negative breast cancer (including the less common triple-negative breast cancer). The risk then becomes lower over time.

Most studies suggest that breastfeeding may slightly lower breast cancer risk, especially if it's continued for a year or more. But this has been hard to study, especially in countries like the United States, where breastfeeding for this long is uncommon. The explanation for this possible effect may be that breastfeeding reduces a woman's total number of lifetime menstrual cycles (the same as starting menstrual periods at a later age or going through early menopause).

Birth control shot: Depo-Provera is an injectable form of progesterone that's given once every 3 months for birth control. Some studies have found that women currently using birth-control shots seem to have an increase in breast cancer risk, but other studies have not found an increased risk.

Birth control implants, intrauterine devices (IUDs), skin patches, vaginal rings: These forms of birth control also use hormones, which in theory could fuel breast cancer growth. Some studies have shown a link

Hormone therapy with estrogen (often combined with progesterone) has been used for many years to help relieve symptoms of menopause and help prevent osteoporosis (thinning of the bones). This treatment goes by many names, such as post-menopausal hormone therapy (PHT), hormone replacement therapy (HRT), and menopausal hormone therapy (MHT).

There are 2 main types of hormone therapy. For women who still have a uterus (womb), doctors generally prescribe estrogen and progesterone (known as combined hormone therapy, or just HT). Progesterone is needed because estrogen alone can increase the risk of cancer of the uterus. For women who've had a hysterectomy (who no longer have a uterus), estrogen alone can be used. This is known as estrogen replacement therapy (ERT) or just estrogen therapy (ET).

Combined hormone therapy (HT): Use of combined hormone therapy after menopause increases the risk of breast cancer. This increase in risk is typically seen after about 4 years of use. Combined HT also increases the likelihood that the cancer may be found at a more advanced stage. The increased risk from combined HT appears to apply mainly to current and recent users. A woman's breast cancer risk seems to go back down within 5 years of stopping treatment.

Estrogen therapy (ET): Studies of the use of estrogen alone after menopause have had mixed results, with some finding a slightly higher risk and some finding no increase. If ET does increase the risk of breast cancer, it is not by much.

At this time there aren't many strong reasons to use post-menopausal hormone therapy (either combined HT or ET), other than possibly for the short-term relief of menopausal symptoms. Along with the increased risk of breast cancer, combined HT also appears to increase the risk of heart disease, blood clots, and strokes. It does lower the risk of colorectal cancer and osteoporosis, but this must be weighed against the possible harms, especially since there are other ways to prevent and treat osteoporosis, and screening can sometimes prevent colon cancer. ET does not seem to increase breast cancer risk, but it does increase the risk of stroke.

The decision to use HT should be made by a woman and her doctor after weighing the possible risks and benefits (including the severity of her menopausal symptoms), and considering her other risk factors for heart disease, breast cancer, and osteoporosis. If they decide she should try HT for symptoms of menopause, it's usually best to use it at the lowest dose that works for her and for as short a time as possible.

Breast implants have not been linked with an increased risk of the most common types of breast cancer. However, they have been linked to a rare type of non-Hodgkin lymphoma called breast implant-associated anaplastic large cell lymphoma (BIA-ALCL), which can form in the scar tissue around the implant. This lymphoma appears to happen more often in implants with textured (rough) surfaces rather than smooth surfaces. If BIA-ALCL does occur after an implant, it can show up as a lump, a collection of fluid, swelling, or pain near the implant, or as a change in a breast's size or shape. — www.cancer.org

There are a number of harmless causes for breast pain and tenderness that may primarily be related to changes in hormone levels. These can include:

- Pregnancy - more often during the first trimester
- Days following childbirth as milk comes in Breastfeeding Mastitis, which is caused by a milk duct that is not properly draining and becomes infected, should be treated. It has no correlation with cancer, but it can become a serious infection if left untreated.

Fibrocystic breast tissue

Some women have lumpy breast tissue called fibrocystic breasts, which may be more painful during certain times of the month. Fibrocystic breasts are not necessarily linked to cancer, and the lumps are fluid filled cysts rather than a mass of cells. Fibrocystic breast changes are also a common cause of breast pain. Fibrocystic breast tissue contains lumps that tend to be more tender just before your menstrual period.

Meanwhile, 390 of the participants were given a placebo before and after surgery. According to the study's findings, 64.8 per cent of those who took the immunotherapy drug later showed no signs of cancer in their tissue, 13.6 per cent more than those who took the placebo.

"Triple negative breast cancer is a particularly aggressive form of cancer with the potential to devastate lives," said lead author Professor Peter Schmid from Queen Mary University of London and St Bartholomew's Hospital.

"We have been desperately looking for better treatment options. These early results suggest that the addition of immunotherapy to chemotherapy leads to a substantial reduction in recurrences in this form of breast cancer." Professor Schmid added that while these are "preliminary results", they are "very promising." "If we prevent the cancer from coming back, we cure more patients, but we need longer-term data to confirm this," he said.

The professor explained to news agency PA that when the cancer is “completely gone out of the breast”, patients have an increased likelihood of long-term survival and “cure rates are much higher”. “Whereas in patients where there is still cancer visible at the time that we do the operation, they have a higher risk of recurrence,” he said. —AFP

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When breast cancer is detected early, and is in the localized stage, the 5-year relative survival rate is 100 percent. Early detection includes doing monthly breast self-exams, and scheduling regular clinical breast exams and mammograms. Every person should know the symptoms and signs of breast cancer, and any time an abnormality is discovered, it should be investigated by a healthcare professional.

Most people who have breast cancer symptoms and signs will initially notice only one or two, and the presence of these symptoms and signs do not automatically mean that you have breast cancer. By performing monthly breast self-exams, you will be able to more easily identify any changes in your breast. Be sure to talk to your healthcare professional if you notice anything unusual.

Nipple tenderness or a lump or thickening in or near the breast or underarm area

A change in the skin texture or an enlargement of pores in the skin of the breast (some describe this as similar to an orange peel's texture)

A lump in the breast (It's important to remember that all lumps should be investigated by a health-care professional, but not all lumps are cancerous.)

A change in the breast or nipple appearance:
Any unexplained change in the size or shape of the breast

Unexplained swelling of the breast (especially if on one side only)

Unexplained shrinkage of the breast (especially if on one side only)

Recent asymmetry of the breasts (Although it is common for women to have one breast that is slightly larger than the other, if the onset of asymmetry is recent, it should be checked.)

Nipple that is turned slightly inward or inverted
Skin of the breast, areola, or nipple that becomes scaly, red, or swollen or may have ridges or pitting resembling the skin of an orange

Any nipple discharge-particularly clear discharge or bloody discharge:

It is also important to note that a milky discharge that is present when a woman is not breastfeeding should be checked by her doctor, although it is not linked with breast cancer.

Let your doctor know about any nipple discharge, clear, bloody or milky.



Hoop troupe: Croquet an unlikely hit for Vietnam retirees



Best known as a historic pastime among Europe's upper crust, croquet has found an unlikely fan base among Vietnamese retirees eager to fill their diaries and move their limbs. Playing on the dusty grounds of a pagoda on the outskirts of Hanoi, a handful of elderly players—one as old as 93 — gather most afternoons for a friendly match. “We don’t have to move a lot when playing croquet... and it also exercises our brains,” Nguyen Van Tuu said from the dirt pitch in the capital’s Soc Son district.

The game first emerged in the 19th century, quickly becoming popular among moneyed classes in England and later embraced more widely as a leisurely garden hobby. While little-known in Vietnam today, croquet was transported to Soc Son in 1996 by a local official who wanted to give the retirees something to do. It’s become a permanent fixture for the seniors there, who play with handmade metal and wood mallets and balls imported from China, keeping score on a rudimentary leader board.



These photographs show elderly people playing a game of croquet in a courtyard in Hanoi’s Soc Son district. — AFP photos



This photograph shows a makeshift wooden scoreboard during a game of croquet.



People wait for their turn to play croquet in a courtyard in Hanoi’s Soc Son district.

Stir crazy - coffee for one for Japan captain Leitch

Japan’s rugby captain Michael Leitch has discovered a frustrating drawback to the side’s storming World Cup run—he can’t pop out for a quiet coffee any-

more. Coffee lover Leitch, who has led the Brave Blossoms to three wins out of three so far, can’t leave Japan’s team hotel without being mobbed by autograph-hunting fans. The marauding flanker, whose face adorns billboards all over Tokyo, recently finished second to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in a poll of Japan’s most recognized public figures.

Leitch, who owns a coffee shop in Tokyo, has bought a coffee machine for his room, but admits it’s not the perfect solution. “I’ve got a coffee machine in the room, but I’ve got to get out of the hotel,” Leitch told AFP after sneaking out for a coffee in the run-up to this weekend’s crunch Pool A game with Scotland. “When I want to go out I want to have a coffee but it’s impossible.” Japan coach Jamie Joseph even handed the game captaincy to Pieter Labuschagne for Japan’s victories over Ireland and Samoa to give Leitch more breathing space.

“The change of captaincy allowed Michael to get his form back,” said Joseph, who reverted to Leitch as skipper for Sunday’s typhoon-threatened game in Yokohama. “We can all feel how much extra he has to do, particularly in Japan—he can’t go outside the hotel without having to sign autographs,” added the former All Black. “But he’s the right leader for Japan and I think this is the right game for him to lead the team.”

Leitch, who along with tennis player Naomi Osaka, carries the flag for mixed-race or foreign-born Japan athletes, leads out a multi-cultural World Cup team with roots in New Zealand, South Africa and the Pacific islands. He also has plans to bring Mongolian teenagers to Japan to play rugby on an exchange program that mirrors his own development. But his importance to Japan’s hopes as they chase a first-ever spot in the World Cup quarter-finals cannot be underestimated.

Classifieds

Monday, October 14, 2019



STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot and Humid specially over coastal areas with light to moderate variable wind to south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear later on.

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas with light to moderate south easterly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	<div>SFC. CHART13/10/2019 0000 UTC</div>	
KUWAIT CITY	35 °C	28 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	38 °C	24 °C		
ABDALY	39 °C	24 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	38 °C	26 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	32 °C	30 °C		
AHMADI	32 °C	30 °C		
NUWAISIB	36 °C	25 °C		
WAFRA	37 °C	23 °C		
SALMY	39 °C	22 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST					
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.	
Monday	10/14	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas	38 °C	23 °C	VRB-SE 08 - 30 km/h
Tuesday	10/15	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	39 °C	24 °C	NW-SE 06 - 28 km/h
Wednesday	10/16	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	39 °C	26 °C	NW-SE 08 - 30 km/h
Thursday	10/17	Hot and Partly cloudy	38 °C	24 °C	VRB-N 06 - 26 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:29
Sunrise	05:48
Zuhr	11:34
Asr	14:52
Sunset	17:20
Isha	18:37

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	36 °C
MIN. Temp.	24 °C
MAX. RH	93 %
MIN. RH	39 %
MAX. Wind	SE 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

CHANGE OF NAME

It is to be informed to the public at large by this public notice that the original name on my Passport (No. Z1907249), Civil ID No. 272050803003, is to be corrected as ZUBAIR MUSTAFA KHAN. (C 5457)

I, Joseph Shibu George (Eruthuckal House, Keekozhoor P.O, Ranny, Pathnamthitta, Kerala, Pin 689672) holder of Indian Passport No. S2349462 issued at Kuwait on 07/12/2017 presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Joseph Shibu and Surname: George. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5459)

I, Asha George (Thekkeveedu, Pathanapuram P.O, Kollam, Kerala, Pin 689695) holder of Indian Passport No. K7040391 issued at Kuwait on 29/07/2012 presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Asha and Surname: George. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5459)

I, Roy Mathew (Chirackal house, Karikolam P.O. Pathanamthitta, Kerala) holder of Indian Passport No. J4437810 issued at Kuwait on 21/12/2010 presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Roy and Surname: Mathew. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5456)

I, Mariamma John (Chirackal house, Karikolam P.O. Pathanamthitta, Kerala, Pin 689682) holder of Indian

Passport No. P7118425 issued at Kuwait on 10/01/2017 presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Mariamma and Surname: John. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5456)

I, Roy Mathew, Father of Ron Roy Mathew, holder of Indian Passport No. S4696329 issued at Kuwait on 21/05/2018, permanent address of Chirackal house, Karikolam P.O, Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India and presently residing at Kuwait do hereby change my son given name as: Ron Roy and Surname: Mathew. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5456)

I, Roy Mathew, Father of Riya Mariyam Roy, holder of Indian Passport No. N9722418 issued at Kuwait on 15/05/2016, permanent address of Chirackal house, Karikulam P.O, Pathanamthitta, Kerala, pin 689682, India and presently residing at Kuwait do hereby change my daughter given name as: Riya Mariyam and Surname: Roy. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5456)

I, Binu Puthozhathil Sam, (Puthozhathil House, Mekozhoor P.O Pathanamthitta, Kerala Pin 689678) holder of Indian Passport No. P0724746 issued at Kuwait on 24/07/2016 presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Binu Puthozhathil and surname: Sam. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5458)

I, Sherry Kunjukunju (Puthozhathil House, Mekozhoor P.O Pathanamthitta, Kerala pin 689678) holder of Indian Passport No. T2410628 issued at Kuwait on 10/02/2019 presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Sherry and Surname: Kunjukunju. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5458)

I, Binu Puthozhathil Sam, Father of Jenil Binu Sam, holder of Indian Passport No. S7937650 issued at Kuwait on 30/07/2018, permanent address of Puthozhathil House, Mekozhoor P.O Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India and presently residing at Kuwait do hereby change my son given name as: Jenil Binu and Surname: Sam. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5458)

I, Binu Puthozhathil Sam, Father of Joshin Binu Sam, holder of Indian Passport No. R8270345 issued at Kuwait on 09/08/2017, permanent address of Puthozhathil House, Mekozhoor P.O Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India and presently residing at Kuwait do hereby change my son given name as: Joshin Binu and Surname: Sam. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5458)

I, ABDUL YUSUF ABDUL KARIM (Old name) holder of Indian Passport No. L6661740 and Civil ID no. 279010502291 presently residing in Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: SHAIKH YUSUF SHAIKH KARIM and Surname: QURESHI. (C 5599)

I, KUTTIKATTIL RAMDAS holder of Indian Passport No. L3857702 having permanent address Kerala, India 679105 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: RAMDAS and Surname: KUTTIKATTIL (C 5455) 11-10-2019

I Rosamma Mathew Kallukuzhy, Kallukuzhy House, Umbidi P.O, Thottackad, Kottayam (holder of Indian Passport No. K5294494) presently residing in Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Rosamma Mathew, Surname: Kallukuzhy. (C 5453) 10-10-2019

MATRIMONIAL

32 year old Goan Catholic boy looking for suitable Goan Catholic life partner. He has graduated in industrial engineering from a reputed university in the US. He is currently employed in Kuwait and looking forward to settle down very soon. He is 5'10" tall, fair and good looking. If you think you are the right match please contact at 96765696 ASAP Email: if8016037@gmail.com (C 5454) 10-10-2019

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EMERGENCY 112



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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Monday 14/10/2019							Departure Flights on Monday 14/10/2019								
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	KAC	742	Dammam	12:55	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	IGO	1756	CNN	12:30
FEG	441	Asyut	00:05	IRA	667	Esfahan	13:10	AIC	982	Ahmedabad/Chennai	00:05	NIA	1502	Asyut	12:35
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	JZR	774	Riyadh	13:35	JZR	713	Sohag	00:10	AXB	790	CNN	13:10
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	KAC	672	Jeddah	13:45	MSC	412	Asyut	00:15	RBG	554	Alexandria	13:10
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	UAE	877	Dubai	14:00	MSR	615	Cairo	00:30	JZR	123	Dubai	13:10
KAC	102	London	00:50	JZR	152	Mashhad	14:00	FEG	342	Sohag	01:05	JZR	115	Doha	13:25
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	JZR	723	Alexandria	01:05	MSR	611	Cairo	13:45
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:15	IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10	THY	767	Istanbul	14:00
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	KAC	677	Dubai	01:40	IRA	600	Tehran	14:10
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	QTR	078	Doha	14:25	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
RJA	642	Amman	01:20	KAC	286	Dhaka	14:35	THY	773	Istanbul	01:50	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:00
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	KAC	364	Colombo	14:35	DLH	625	Frankfurt	01:50	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	KAC	304	Mumbai	14:45	KAC	285	Dhaka	02:00	FDB	060	Dubai	15:05
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	SVA	500	Jeddah	14:45	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00	JZR	103	Bahrain	15:05
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	JZR	222	Riyadh	14:45	KAC	417	Manila	02:00	UAE	878	Dubai	15:30
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	562	Amman	14:50	JZR	111	Doha	02:10	QTR	1079	Doha	15:30
THY	1404	AYT	02:45	KAC	618	Doha	14:50	THY	765	Istanbul	02:50	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	KAC	788	Jeddah	14:55	KKK	1269	Istanbul	02:55	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:50	KAC	516	Tehran	15:00	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05	KAC	105	London	15:55
JZR	502	Lahore	02:55	KAC	118	New York	15:00	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:10	KAC	563	Amman	16:00
JZR	406	Kochi	03:05	KNE	529	Jeddah	15:05	UAE	854	Dubai	03:30	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	KAC	412	Bangkok	15:10	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00	KAC	405	Kochi	16:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	OMA	644	Muscat	04:05	KAC	775	Riyadh	16:05
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	OMA	645	Muscat	15:20	JZR	101	Bahrain	04:05	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:10
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	ABY	127	Sharjah	15:35	RBG	1558	Alexandria	04:10	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:15
RBG	1557	Alexandria	03:30	UAE	857	Dubai	15:35	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15	OMA	646	Muscat	16:20
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	FEG	341	Sohag	15:45	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:00	KAC	546	Cairo	16:00	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:20	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:20
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	JZR	732	Cairo	16:05	JZR	1735	Cairo	04:40	KAC	619	Doha	16:25
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	FDB	051	Dubai	16:10	QTR	1077	Doha	04:40	FEG	242	Alexandria	16:25
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	04:15	QTR	1072	Doha	16:15	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:00	KAC	699	Doha	16:55
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	KAC	502	Beirut	16:15	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:00	FDB	052	Dubai	17:10
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:50	SAW	705	Damascus	16:15	KAC	303	Mumbai	05:00	QTR	1073	Doha	17:25
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	JZR	116	Doha	16:15	THY	1465	Istanbul	05:10	KAC	155	Istanbul	17:35
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:00	KAC	303	Colombo	05:15	KAC	361	Colombo	17:35
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:05	THY	771	Istanbul	06:00	UAE	858	Dubai	17:40
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	JZR	214	Jeddah	17:10	FDB	070	Dubai	06:00	KAC	283	Dhaka	17:40
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	JZR	124	Dubai	17:30	THY	771	Istanbul	06:30	KAC	621	Doha	17:50
KAC	552	Cairo	05:45	IAW	157	Baghdad	17:35	GFA	212	Bahrain	06:50	KAC	381	Delhi	17:55
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	JZR	104	Dubai	17:40	RJA	643	Amman	07:00	KAC	706	Damascus	18:00
JZR	702	Asyut	06:10	KAC	158	Dubai	18:00	JZR	121	Dubai	07:15	SAW	706	Damascus	18:00
BAW	157	London	06:10	QTR	1080	Istanbul	18:00	KAC	167	Paris	07:15	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:10
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	MSR	620	Doha	18:10	JZR	113	Doha	07:30	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:15
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	FDB	063	Cairo	18:30	BAW	156	London	07:30	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	RJA	640	Dubai	18:10	KAC	173	Munich	07:40	JZR	127	Dubai	18:20
KAC	204	Lahore	06:45	GFA	217	Dubai	18:30	JZR	211	Jeddah	07:45	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:25
JZR	102	Bahrain	06:45	ABY	123	Amman	19:05	IGO	1767	Mumbai	08:00	JZR	733	Cairo	18:35
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	KAC	744	Bahrain	19:05	RBG	214	Sohag	08:10	KAC	158	Baghdad	19:00
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	KAC	616	Sharjah	19:20	JZR	151	Mashhad	08:15	IAW	158	Baghdad	19:00
RBG	211	Luxor	07:25	KAC	674	Dammam	19:25	FDB	054	Dubai	08:15	JZR	253	Amman	19:10
JZR	724	Alexandria	07:50	KAC	545	Bahrain	19:40	KAC	163	MXP	08:35	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	19:20
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	674	Dubai	19:45	KAC	501	Beirut	08:35	QTR	1081	Doha	19:20
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	KNE	381	Riyadh	19:45	KAC	545	Cairo	08:35	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
MSC	401	Alexandria	08:00	OMA	647	Dubai	19:50	KAC	561	Amman	08:50	FDB	064	Dubai	19:45
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	NIA	1501	Taif	20:00	MSC	402	Alexandria	08:50	GFA	218	Bahrain	19:50
IRA	601	Tehran	08:10	DLH	624	Muscat	20:05	KAC	117	New York	08:55	KAC	331	Trivandrum	19:55
KAC	352	Kochi	08:20	MEA	402	Asyut	20:10	QTR	1085	Doha	09:00	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:00
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	KAC	620	Frankfurt	20:10	IRA	666	Esfahan	09:05	KAC	357	Kochi	20:05
RSB	1078	Baku	08:30	KAC	174	Beirut	20:15	KAC	671	Dubai	09:10	RJA	641	Amman	20:05
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:30	KAC	744	Doha	20:15	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:10	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:30
KAC	334	Trivandrum	08:50	QTR	1088	Doha	20:30	KAC	157	Istanbul	09:15	FDB	058	Dubai	20:30
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	JAV	621	Munich	20:30	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:15	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:50
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	RBG	219	Doha	20:40	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:35	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50
ETD	9873	Tbilisi	09:10	KLM	445	Doha	20:45	KAC	773	Riyadh	09:40	DLH	624	Dammam	20:55
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	ETD	307	Amman	20:55	JZR	741	Dammam	09:40	OMA	648	Muscat	21:05
GOW	061	CNN	09:30	UAE	859	Sohag	21:00	KAC	731	Cairo	09:40	NIA	1602	Luxor	21:10
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	ALK	229	Amsterdam	21:05	UAE	856	Dubai	09:45	MEA	403	Beirut	21:15
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	168	Paris	21:10	OMA	642	Muscat	09:50	KAC	301	Mumbai	21:25
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	THY	764	Istanbul	21:15	QTR	1071	Doha	09:55	RBG	210	Sohag	21:35
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	164	MXP	21:20	GOW	062	CNN	10:00	JAV	621	Amman	21:45
AXB	395	Kozhikode	10:40	GFA	222	Doha	21:30	RSB	1079	Baku	10:05	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	KAC	564	Doha	21:40	KAC	515	Tehran	10:30	KAC	203	Doha	21:50
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	QTR	1082	Bahrain	21:50	FGO	056	Dubai	10:30	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:00
THY	1282	Trabzon	11:05	ETD	309	Amman	21:55	IDO	1754	Beirut	10:40	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
JZR	1736	Cairo	11:05	KAC	786	Asyut	22:05	KAC	617	Ahmedabad	10:40	ALK	230	Colombo	22:20
JZR	114	Doha	11:10	SVA	514	Abu Dhabi	22:10	KAC	617	Doha	10:40	KAC	383	Delhi	22:25
IGO	1755	CNN	11:30	AIC	975	Jeddah	22:15	ETD	9874	Abu Dhabi	11:10	JZR	407	Ahmedabad	22:40
NIA	1401	Sohag	11:35	SVA	502	Riyadh	22:25	AXB	890	Mangalore	11:20	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:50
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	JZR	128	Chennai/Goa	22:25	JZR	221	Riyadh	11:20	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:55
AXB	789	CNN/Bahrain	12:10	MSC	411	Jeddah	22:45	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35	KAC	551	Cairo	23:00
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:30	MSR	614	Dubai	22:50	AXB	396	Kozhikode	11:50	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	FDB	071	Asyut	23:15	MEA	405	Beirut	11:55	QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
MSR	610	Cairo	12:45	FDB	071	Cairo	23:30	THY	1283	Trabzon	12:00	SVA	515	Riyadh	23:25
						Dubai	23:35	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:05	JZR	701	Asyut	23:45
								QTR	1075	Doha	12:10	SVA	503	Jeddah	23:45

Khamenei tells Iran’s Guards to develop advanced weapons

DUBAI: Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told Iran’s elite Revolutionary Guards yesterday to develop more advanced and modern weapons, amid increasingly tense disputes with the United States and Gulf Arab states. Tensions in the Gulf have risen to new highs since May 2018, when the Trump administration withdrew from a 2015 international nuclear accord with Tehran that put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for the easing of sanctions.

As US sanctions have been reimposed, there have been a series of attacks in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf that Washington and its allies have blamed on Iran, which denies responsibility. “The Guards should have advanced and modern weapons ... Your weapons should be modern and updated. It should be developed at home. You need to develop and produce your weapons,” Khamenei said in a speech at Imam Hossein Military University in Tehran.

“Today the Guards have a powerful presence inside and outside Iran ... America’s hostile approach has increased the Guards’ greatness,” Khamenei said, according to state TV. Washington and Riyadh have accused Iran of being behind attacks on Saudi oil facilities on Sept. 14, which temporarily knocked out half Saudi oil output. Tehran denies any role in the strikes which were claimed by Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthis forces.

Amid the tensions, Washington plans to deploy about 3,000 troops to Saudi Arabia, including fighter

squadrons, an air expeditionary wing and air defense personnel. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan arrived in Tehran yesterday, saying he would continue efforts to defuse the row between Tehran and Riyadh, which have been locked in proxy conflicts in the Middle East. Khan, who also met Khamenei, is visiting Tehran after he said US President Donald Trump had asked him to help reduce tensions with Iran.

“Pakistan does not want conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia,” Khan told a joint news conference with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, broadcast on state television. “I am happy to facilitate talks between Tehran and Riyadh,” said Khan, saying he had “constructive talks” with Rouhani and planned to visit Saudi Arabia tomorrow. Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel Al-Jubeir said yesterday that Riyadh had not asked Islamabad to mediate.

The minister told reporters in Riyadh the Pakistani prime minister was acting “on his own initiative” and said Iranians needed “to change their behavior, their policies if they want countries to deal with them as with normal countries.” Iran’s foreign ministry said before Khan’s visit that Tehran was ready for talks with Riyadh with or without a mediator. Rouhani told the news conference after meeting Khan that “any effort based on goodwill is welcomed ... during the meeting, we agreed that the regional issues can be resolved through diplomacy and through dialogue between countries.” — Reuters



TEHRAN: A handout picture provided by the office of Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei shows him meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan (center) and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani (left) in the capital Tehran. — AFP

Facebook researchers use maths for better translations

PARIS: Designers of machine translation tools still mostly rely on dictionaries to make a foreign language understandable. But now there is a new way: numbers. Facebook researchers say rendering words into figures and exploiting mathematical similarities between languages is a promising avenue—even if a universal communicator a la Star Trek remains a distant dream.

Powerful automatic translation is a big priority for internet giants. Allowing as many people as possible worldwide to communicate is not just an altruistic goal, but also good business. Facebook, Google and Microsoft as well as Russia’s Yandex, China’s Baidu and others are constantly seeking to improve their translation tools. Facebook has artificial intelligence experts on the job at

one of its research labs in Paris. Up to 200 languages are currently used on Facebook, said Antoine Bordes, European co-director of fundamental AI research for the social network.

Automatic translation is currently based on having large databases of identical texts in both languages to work from. But for many language pairs there just aren’t enough such parallel texts. That’s why researchers have been looking for another method, like the system developed by Facebook which creates a mathematical representation for words. Each word becomes a “vector” in a space of several hundred dimensions. Words that have close associations in the spoken language also find themselves close to each other in this vector space.

From Basque to Amazonian?

“For example, if you take the words ‘cat’ and ‘dog’, semantically, they are words that describe a similar thing, so they will be extremely close together physically” in the vector space, said Guillaume Lample, one of the system’s designers. “If you take words like Madrid, London, Paris, which are European capital cities, it’s the same idea.”

These language maps can then be linked to one another using algorithms—at first roughly, but eventually becoming more refined, until entire phrases can be matched without too many errors. Lample said results are already promising. For the language pair of English-Romanian, Facebook’s current machine translation system is “equal or maybe a bit worse” than the word vector system, said Lample.

But for the rarer language pair of English-Urdu, where Facebook’s traditional system doesn’t have many bilingual texts to reference, the word vector system is already superior, he said. But could the method allow translation from, say, Basque into the language of an Amazonian tribe? In theory, yes, said Lample, but in practice a large body of written texts are needed to map the language, something lacking in Amazonian tribal languages. “If you have just tens of thousands of phrases, it won’t work. You need several hundreds of thousands,” he said.

‘Holy Grail’

Experts at France’s CNRS national scientific centre said the approach Lample has taken for Facebook

could produce useful results, even if it doesn’t result in perfect translations. Thierry Poibeau of CNRS’s Lattice laboratory, which also does research into machine translation, called the word vector approach “a conceptual revolution”.

He said “translating without parallel data”—dictionaries or versions of the same documents in both languages—“is something of the Holy Grail” of machine translation. “But the question is what level of performance can be expected” from the word vector method, said Poibeau. The method “can give an idea of the original text” but the capability for a good translation every time remains unproven.

Francois Yvon, a researcher at CNRS’s Computer Science Laboratory for Mechanics and Engineering Sciences, said “the linking of languages is much more difficult” when they are far removed from one another. “The manner of denoting concepts in Chinese is completely different from French,” he added. However even imperfect translations can be useful, said Yvon, and could prove sufficient to track hate speech, a major priority for Facebook. — AFP

High-tech start-up tackling extremism

LONDON: Vidhya Ramalingam believes it’s always possible to change, even for people deeply involved in the murky online world of jihadist and far-right extremism. Her company Moonshot CVE has the ambitious aim of trying to get anyone tempted by violence back on the straight and narrow. Over the last four years, the London-based start-up has grown quietly but not anonymously; if a recent partnership deal with Facebook is anything to go by.

US national Ramalingam and the firm’s co-founder Ross Frenett previously worked as researchers into extremism and believe radical groups are often one step ahead when it comes to technology. “There was a lot of recognition that terrorists were using the internet in creative ways, that they were reaching young audiences, that they were able to innovate,” she told AFP in an interview.

“Yet those of us that were trying to counter them simply were moving too slowly and had too many constraints to actually replicate those methods for counter-terrorism purposes.” That led to the idea of a technology start-up able to keep up with and fight against all forms of violent extremism, from jihadists and neo-Nazis, to nationalists and even “incels”. But greater visibility has forced the company to take more security measures because of the sensitive nature of its work—and the potential for violence from the people it tracks.

The address of Moonshot CVE’s London offices is kept secret and most of its staff have no visible online presence. Just to get into its premises in a nondescript building in the British capital, visitors have to pass through heavy armoured doors and a security check. “We take precautions,” said Ramalingam. “We work on high-risk issues and we try and put as much into the public domain as possible.”

The start-up’s name refers to the act of launching a rocket to the moon—and gives an indication of its stellar ambition. The CVE stands for countering violent extremism. It employs 40 people working in 15 languages,

including English, French and Arabic, on 76 projects in 28 countries, with clients ranging from governments to technology firms.

One project is a collaboration with the Canadian government against jihadism and the far-right. Another works with the United Nations on online Islamist content in Asia.

The company has also had a partnership for several years with Google, using online advertising to target people looking up violent extremism on the net. The Facebook contract involves Moonshot analysing how effective the social network could be to “deradicalise” users looking up extremist content. Moonshot is classed as a “social enterprise” in that it reinvests most of its profits into the projects it develops and technology, guaranteeing independence.

It’s known for having developed the “redirect method” of finding individuals taken in by violent extremism then trying to make them change their ways. That involves identifying people searching for such content online, finding out as much possible how they are doing it and what ideas they are looking for, before intervening. That can even include direct contact, using social workers or mental

health specialists who work in the “real world”.

Jihadist online networks are known for being more difficult to infiltrate, and often use hard-to-access encrypted software such as the Telegram messaging app and other platforms. Far-right extremists and white supremacists on the other hand are often more inclined to air their views openly, which makes them easier to find, said Ramalingam. “Obviously, if we believe someone poses an imminent threat, that’s where it’s beyond our organization,” she added. “Only on rare occasions we’ll engage with law enforcement on this.”

Since 2015, Moonshot has gathered huge amounts of data and experience, while Ramalingam says direct messages sent to users offering help have been particularly successful. “I’ve worked with so many individuals that were deep in these sort of groups,” she said. “They’ve now left and turned their life around and some of them have become peace activists. “It’s a huge transformation. To my mind change is always possible because I’ve seen it with my own eyes. You have to have an optimistic view.” — AFP

26 die as Hagibis slams Japan...

Continued from Page 1

breach sent water from the Chikuma river gushing into residential neighborhoods, flooding homes up to the second floor. Military and fire department helicopters winched survivors from roofs and balconies in several locations, but in Fukushima one rescue went tragically awry when a woman died after falling from a chopper cradle. Elsewhere, rescue workers carried out an hours-long boat operation to evacuate hundreds of people from a retirement home in Kawagoe, northwest of Tokyo, which was flooded up to its top floor.

One elderly woman wearing an orange life vest was brought out from a boat on the back of a hard-hat wearing rescuer. Others were hoisted onto wheelchairs and pushed along a muddy shore on arrival by boat. Hagibis smashed into the main Japanese island of Honshu on Saturday night as one of the most violent typhoons in recent years, with wind gusts of up to 216 kilometers per hour.

‘Please do your best’

The storm claimed its first victim even before making landfall, when high winds flipped a vehicle, killing its driver. Landslides and flooding claimed more lives overnight, and the toll climbed higher after sunrise yesterday, as the scale of the devastation wrought by Hagibis became clear. Bodies were retrieved from submerged homes and vehicles, from raging overflowing rivers, and from buildings buried in landslides.

The dead included a municipal worker whose car was overcome by floodwaters and two Chinese crew members aboard a boat that sank overnight in Tokyo Bay. Four of the crew were rescued, but authorities were still searching for another six. “The government will do its utmost,” Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said, vowing that rescue efforts would run through the night. “Please do your best,” he told a disaster management meeting.

More than 110,000 homes were still without power yesterday evening, with others experiencing water outages. At the storm’s peak, more than seven million people

were placed under non-compulsory evacuation orders, and over 135,000 people were still in government shelters yesterday. The storm prompted the Japan Meteorological Agency to issue its highest-level rain disaster warning, saying “unprecedented” downpours were expected.

“The water came up higher than my head in the house,” Hajime Tokuda, a finance professional living in Kawasaki near Tokyo said. He moved to his family’s home nearby, but that flooded too and they had to be rescued by boat. In Saitama’s Higashi Matsuyama city, northwest of Tokyo, rice and flower farmers were counting their losses, with water submerging warehouses full of freshly harvested produce.

“We never had a flood like this before in this neighborhood,” said one farmer, who declined to give his name. “I don’t know where to start cleaning this mess.” The storm brought travel chaos during a long holiday weekend in Japan, grounding flights and halting local and bullet train services. Yesterday, train services began resuming and operations also slowly restarted at the two airports serving the capital, although many flights were cancelled.

But some lines remained halted, with aerial footage in Nagano showing rows of bullet trains partially submerged by flooding. The storm also caused havoc for the sports world, delaying Japanese Grand Prix qualifiers and forcing the cancellation of several Rugby World Cup matches. But a crucial decider saw the home team reach the World Cup quarter-finals for the first time ever. “To everyone that’s suffering from the typhoon, this game was for you guys,” said Japan captain Michael Leitch.

Amir extends condolences

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent cables of condolences yesterday to Japanese Emperor Akihito and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The cables expressed His Highness’s earnest sympathies over casualties of Typhoon Hagibis, which left at least 26 dead, in addition to more than 100 others injured, so far.

His Highness prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow mercy on the dead, wishing a speedy recovery for the injured. His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Premier Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah have sent similar cables to Emperor Akihito and Premier Abe. — Agencies

Saudi launches new logistics...

Continued from Page 1

own port and offers logistics investments and NEOM, a mega project announced in 2017, has plans for a logistics zone. Over a decade ago, Saudi government spent \$30 billion to build six economic cities

IS families flee; Turkey advances

Continued from Page 1

dead from Kurdish shelling inside Turkey at 18. The Observatory said pro-Ankara fighters “executed” at least nine civilians on Saturday near the Syrian town of Tal Abyad. The Kurds said a female Kurdish party official and her driver were among those killed.

Aid groups have warned of another humanitarian disaster in Syria’s eight-year-old war if the offensive is not halted. The UN humanitarian agency OCHA said the exodus sparked by the fighting had grown to 130,000 people and it was preparing for that figure to more than triple. “We have moved into a planning scenario where up to 400,000 people could be displaced within and across the affected areas,” spokesman Jens Laerke said.

Some 12,000 IS fighters-Syrians, Iraqis as well as foreigners from 54 countries—are detained in Kurdish prisons, according to official Kurdish statistics. Displacement camps meanwhile host some 12,000 foreigners - 8,000 children and 4,000 women. “The brutal military assault led by Turkey and its mercenaries is now taking place near a camp in Ain Issa, where there are

across the kingdom to diversify the economy, create jobs for young Saudis and attract foreign investment, though many of the projects have failed to achieve expected results.

After decades of spending on development projects, the government has made attracting greater foreign investment a cornerstone of its Vision 2030 plan. But foreign investment has failed to live up to the government’s ambitions, especially after the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the hands of Saudi agents in October 2018 strained ties with Western allies. — Reuters

thousands (of people) from families of IS,” a Kurdish administration statement said.

“Some were able to escape after bombardments that targeted” the camp. It said the Ain Issa camp was “now without guards” and 785 relatives of IS jihadists had fled. The SDF, a coalition of Kurdish and Arab fighters, was the main partner on the ground in the US-led campaign against IS. According to the Observatory, at least 104 of its fighters have been killed since the start of the Turkish offensive.

According to Turkish media, Ankara aims to take control of a territory 120 kilometers long and 30 kilometers into Syria, up to the towns of Tal Abyad and Ras Al-Ain. Turkish forces and their proxies captured Tal Abyad on Friday afternoon, which left Ras Al-Ain, further east, as the last major target in the offensive. The fighting was intense in and around the town and the Observatory reported that a convoy, which included journalists and civilians, was hit by artillery.

Nine people were killed, five of them civilians, the monitoring organization said. Turkey announced it had seized the key M4 highway, which looks like it might mark the southern limit of its advance in this initial phase of the invasion. It lies 30 to 35 kilometers deep in Syrian territory. SDF fighters have taken mounting losses against the vastly superior military firepower of Turkey, which has defied mounting international protests and the threat of US sanctions in pressing on with its offensive. — AFP

Sports

Bottas Japan win seals sixth world title double for Mercedes

Mercedes clinch sixth successive drivers'-constructors' world championship double

SUZUKA: Valtteri Bottas jumped from third to first with an electric start to win the Japanese Grand Prix yesterday ahead of Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel and Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton. With only Bottas now able to overtake Hamilton in the standings, Mercedes clinched an unprecedented sixth successive drivers'-constructors' world championship double.

"I'm happy, very happy," said flying Finn Bottas, who ended a six-month wait for his third victory of 2019 after winning the season-opener in Australia and the Azerbaijan Grand Prix in April.

"Starting third isn't easy. I had a really nice start, managed to get the lead and then the pace was super good, I could really control the race," he added. "I'm really proud to be part of the team. A sixth title is really impressive." "Firstly congratulations to the team," said Hamilton, who now leads the drivers' standings by 64 points from Bottas. "That's the main point. I just wanted to bring home good points for the team."

Emotional Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff dedicated his team's achievement to Formula One legend Niki Lauda, who died earlier this year. "We want to dedicate this to Niki because he's just been such an important part from the beginning of the journey," said

Wolff. "I miss him every day," said Wolff, who like Lauda hails from Austria. "When we talk in our group of friends, it's surreal that he's not here." Ferrari had enjoyed a front row lock-out in the morning qualifying session caused by Typhoon Hagibis but that was as good as "Super Sunday" got for them as their race unravelled right from the start.

Vettel twitched before the lights went out and his hesitation enabled the fast starting Bottas to leapfrog from third into the lead.

"It was my mistake," admitted Vettel who escaped a penalty for his false start. "It was worse than a poor start. It was a really poor start. With the lack of pace today, second place today was probably the maximum."

Max Verstappen enjoyed a bullet launch off the grid from fifth in the Red Bull and was overtaking the Ferrari of Charles Leclerc on the outside of turn two when the Monegasque drove into the Dutchman, causing him to spin. "He just drove into the side of my car," complained an unhappy Verstappen, who retired on lap 15. Leclerc's front wing was damaged but he soldiered on with sparks and debris flying dangerously before he was forced to pit for a new nose at the start of lap four.

He was subsequently summoned to face the stewards and penalised five seconds for causing the collision and given a further 10

seconds penalty for continuing to drive his car in an unsafe condition. That meant Leclerc's miserable day was completed by being relegated from sixth place to seventh behind Daniel Ricciardo's Renault.

'WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO'

After the drama at the start, Vettel was left sandwiched between the two Mercedes and took the first strategic move when he dived into the pits for a new set of soft tyres on lap 17. Bottas mirrored him on the next lap and stayed in front of Vettel. Hamilton was left in the lead and Mercedes tried to keep him out on a one-stop strategy, but by lap 22 Hamilton was moaning that his tyres were "dead" and he too was brought in. Hamilton, on fresher rubber, began to close on Vettel who pitted for his final change to medium tyres on lap 32, rejoining in third. Bottas took on fresh soft tyres five laps later leaving Hamilton back in the lead but worried he would have to stop again.

"Tell me what I have to do to win this race," pleaded Hamilton over team radio. Mercedes gambled on bringing him in again on lap 43 for the quickest compound. It allowed Vettel back into second, but Hamilton was now energised and closed the gap with a new lap record. Hamilton continued to swarm



SUZUKA: Mercedes' Finnish driver Valtteri Bottas celebrates his victory on the podium at the end of the Formula One Japanese Grand Prix final at Suzuka yesterday. — AFP

all over Vettel in the closing stages but was unable to get past as Vettel held firm in a captivating duel. Hamilton can still clinch the drivers' championship at the next race in Mexico in a fortnight's time as he holds a 64-point lead over Bottas. — AFP

Kuwait's Antar and Qabazard win tennis gold

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait's tennis players Bader Antar and Salman Qabazard made a significant achievement by winning the gold medal of the doubles of Kuwait's first international juniors tournament by defeating the team of Britain's Derin Acaroglu and his Belgian partner Martin Katz, with the score of 6-2, 1-6, 10-8.

The final match was attended by President of Saudi Tennis Federation Mohammad bin Nasser Al-Ajazi, Deputy President of Kuwait Tennis Federation

Abdelsamad Al-Aryan, Treasurer Ali Al-Daihani and board member Saleh Al-Saraawi. Both players will add to their international points in the doubles, and Bader Antar added to his singles by reaching the semifinals of the tournament.

Players Antar and Qabazard won the doubles silver medal in Turkey's international juniors tournament in July.

Kuwait's tournament was held under the patronage of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, President of Arab and Kuwait Tennis Federations, and 23 countries: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Qatar, Iran, India, Philippines, Hong Kong, Romania, Greece, USA, Italy, France, Britain, Russia, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Serbia, Slovakia, Kazakhstan and host country Kuwait.

This tournament will be followed by a second one that will continue until 19th October, with the same 23 countries, and expected to witness strong competition.



HH the Crown Prince annual shooting tourney concludes

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Annual shooting tournament of HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah concluded on Saturday at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex. HH the Crown Prince was represented by Information Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri, who said Kuwait's political leadership pays great attention to the sport of shooting and that reflected of Kuwait shooters making many achievements at the international arenas.

Al-Jabri said the tournament saw shooters from Kuwait and Bahrain competing, and said he was honored to represent HH the Crown Prince in the closing ceremony and congratulated the winning shooters. Meanwhile, President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Eng Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi said KSSC took forward to organize this tournament every year, adding that more than 300 shooters participated in this year's event. Al-Otaibi said, Kuwait shooting, with the support of the political leadership, made several significant achievements most important of which is the qualification of shooter Mansour Al-Rashidi to Tokyo 2020 Olympics in addition to winning many medals in international, and regional tournaments.

He said the club won 1,069 various medals along its history, 340 at the international level, 558 medals at the Arab and Gulf levels and 167 medals at the juniors level. He said such achieve-



ments were not to be without the strong support of the state officials at all levels.

Results of the tournament are as follows:

Skeet-men:
Saud Habeeb, Zaid Al-Mutairi, Mohammad Al-Daihani.

Trap-men:
Abdelrahman Al-Faihan, Ayed Al-Mutairi, Ahmad Dakhil.

Skeet-women:
Iman Al-Shamma, Fatima Al-Zaabi, Sheikha Al-Rashidi.

Trap-women:
Shahad Al-Hawal, Sarah Al-Hawal, Hajar Abdelmalek.

10m air pistol-men:
Ali Al-Mutairi, Abdelrahman Al-Hamad, Hassan Abdelmajeed.

10m air rifle-men:
Eid Melfi, Saud Al-Subaie, Khalid Ibrahim.

50m rifle:
Abdallah Abdelrahman, Torky Al-Shimmari, Majid Abboud.

50m pistol:
Ali Al-Mutairi, Hamad Al-Namshan, Saad Al-Ajmi.

10m air rifle-women:
Hussa Al-Zayed, Reem Bader, Mariam Irzouqi.

10m air pistol-women:
Huthama Al-Baghli, Mariam Al-Kandary, Amira Awadh.

Olympic archery-men:
Abdallah Taha, Faisal Sindi, Bader Saleh.

Compound archery-men:
Abdallah Malallah, Mohammad Musallam.

25th Asian bowling championship to begin on Oct 20

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: President of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Sabah appreciated the patronage of the 25th Asian bowling championship by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, which will start Oct 20. He said this patronage goes along with the political leadership's moral support to Kuwait athletes.

Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Sabah welcomed Kuwait's hosting the championship, which is a distin-



Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Sabah

guished Asian gathering that contributes to the return of Kuwait sports to international arenas, and to go for achievements in the name of Kuwait. He added that such championships should be a strong opportunity to develop and improve the level of Kuwait players as they compete with athletes from 28 countries. Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Sabah expressed confidence in the organizers of the championship, and bring it out in a manner Kuwait is known to have, and confirmed KOC's

continued support for all sports and host more championships in Kuwait.

First women's weightlifting championship in Kuwait concludes

KUWAIT: The first women's weightlifting championship in Kuwait concluded on Saturday at the Al-Tadhamon Sports Club. Badriyah Al-Houti came in first place in the (41-kilogram) competitions organized by the Kuwaiti Weightlifting Federation, while

Bashayer Al-Mayas won the first place in (55-kg). Following the end of the tournament, the Federation President Talal Al-Jassar expressed his hope that the Kuwaiti women's weightlifting team will achieve positive results in the forthcoming entitlements, most notably the Tunisian championship which starts next month. Al-Jassar pointed out that Kuwaiti women are able to compete, especially after providing moral support from the board of directors of the federation as well as the financial support provided by the General Authority for Sport. In September, the Kuwait Weightlifting Federation announced the formation of the first women's team to prepare for the upcoming regional and continental entitlements. — KUNA



Sports

Kohli lauds India's 'hunger' after record 11th-straight Test series win

India have not lost a home series since 2013

PUNE: India skipper Virat Kohli said yesterday the team's "hunger" to keep improving has led to their record 11th-straight Test series win at home after outplaying South Africa by an innings and 137 runs.

South Africa were dismissed for 189 after following-on in the final session of day four in Pune, as the hosts took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. Paceman Umesh Yadav and spinner Ravindra Jadeja took three wickets each as India went past Australia's previous record of 10 straight series wins on home turf and consolidated their number-one position in the world Test championship.

Kohli set up the win in the second match with his unbeaten 254 — a record seventh double-century for the star batsman — in India's 601 for five declared, but the captain lauded the team effort.

"We are lucky to have the group of players we have in the last three-four years. It's amazing to see that hunger and passion for all the guys to keep improving," man of the match Kohli said after the win.

"Looking at the larger picture of the Test championship, every game has value so we're not going to take our foot off the gas in the third Test. No one's going to relax at any stage, that's a guarantee."

Ravichandran Ashwin struck twice in the morning session after the tourists started their second innings trailing by 326. Ashwin had skipper Faf du Plessis — who promoted himself to number four in the batting order — caught behind for five with wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha holding on to a juggling catch.

The off-spinner soon got opening batsman Dean Elgar caught for 48 as South Africa slipped further. Paceman Ishant Sharma struck with his second ball of the day to trap Aiden Markram lbw for nought.

Markram had a long discussion with Elgar over whether to review the on-field call but decided not to, only for the replays to suggest the ball would have gone over the stumps. The Proteas were dismissed for 275 at the end of day three in response to India's 601-5 declared, 127 short of the follow-on. India have not lost a home series since 2013.

'WEAK MINDSET'

Du Plessis admitted Kohli's knock and India's mammoth total made the tourists play catch-up after the hosts elected to bat first. "The way India batted, especially Virat with 250, it takes a lot of mental toughness. Two days in the field can wear you down," said du Plessis.

"Especially that second evening, the batsmen were a bit weak in the mindset. From then it's playing catch-up. We were found wanting in this Test match," Du Plessis said Kohli's innings was a lesson for any batsman. "He was too good. The hunger stood out, it was great value for us as batters," he added.

South Africa put up some resistance in their first innings with Maharaj, who made 72, and Philander with 44 not out putting on 109 runs for the ninth wicket to frustrate the Indian bowlers. Ashwin broke the stand with Maharaj's wicket and then got last man Rabada to return figures of 4-69.

The match will also be remembered for Kohli going past Don Bradman's tally of 6,996 runs. Kohli, who now has 7,054 runs from 81 Tests, put together crucial partnerships including a 225-run fifth-wicket stand with Jadeja, who made 91, to extend India's dominance.

Opener Mayank Agarwal also contributed with a century. The two teams now head to Ranchi for the final match starting October 19. — AFP



PUNE: India's wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha (L) takes a successful catch to dismiss South Africa's captain Faf du Plessis (R) as Cheteshwar Pujara watches during the fourth day of play of the second Test cricket match between India and South Africa, at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune yesterday. — AFP

Scherzer flirts with no-hitter, Yankees rout Astros in opener

LOS ANGELES: Washington's Max Scherzer became the second pitcher to flirt with a no-hitter in as many days as the Nationals stunned Adam Wainwright and the St. Louis Cardinals 3-1 in game two of the National League Championship Series.

Scherzer took a no-hitter into the seventh inning and new dad Daniel Hudson closed it out in the ninth to preserve the win for the visiting Nationals, who took a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven playoff series.

"I came in and my arm didn't feel great," Scherzer said. "But around the fourth or fifth inning I felt like everything kind of loosened up in my shoulder. I was able to find my arm slot and I was driving my fastball into locations where I wanted." In the late game, Gleyber Torres became the youngest New York Yankee to record five RBIs in a playoff game as the Yankees routed the Houston Astros 7-0 in the AL Championship Series opener. The Nationals, who rallied to upset the 106-win Los Angeles Dodgers in the previous round, are now just two wins away from advancing to

the World Series. The best-of-seven NL Championship series shifts to Washington for games three and four. The winner will take on either the New York Yankees or Houston Astros in the World Series. Scherzer's gem came less than 24 hours after Anibal Sanchez took a no-hitter into the eighth inning in Washington's 2-0 win in game one.

Scherzer didn't allow a hit Saturday until Paul Goldschmidt led off the seventh inning with a single. Sanchez had his no-hit bid busted up by a single from Jose Martinez. "For me, I'm just in the moment," Scherzer said. "I'm not trying to do anything great."

He finished with 11 strikeouts, allowed one hit and walked two and has been pitching on just a few days rest in these playoffs. "He was dynamite," Nationals manager Dave Martinez said of Scherzer.

Cardinals ace Wainwright also fanned 11 batters as he allowed seven hits in 7 1/3 innings. Right hander Hudson closed it out for his third save of the post-season. He missed the series opener to be with his wife, Sara, for the birth of their third child, a girl.

Scherzer said after Saturday's game that one of the keys to their success if the way he communicates with catcher Kurt Suzuki. "There are multiple ways to skin a cat," Scherzer said. "We just try to find what is going to work in the game. We work well together and we know how to play the chess game." This is the season of the comeback for the Nationals, who got off to a 19-31 start before going 74-38 the rest of the way. They rallied from

three runs down in the wild card game to beat the Milwaukee Brewers 4-3 then came from behind to eliminate the Dodgers in the NLDS. Down 3-0, they won it in the 10th inning when Howie Kendrick blasted a grand slam home run. They became the first team to come back from three run deficits in back-to-back deciding games in the playoffs. The Cardinals hitters struggled, producing just five baserunners against Scherzer and relievers Sean Doolittle, Patrick Corbin and Hudson. "We've been shut down pretty much for two games in a row," said Cardinals manager Mike Shildt.

In Houston, Japan's Masahiro Tanaka put his stamp on the series with six solid innings and Torres did his part by with a solo home run and a go-ahead double for the Yankees. "I just try to be patient and believe in what I am doing in that situation," said Torres. "The most important thing for me is to stay humble and respect the game."

Torres, who was recently promoted to the third position in the batting order, continued his October heroics by adding a two-run single and a RBI ground ball hit. It all added up to a franchise record five RBIs in a postseason game for the 22-year-old rising star. Giancarlo Stanton and Gio Urshela also hit home runs and outfielder Aaron Judge delivered a clutch play, catching a line drive and doubling Alex Bregman off first base when it was still 1-0. Game two is when Canadian pitcher James Paxton of the Yankees goes up against Houston ace Justin Verlander. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard on day four of the second Test between India and South Africa in Pune yesterday:

India 1st innings 601-5 (V. Kohli 254 not out, K. Rabada 3-93)	
South Africa 1st innings 275 (K. Maharaj 72, F. du Plessis 64; R. Ashwin 4-69)	
South Africa 2nd innings (follow-on)	
A. Markram lbw b I. Sharma	0
D. Elgar c Yadav b Ashwin	48
T. de Bruyn c Saha b Yadav	8
F. du Plessis c Saha b Ashwin	5
T. Bavuma c Rahane b Jadeja	38
Q. de Kock b Jadeja	5
S. Muthusamy c Sharma b Shami	9
V. Philander c Saha b Yadav	37
K. Maharaj lbw b Jadeja	22
K. Rabada c R. Sharma b Yadav	4
A. Nortje not out	0
Extras (b8, lb3, w2)	13
Total (all out, 67.2 overs)	189
Fall of wickets: 1-0 (Markram), 2-21 (de Bruyn), 3-70 (du Plessis), 4-71 (Elgar), 5-79 (de Kock), 6-125 (Bavuma), 7-129 (Muthusamy), 8-185 (Philander), 9-189 (Rabada), 10-189 (Maharaj)	
Bowling: Sharma 5-2-17-1, Yadav 8-3-22-3, Shami 9-2-34-1 (w2), Ashwin 21-6-45-2, Jadeja 21.2-4-52-3, R. Sharma 2-0-4-0, Kohli 1-0-4-0.	
Result: India won by an innings and 137 runs	
Series: India lead the three-match series 2-0	

Kuwait welcomes freestyle champ Sean Garnier

KUWAIT: Alghanim Motors is excited to welcome Arnaud Sean Garnier - the French freestyle footballer and athlete - to Kuwait next week as part of his world tour. During Garnier's Kuwait tour he will showcase and screen his film Sean Garnier vs. the World at the Honda Alghanim showroom in Shuwaikh on Wednesday October 16th.

The full-length feature film catalogues Garnier's humble beginnings in the French countryside, his move to Paris at the young age of fourteen, and the journey of his life through football and self-discovery over his twenty-year-long career. His career took him all over the world and back and saw Garnier develop the unique style he is known for: combining music, breakdance, jumps and flips, football and basketball movements into his routines.

The film is directed and produced by William Sarne and showcases that Garnier's success and his determination to combine art and sports.

Garnier will also visit 360 Mall for the esports finals of MrDOne's Game On occurring Thursday October 17, a new e-football platform made by the players, for the players. In the tournament, teams consisting of 2-players compete for points using a revised set of rules on the latest e-football game on Playstation 4. A key draw to this game is the non-traditional rules, where team members tag each other in and out during times of high-importance like scoring a goal, half time or when a red card is given. It guarantees an intense, action-packed battle of skill and lightning-fast moves.

Since leaving professional football, Garnier has championed alternative sports. In conjunction with Red Bull he has increased awareness of freestyle football - highlighted by his win at the inaugural Red Bull Street Style World Finals in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 2008. His presence in Kuwait in conjunction with Red Bull emphasizes the results of a life dedicated to perseverance, willpower, and a desire to perform under all conditions.

To find out more about the tour, visit @RedBullKuwait on Instagram and Twitter, and @RedBull on Facebook, or visit redbull.com/events



Langer unsure if Smith wants captaincy back

SYDNEY: Steve Smith's ban on leading Australia ends in March but the star batsman may not want the Test captaincy back, coach Justin Langer says. Smith skippered the team until he was suspended for 12 months over a brazen attempt to alter the ball with sandpaper under his watch in Cape Town last year.

Part of his punishment included a further year-long exile from any leadership role. Calls have grown for Smith to take over from Tim Paine when the ban is lifted since his incredible batting performances helped Australia retain the Ashes against England.

But Langer said it was not a simple decision, with Smith admitting his exploits — 774 runs in just seven innings — left him mentally and physically shattered. "I've built a good relationship with Steve over the last 18 months, and it (the captaincy) is going to come down to honest conversations," the coach told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation on Saturday. "You can see how exhausted he was from the effort he put into his batting (during the Ashes), and whether he wants the burden of captaincy as well is something we'll have to work out over time."

"I'll be one of the selectors, and I think we'll just work out what's best," Paine, who will be 35 in December, will almost certainly retain the role for the home summer Test series against Pakistan and New Zealand, despite occasional criticism of his batting and captaincy during the Ashes. Langer said he was "doing a brilliant job at the moment". "He's been outstanding in his time as captain. However long he wants to keep playing for is another thing," he added. Unlike Smith, former vice-captain David Warner endured a miserable return from the "sandpapergate" scandal, struggling to make double figures against England.

But Langer said he still had confidence in the explosive opener, who returned to form with a century for New South Wales in the Sheffield Shield last week. "He had a poor series against England, no doubt. That's just a fact, and he knows that," Langer said. "But he also hasn't lost his talent, because he was the highest run scorer in the World Cup two weeks before the Ashes started, and he was the highest run scorer in the IPL (Indian Premier League) before that. — AFP

Sports

History-makers Japan floor Scots to reach Rugby World Cup quarters

Brave Blossoms will face two-time world champions South Africa in Tokyo

YOKOHAMA: Japan's "Ferraris" hit top gear yesterday as the hosts beat Scotland 28-21 in a barnstorming Rugby World Cup clash to create history by reaching the quarter-finals. Rampaging wingers Kotaro Matsushima and Kenki Fukuoka did the damage for Japan, who survived a late fightback in Yokohama to advance as Pool A winners along with Ireland.

The Brave Blossoms will face two-time world champions South Africa in Tokyo next weekend after making it a perfect four wins out of four, roared on by a crowd of 67,000. Fukuoka, scorer of Japan's try in their 19-12 upset over Ireland, grabbed two more in Yokohama with Matsushima notching his fifth of the tournament for the rampant Japanese.

After a war of words between the rival coaches in the build-up, the teams observed a moment's silence for the victims of the violent typhoon that swept through Japan on Saturday, killing at least 26 and forcing organisers to scrap three pool games.

The needle between the sides quickly resurfaced in yesterday's typhoon-threatened Pool A decider, however, as both teams put in some monstrous early tackles. "For my team, the whole World Cup, we've prepared really, really well. They've put their bodies on the line every weekend," said Japan coach Jamie Joseph, who has compared his wide players to Ferraris.

"But tonight they went another level I felt. They gave everything they possibly could — everyone gave 150 percent and that's what it takes to win big Test matches." Scotland needed to win while preventing Japan from securing a defensive bonus point — and they got off to a flying start.

Early pressure told as fly-half Finn Russell broke through to give them the lead after just seven minutes. But the Japanese hit back with Matsushima latching onto a superb, one-handed offload from Fukuoka to score his

fifth try of the tournament.

Even better was to come from the hosts with a dazzling move straight out of a basketball playbook, quick hands between Shota Horie and William Tupou releasing loose-head prop Keita Inagaki to crash over.

On the stroke of half-time, Fukuoka plucked a high-bouncing Timothy Lafaele grubber out of the air to leave Scotland with a mountain to climb. Man of the match Fukuoka then produced a moment of magic moments into the second half, stripping the ball from Chris Harris before accelerating clear.

Scotland, who bounced back from a 27-3 drubbing by Ireland to smash Samoa 34-0 and Russia 61-0, looked out of it. However, when WP Nel and Zander Fagerson bulldozed over in the space of five minutes, suddenly the Japanese were creaking.

But they withstood a late barrage to avenge a 45-10 defeat by Scotland that cost them a place in the knockout stages of the 2015 World Cup. "We're not coming out next week to have a good time and lose," warned Japan captain Michael Leitch, looking to the quarter-finals. "We're coming to be chasing the game," he said.

Scotland skipper Greig Laidlaw bemoaned "soft tries" his side had gifted Japan. "We gave it a good crack in the second half but when you leak 28 points, you're always going to be chasing the game," he said.

"You've got to give Japan credit. They've really improved since four years ago." That Japan team, led by Eddie Jones, won three pool matches, including a breathless 34-32 victory over South Africa in their opening game.

Japan's current vintage thrashed Russia 30-10 and Samoa 38-19 either side of their massive win over Ireland, and Joseph will relish the chance to have another crack at the Springboks next weekend. "This doesn't happen overnight," said the former All Black. "You've got to go through a bit of pain." — AFP



YOKOHAMA: Japan's prop Asaeli Ai Valu (C) is tackled during the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup Pool A match between Japan and Scotland at the International Stadium Yokohama in Yokohama yesterday.—AFP

Tension ahead of France-Turkey Euro showdown

SAINT-DENIS: France host Turkey in a crunch Euro 2020 qualifier today with the teams vying for top spot in Group H and diplomatic tension simmering between the two nations after Turkey's bombardment of Syrian Kurds this week. With three games to go in the Euro 2020 qualifying campaign the sides have 18 points each ahead of Monday's showdown at the Stade de France but Turkey top the group on the head-to-head rule after their 2-0 defeat of Les Blues in Konya in June.

French striker Olivier Giroud says the 2018 world

champions "want to put that right (the defeat), as a matter of pride because of what happened over there". France will be missing two key players in Kylian Mbappe and Paul Pogba, who are both injured, and will be hoping Barcelona recruit Antoine Griezmann can refine his sharpest form.

Looming large over the game, however, will be security issues and international diplomatic relations as France decried Turkish military interventions in Syria this week and blocked arms sales to them.

European soccer chiefs UEFA are already looking into reports that Turkey footballers performed a military salute in celebration of Cenk Tosun's last-gasp winning goal over Albania in Istanbul on Friday.

After the match, a photo was also posted on the official Twitter account with players making a military salute and a text saying the players "have dedicated their victory to our brave soldiers and fellow martyrs".

Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan can often be seen at football matches and has taken many photo calls

with top soccer stars, and today evening his ambassador to France and sports minister are due to attend the match.

Some 3,800 Turkish fans should be in the 78,000 sell out crowd today for a match where a win for France would signal a spot in the finals while Turkey are still under threat from Iceland, who they play in November.

At any event at the Stade de France security is always impressively tight. On Turkey's last visit to France in 2009 their famously passionate fans threw flares onto the pitch in Lyon. The government has qualified the event as high risk and ordered the police to ramp up security measures ahead of and following the game. On November 13, 2015 - the night of a series of terror attacks which killed 130 people - security prevented a suicide bomber from entering the Stade de France during a France v Germany match which was being watched by French President Francois Hollande. The bomber and two other suicide bombers set off their bombs outside the ground, killing themselves and one bystander. —AFP

Saudi football team makes first West Bank visit

RAMALLAH: Saudi Arabia's national football team arrived in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday, on a ground-breaking visit to play against Palestine tomorrow.

The game will be played in the West Bank town of Al-Ram, between Ramallah and Jerusalem, and marks a change in policy for the Gulf state, which has previously only played against Palestine in third countries.

Four years ago a similar game was ultimately played in Jordan after pressure on the Saudis not to go to Israeli-occupied territory. Arab clubs and national teams have historically refused to play in the West Bank, where the Palestinian national team plays, as it obliged them to apply for Israeli entry permits, implying normalisation of relations. But lately clubs or national teams

from Iraq, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain have all visited. Others, including Egypt and Lebanon, still refuse. Saudi Arabia does not have official diplomatic relations with the Jewish state but the two countries are widely believed to have discreet contacts over Iran, their common enemy.

The team visit had been seen by some as breaching a decades-long Arab boycott of the Jewish state over its treatment of the Palestinians.

Palestinian public opinion is divided, with some seeing it as a boost for Palestinian football while others interpret it as signs of an unwelcome thaw between Saudi Arabia and Israel.

Nada Hussein, coordinator of the Palestinian National Committee for the Boycott of Israel, said however it was within the rules. "The visit of the Saudi squad does not go against the criteria of the boycott... provided that there is no connection during the visit with the state of occupation (Israel) or its institutions," she told AFP.

Al-Ram Stadium is recognised by FIFA. "You proved to the world that a visit to a prisoner does not mean normalisation with the jailer," Ramallah gov-



RAMALLAH: Palestinian women welcome Saudi Arabia's national football players with flowers in Ramallah yesterday upon the team's arrival in the occupied Palestinian territories where they will play for the first time next week their match in the Asian qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup against Palestine. —AFP

ernor Laila Ghannam said at a welcoming ceremony.

"We are very happy about your presence," Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas said in remarks to the Saudi Football Federation chief and his delega-

tion. "Your arrival delights the Palestinian people," the official Palestinian news agency Wafa quoted him as saying. The match is the first for the Saudi team in the playoffs for the Asian zone of the 2022 World Cup. — AFP

Fawzia Sultan Healthcare to hold ninth edition of RunKuwait charity race

FKUWAIT: Fawzia Sultan Healthcare Network (FSHN), a non-profit multidisciplinary healthcare provider, is pleased to announce the return of its annual charity sporting event, RunKuwait, in its ninth edition.

The event, which will be held on November 23rd, invites interested participants and RunKuwait returning friends to register for the race and contribute to improving the lives of children with special needs.

RunKuwait is a charitable initiative aiming to raise awareness and funds towards the rehabilitative treatment of vulnerable children with special needs. Since 2013, all registration proceeds are channeled directly towards the non-profit Children's Evaluation and Rehabilitation Center (CERC), founded by FSHN. Last year's event with more than 2,900 registrations successfully contributed towards offering a total of 1000 treatment sessions to children with special needs.

RunKuwait is a community based fun sporting event for all family members who can join a 5KM or 10KM run or walk. The event's race village will host different warm-up exercises, activities for children and exciting activities for family members and friends who will join the event to cheer for the participants.

RunKuwait is supported by generous contributions from the following sponsors: Agility as a Founding Partner, INTERSPORT and ASAR Legal as Gold sponsors, and EQUATE as Silver sponsor. The media spon-



sors for the RunKuwait initiative this year are Alanba newspaper, Alrai newspaper, Alseyassah newspaper, Arab Times newspaper, Kuwait Times newspaper, bazaar magazine, The talk magazine, Alhadaf magazine, M2R company and 248am as a social media sponsor.

Interested participants, athletes, and continuous supporters of RunKuwait can find more information about the race, and can register through the RunKuwait official social media channels, @RunKuwait on Instagram and Facebook.

Mancini's new-look Italy roar into Euro 2020 after WCup flop

MILAN: Roberto Mancini has succeeded with stage one of his mission to bounce back from failing to qualify for the last World Cup by sealing Italy's place at Euro 2020 with Saturday's 2-0 win over Greece that pushed their perfect qualifying run to seven matches. In November 2017, headlines spoke of an 'Apocalypse' after the four-time world champions missed out on a World Cup for the first time since 1958 following playoff defeat to Sweden.

However on Sunday the Gazzetta Dello Sport gave the national side "Green light" after they qualified for next summer's tournament in front of 60,000 fans at Rome's Stadio Olimpico, wearing green for just the second time since 1954.

"Dear Europe, here we are!" added Turin daily Tuttosport. Previous coach Gian Piero Ventura, largely seen as an uninspiring replacement for Antonio Conte who dragged Italy to the quarter-finals of Euro 2016, took the brunt of the blame for the failure almost two years ago.

But the problems ran deeper, with the 2006 World Cup winners also exiting in the group stages of the South Africa and Brazil tournaments.

Former Italy international Mancini took over in May 2018 with the task of rebuilding a demoralised team around a new generation, with the ageing heroes of Berlin bowing out.

And in front of a 60,000-crowd in the Stadio Olimpico on Saturday night Italy advanced with three games to spare to a multi-host tournament they are kicking off on June 12 in Rome. "I feel very proud, because it was not a good situation when I arrived," said 54-year-old Mancini.

"I tried to make the players believe in themselves, when everyone else said Italy didn't have good quality players." The 'Azzurri' won thanks to Jorginho's 63rd-minute penalty and a deflected strike from Federico Bernardeschi with 12 minutes remaining.

Mancini conceded his side "were not brilliant, maybe a little nervous at being back in Rome", but it was enough to get past the 2004 European champions and qualify from a modest group which also includes Finland, Armenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Liechtenstein. Under Mancini Italy have lost just two matches in 17 months, against European champions Portugal, and in June 2018 to the France team who went on to lift the World Cup.

The former Manchester City and Inter Milan boss kept faith with some of the old stalwarts such as Leonardo Bonucci, Giorgio Chiellini, Jorginho and Marco Verratti.

But he has boosted confidence with a more dynamic style of attacking football, and above all bringing in a new crop of players. Roma midfielder Nicolò Zaniolo, 20, was called up in September 2018 before he had even made his Serie A debut, with 19-year-old Everton forward Moise Kean, Fiorentina's Federico Chiesa, 21, and Inter Milan's 20-something midfield pair Nicolò Barella and Stefano Sensi also arriving. "We've managed to create a team in a short space of time. It wasn't easy but we have to thank the players who have quickly adapted to each other," said Mancini.

"We have a lot of work to do, but we're not far off the best European teams." Despite the 20 goals scored in their seven matches, the team lacks a striker of the calibre of Cristiano Ronaldo, Harry Kane, Antoine Griezmann or Kylian Mbappe. They approach the European tournament searching for just their second title after 1968 having finished runner-up twice. But Mancini has warned: "My idea was originally to target success in the 2022 World Cup, but now we can challenge for Euro 2020." — AFP

25 Bottas Japan win seals sixth world title double for Mercedes



26 Kohli lauds India's 'hunger' after record 11th-straight Test series win



27 History-makers Japan floor Scots to reach Rugby World Cup quarters



Biles extends record to 25 medals

Simone Biles the American gymnastics superstar



STUTTGART: USA's Simone Biles poses after the apparatus finals with the five gold medals she won at the FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Championships at the Hanns-Martin-Schleyer-Halle in Stuttgart, southern Germany, yesterday. —AFP

STUTTGART: She insists she is no superstar, but Simone Biles can now be considered amongst the greatest gymnasts ever after yesterday becoming the all-time record holder for most medals won at world championships. Biles won the beam and floor finals to earn the 24th and 25th worlds medal of her career, bettering the previous record of 23 set by Belarus male gymnast Vitaly Scherbo in the 1990s. Having also won the all-around, team and vault finals in Stuttgart, Biles extended her own record to 19 gold medals in what is likely to be her last worlds. She is "99 percent" sure she will not be at the 2021 world gymnastics championships in Copenhagen.

Under a year from the Tokyo Olympics, where she hopes to retain the four golds — in the team, all-around, vault and floor events — won at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games, Biles has dazzled this week.

"I'm proud of all my performances here, I have been consistent, which was my goal for these championships and the year," she told reporters.

In Tokyo, Biles seems destined to better the five Olympic gold medals legendary Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci won at the 1976 and 1980 games.

Behind the scenes, Biles endured personal hardship in recent months. She broke down in tears after a training session in August, slamming USA gymnastics for failing to protect her and other American female gymnasts from disgraced former US team doctor Larry Nassar. In January 2018, Biles admitted to being among the victims of Nassar, who was jailed for sexually abusing hundreds of girls and women.

"You had one job. You literally had one job and you couldn't protect us," she said angrily, her words aimed at US Gymnastics officials. Then, at the end of August, her brother was arrested and charged with a shooting which left three people dead last December.

Her slight 1.45m frame has shouldered adversity to reach the pinnacle of gymnastics.

Born in Ohio in March 1997, Biles was adopted and

raised by her grandparents at the age of three, along with her younger sister, while her mother battled drug and alcohol addictions. "When I was younger I thought every kid was adopted," Biles told Time magazine interview before her Rio 2016 success. "I didn't understand why people made it such a big deal." Her gymnastics talent was identified at an early age, when she was encouraged to pursue the sport after impressing instructors during a day-care field trip as a six-year-old. Her breakthrough on the global stage came at the 2013 world championships in Antwerp, winning the floor and all-around titles, which she retained in Nanning the following year as part of a four-gold haul.

OWN BIGGEST CRITIC

Four more golds — in the team, all-around, beam and floor events — followed at the 2015 worlds in Glasgow. After her incredible Olympic success in Rio, Biles skipped competition in 2017 to co-write her autobiogra-

phy "Courage to Soar: A Body in Motion, A Life in Balance". "I want people to reach for their dreams," she told the Los Angeles Times. She returned with a bang in 2018, sweeping another quartet of world golds in the team, all-around, vault and floor events in Doha.

Biles' success is forged by a relentless pursuit of excellence, setting standards that she acknowledges may be impossible to achieve and she is her own "biggest critic", by her own admission.

"I look back at videos and wonder how I did that," she said after winning the all-round title for the fifth time last Thursday. "I sometimes wish I could have an out-of-body experience to witness it." Biles has never accepted she is to gymnastics what Michael Phelps is to swimming or Usain Bolt is to athletics. "I feel like if I were to label myself as a superstar, it would bring more expectations on me." However, her Stuttgart exploits means there is now no denying her status amongst the greatest gymnasts of all time. — AFP

Medvedev conquers Shanghai, teenage star Gauff wins first WTA title

SHANGHAI: Daniil Medvedev conceded that he had been "invincible" after he won his fourth title of a spectacular year with a thumping 6-4, 6-1 victory over Alexander Zverev in the Shanghai Masters final yesterday. Victory for the 23-year-old Russian, contesting a sixth final in a row, was more evidence that he is the prime contender to join the "Big Three" of Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer.

The US Open finalist is also able to say that he has finally beaten the German Zverev, another young contender at 22, at the fifth attempt. This was an emphatic

statement from the world number four, needing just 74 minutes to seal the crown and failing to drop a set all week. Starting with Washington, DC, in July, the Russian has reached six finals on the spin — including the US Open — winning three of them. Asked in what respect he has improved, Medvedev, who now threatens to usurp Federer at three in the world, said: "I think it's everything together, something clicked in my game in the US, I don't know why.

"I think it's the hard work I've been doing, but I started to understand even more about my game, my serve, my volley, my everything, what I have to do when. "At crucial moments I know what I have to do and how I have to play."

Zverev, long touted as the best of the new generation of men's tennis stars, was error-prone, but had no complaints. "As I said yesterday, you are probably the best player in the world right now," the world number six told Medvedev. "How you are playing is unbelievable." Medvedev made a fast start, winning his service game and then breaking Zverev's for an early 2-0 lead. Under a closed stadium roof because of rain in Shanghai, Zverev was suffocating, down 3-0 after 11 minutes. But the

German sent down an ace to finally get a foothold in the match and then broke back for 3-2. The duo went with serve until Zverev conceded the set with two calamitous double faults on the trot, the last of which he transpired to gift with a horribly mis-hit second serve that drew a few giggles from the crowd.

Meanwhile, in Linz, teenage prodigy Cori Gauff won her first WTA title yesterday following a 6-3, 1-6, 6-2 win over Jelena Ostapenko in the final in Linz that saw her hold her first trophy aloft aged 15.

Gauff, who only entered the field as a lucky loser after failing to qualify, completed a dream week in Linz in front of a supportive crowd to become the youngest player to win a WTA event since Czech Nicole Pietrangeli, who triumphed in Vancouver and Tashkent two months apart in 2004. "I'll remember this day for the rest of my life," the delighted Gauff said after receiving a minutes-long standing ovation from 3,000 spectators. "I had an amazing week and I hope to be back in the future." Gauff will shoot up from 110 in the rankings into the 80s, according to WTA calculations, after becoming the youngest American to earn a WTA trophy since Jennifer Capriati at Toronto 1991, nearly three decades ago. — AFP



LINZ: Cori Gauff of US poses with the trophy after she won her WTA-Upper Austria Ladies final tennis match against Jelena Ostapenko of Latvia yesterday in Linz, Austria. —AFP