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Coalition says weapons used in Saudi attacks 'came from Iran'

US hints at military response • Oil prices surge • Houthis threaten new attacks

MPs call on govt to beef up security after drone breach

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Lawmakers yesterday called on the government to beef up security measures following what they called a "very serious breach" after a drone intruded into the country's airspace. MP Riyadh Al-Adasani accused the government of not being sufficiently ready to face such violations, adding that the government should have dealt with the breach immediately.

The lawmakers made the remarks after the government said an investigation has been launched by security authorities regarding a report saying that a drone was seen over Bidaa coast early Saturday. The government held a meeting with top security and military officials and then announced launching the investigation after the report said the drone flew over HH the Amir's residential palace in Salwa. Adasani said security agencies should have been ready for any security incident and effectively deal with it, adding that it was clear that the government is not ready to deal with the drone.

MP Mohammad Al-Dallal stressed that a drone approaching vital installations in the country is a very serious development, adding that it means that any drone can breach any site in the

country including the National Assembly, schools and others. He said he has sent two questions to the defense and interior ministers about the incident and also about the government's failure to implement an Assembly recommendation to set up an independent body for dealing with contingency plans.

Dallal said during a debate of the security situation in the country, lawmakers called on the government to establish a body for disasters and catastrophes, but nothing has so far happened. He said the government is required to take all measures necessary to safeguard Kuwait's airspace, in addition to sea and land borders and prevent the reoccurrence of the drone incident. Dallal said regional military and security tensions are a major source of concern for Kuwaitis and expatriates, and condemned the attacks on two major Saudi oil facilities on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Islamist MP Mohammad Hayel yesterday cautioned the minister of education over failure to implement sex segregation at the newly-opened campus in Shadadiya. He said he will watch the ministry's measures to implement segregation after the initial opening chaos.

RIYADH: The weapons used to strike Saudi oil facilities were Iranian-made, the Riyadh-led coalition said yesterday, heightening fears of regional conflict after the US hinted at a military response to the assault. The weekend strikes on Abqaiq - the world's largest oil processing facility - and the Khurais oilfield in eastern Saudi Arabia have roiled global energy markets, sending prices spiking yesterday. Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi rebels claimed responsibility for the strikes but Washington has squarely blamed Iran, with President Donald Trump saying the US is "locked and loaded" to respond.

Saudi's energy infrastructure has been hit before, but this strike was of a different order, abruptly halting 5.7 million barrels per day (bpd) or about six percent of the world's oil supply. The Saudi-led coalition, which is bogged down in a five-year war in neighboring Yemen, reiterated the assessment that the Houthis were not behind it, pointing the finger at Iran for providing the weapons.

Russia urged "all countries to avoid hasty steps or conclusions that could exacerbate the situation" while the European Union stressed all sides should show "maximum restraint". China also called on the US and Iran to "exercise restraint... in the absence of a conclusive investigation or verdict".

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RIYADH: Spokesman of the Saudi-led military coalition Colonel Turki Al-Maliki speaks during a press conference yesterday. — AFP

Iran seizes new boat in Gulf for smuggling fuel

TEHRAN: Iran has seized a boat suspected of being used to smuggle fuel and arrested its 11 crewmembers near a vital oil shipping lane, state television reported yesterday. A naval

patrol of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps intercepted the vessel carrying 250,000 liters of fuel near the Strait of Hormuz, state TV's website said, citing a commander of the force. "This boat was sailing from Bandar Lengeh towards United Arab Emirates waters before it was seized 20 miles (32 km) east of Greater Tunb island," Brigadier General Ali Ozmayi was quoted as saying.

"The boat's 11 crewmembers have been arrested," he added, without saying when it happened or giving their nationality. State tel-

evision broadcast footage from the deck of a trawler-sized vessel with open hatches showing tanks full of what appeared to be fuel. It is the second such seizure this month, after a boat suspected of smuggling fuel was detained and its 12 Filipino crew members arrested in the Strait of Hormuz on Sept 7. Iran, which has some of the world's cheapest fuel prices due to heavy subsidies and the fall of its national currency, has been fighting rampant fuel smuggling by land to neighboring

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3 killed in 3-way crash



KUWAIT: Three people were killed in a three-vehicle collision on King Abdulaziz Road that resulted in a blaze. Fahaheel firemen put out the fire and found the charred bodies of the three victims, which were recovered by forensics. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun

Ghanem meets Sisi

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi received Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem at Etihadia Palace yesterday. During the meeting, Ghanem conveyed greetings of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his wishes for more development for Egypt. Sisi also conveyed, via the visiting top lawmaker, his greetings to HH the Amir, wishing him a long healthy life. The meeting also discussed bilateral ties and recent regional and international developments.

Sisi also noted the historic Egyptian-Kuwaiti relations, stressing on the need for continuous cooperation between the two sides, pointing out that these bonds were boosted during Sisi's visit to Kuwait in August. Meanwhile, Ghanem noted that Kuwait deeply appreciates Egypt's political position in the Arab world. The meeting was attended by Egyptian Speaker Ali Abdelaal and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Egypt Mohammad Al-Thuweikh. — KUNA



CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi meets Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali-Ghanem at Etihadia Palace yesterday. — KUNA

Outsiders lead in Tunisia presidential poll

TUNIS: With more than half the votes counted in a presidential election, Tunisians have delivered a political earthquake by rejecting established leaders for a little known law professor and a media mogul jailed on suspicion of tax evasion. Kais Saied and Nabil Karoui are leading 24 other candidates, who included the prime minister, two former prime ministers, a former president and the defense minister, and appear certain to advance to a runoff vote next month.

It represents a sharp rebuke of elected governments that have struggled to improve living standards or end graft after Tunisia's 2011 revolution introduced democracy and inspired the "Arab Spring". "He will fight corruption and establish a just state and continue the process of the revolution," said fishmonger and Saied voter Nouredine El-Arabi, proudly showing the inky forefinger that proved he had voted.

Karoui has for years used his Nessma



Nabil Karoui Kais Saied

television station and the charity he founded after his son died to present himself as a champion of the poor and a scourge of government, while his critics describe him as an ambitious, unscrupulous, populist. He denies all claims of wrongdoing against him, including old tax evasion and money laundering charges which kept him in jail on election day, calling them an undemocratic plot. "We hope that Karoui will keep his promises and keep helping us like he did in recent years (with his charity)," said a woman at Tunis fish market, who did not want to be named.

His wealth and massive electoral organization stand in sharp contrast to Saied, who spent so little on his

Continued on Page 24

Erdogan hosts Putin, Rouhani for Syria summit

ANKARA: The latest summit on Syria hosted by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara with his Russian and Iranian counterparts started yesterday, with attention focused on Damascus' push on the last rebel-held bastion of Idlib. Presidents Vladimir Putin and Hassan Rouhani met Erdogan for separate bilateral talks in the Turkish capital before they sat down together for their fifth summit on the conflict since 2017.

Iran and Russia have been staunch supporters of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, while Turkey has called for his ouster and backed opposition fighters. But with Assad's position looking increasingly secure, Turkey's priority has shifted to preventing a mass influx of refugees from Idlib into Syria's northwest. "We are in complete agreement in aiming for a lasting political solution for Syria's political unity and territorial integrity," Erdogan said in a televised statement as the summit began.

Turkey is concerned over the steady advance of Syrian forces into the region, backed by



ANKARA: (From left) Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin pose for pictures prior to a trilateral meeting on Syria yesterday. — AFP

Russian airpower, despite a series of ceasefires. Turkey has 12 observation posts in Idlib to enforce a buffer zone agreement struck a year ago with Russia to prevent a full-scale Syrian offensive. But the posts look increasingly threatened, with one of them cut off from the rest of Idlib when Syrian forces advanced last month.

Russian airstrikes have continued in the region despite the latest ceasefire agreed by Ankara and Moscow on Aug 31. "A zone of de-escalation should not serve as a terrain for armed provocations," Putin said as the summit began.

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Local

Prime Minister inaugurates Sports center for the visually impaired



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday attended the inauguration ceremony of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Sports Center for the Visually Impaired at the Kuwait Blind Association (KBA) in Maidan Hawally.

KBA's Chairman Fayez Al-Azmi delivered a speech which was then followed by a video about the progress of this sports project for the blind, focusing on the expected duration of the project completion. On his part, HH the Prime Minister said in a statement after the ceremony that the government ascribed great importance to people with various disabilities in accordance to the directives of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The provision of these support programs for the disabled will be reflected positively in their potential, benefiting themselves and the community, he explained. HH hoped that this sports project would develop the skills and abilities of blind children, showing the potential of Kuwait's championships in various events, through local and international levels. —KUNA



TAIF: Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohammed Daifallah Sahrar - Envoy of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah attended the finale of the Saudi Crown Prince Camel festival in Taif on Sunday. — KUNA photos



Al-Etelafiya wins Kuwait University's NUKS polls for 41st consecutive year

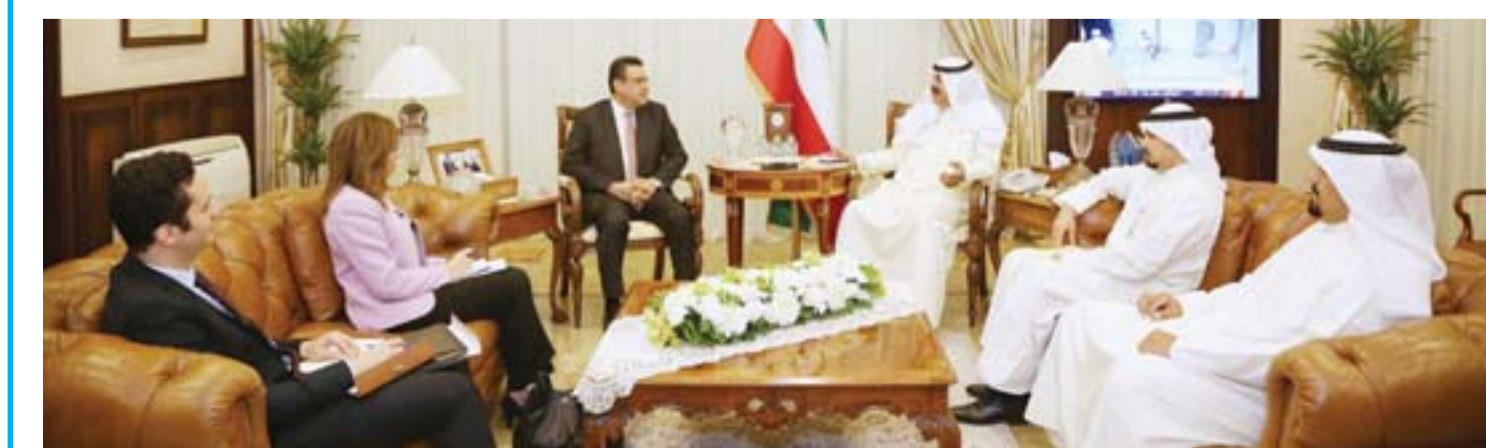
KUWAIT: Al-Etelafiya won the elections of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS) for the 41st consecutive year by 7,063 votes on Sunday night. In a statement to KUNA, Head of the voting committee at NUKS, Musab Al-Mulla said that Al-Etelafiya List won first place, and Al-Mustaqilla List earned second place by 4,971 votes. Meanwhile, Al-Islamia List got third place by 294 votes and the Democratic Circle List got fourth by 251 votes, he added. Al-Mulla hoped the results achieve students' aspirations in fulfilling their wishes, and solving all problems facing them. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The winning party celebrates their triumph. — KUNA photos



Votes being counted during the NUKS elections.



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah met with Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Tariq Al-Qouni yesterday. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations and the latest regional and international developments. Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for the Office of the Deputy Minister Counselor Talal Al-Shatti also attended the meeting. — KUNA

Kuwait supports Saudi measures to maintain security: Al-Ghanem

KUWAIT: Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem yesterday affirmed Kuwait's support of all measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to maintain its security and stability. "Our stand by Saudi Arabia comes from duty and merit", Al-Ghanem said on his official Twitter account.

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will always be able to encounter any threat to its security and stability and we are confident in the wisdom and approach of the Saudi leadership". The Saudi approach has always brought the Arab nations together and made Muslims' interests a priority, and will continue this clear and transparent approach as it was since the reign of founder King Abdulaziz, Al-Ghanem stressed.

Meanwhile, Ali Al-Ghanem held a meeting yesterday with his Egyptian counterpart Dr Ali Abdel Aal in the

Egyptian capital. The discussions, held at the Egyptian parliament building, tackled cooperation between Kuwaiti and Egypt's MPs and means of coordinating stances on different regional and international topics. The two sides noted importance of coordination on topics to be covered at the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference, due in Serbia in October.

Both sides confirmed necessity of unifying stances on continental and international issues at the Arab parliamentary level, including "priority files," especially Palestine. Meanwhile, Al-Ghanem sent a cable of congratulations to Parliament Speaker of Papua New Guinea Jon Pamat, congratulating him on his country's National Day. Cable of congratulations was also sent to the top lawmakers in Mexico to wish them on their Nation Day. —KUNA



CAIRO: Egyptian Parliament Speaker Dr Ali Abdel Aal receives his Kuwaiti counterpart Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — KUNA

Official underlines importance of traditional sports

JEDDAH: Kuwait Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Mohammad Al-Jabri underlined Sunday importance of the development of traditional sports. Al-Jabri made the remarks to KUNA on sidelines of a final ceremony of Saudi Crown Prince camel festival in Taif, also attended by Mohammad Dhaifallah Sharar, Amiri Diwan Advisor and envoy of First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister

Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. He congratulated board chairman of the Saudi sport authority Prince Abdulaziz Al-Faisal for the creation of the international camel federation, which would be based in Riyadh. Prince Abdulaziz, addressing the final ceremony, said the Saudi leadership was keen on the development of sport to enable the young Saudis compete in international championships. — KUNA

Local

Sharing experience key to boost humanitarian work



BEIRUT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society's delegation to the meeting. — KUNA photos



Meeting for the heads of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in MENA region.



President of the Lebanese Red Cross Antoine Zoghbi

BEIRUT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) affirmed the need for sharing experience to boost their ability to face crises and develop humanitarian work. The remarks were made to KUNA by KRCS' Director General Hilal Al-Sayer yesterday, on the sidelines of his participation in a meeting for heads of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), held in Beirut.

He noted the importance of such meetings to boost cooperation, in light of the growing challenges in the region. The meeting is also an opportunity to showcase KRCS' humanitarian campaigns in many countries including Syria, Sudan, the Philippines,

Somalia, Yemen, Malawi, Mozambique, Comoro Islands and Kenya, Al-Sayer said.

Meanwhile, Regional Director of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Seyed Hashem and Regional Director of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Fabrizio Carboni, both agreed in separate speeches that the lack of stability and security in the region is putting pressure on Red Cross and Crescent societies to face the growing humanitarian needs of people affected by conflict and crises.

On his part, President of the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) Antoine Zoghbi noted that KRCS continuously supports LRC and

provides aid to different cities. KRCS is also running humanitarian projects including bakeries and dialysis centers, he added. The three-day meeting discusses the dangers of disasters and crises caused by climate change, migration and displacement, providing mental health care to war victims and commitment to the International humanitarian law and the law of armed conflict.

Elsewhere, Arab League Secretary General Ahmad Abul Gheit affirmed Sunday his support to the humanitarian efforts of the Arab Red Cross and Red Crescent Society to lift the suffering of some Arab people. This came in the meeting between the Abul Gheit and Secretary-general of the Arab Red Cross and

Red Crescent Society Dr Saleh Al-Tuwaijri, Arab League said in a press release.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed different views on ways of boosting cooperation between the two organizations to overcome humanitarian challenges facing people in need. According to the press release, Al-Tuwaijri pointed out that the Arab Red Cross and Red Crescent Society is the humanitarian arm of the Arab League, expressing his willingness for more cooperation to cope with the humanitarian crises in the region. The meeting discussed a MoU to set the framework of cooperation between the two organizations that involves several mutual activities. — KUNA

Official highlights goal to end poverty in Arab states

CAIRO: It is imperative to rid the Arab region of poverty particularly in countries plagued by conflict, said a Kuwaiti official yesterday, pointing out these nations usually grapple with the highest rates of malnutrition. The Arab Planning Institute's (API) Director General Dr Bader Malallah made the remarks amid pan-Arab talks over efforts to exterminate poverty, saying the matter has morphed into a global scourge that transcends the Arab region.

He dispelled the notion that population growth is among the causes of widespread poverty, pinpointing the culprit as an amalgam of social and economic fac-

tors. Eliminating poverty is the focal point of sustainable development plans and API is in the midst of putting together a "comprehensive strategy" to address the problem from a regional perspective, he added.

"Our focus is on Arab countries mired in internal conflict," he said, citing Syria and Yemen as cases in point, while the strategy also takes into account recent statistics and figures on poverty in the region. He went on to urge the Cairo-based Arab League to follow suit with similar initiatives, which will help bring the aforementioned strategy a step closer to fruition, he said. — KUNA

National, religious faithfulness do not contradict: Scholar

CAIRO: Faithfulness to the homeland and serving national interests do not contradict with the Islamic Shariaa and devotion to the heavenly religion of Islam, affirms a ranking Kuwait official and religious scholar. The affirmation came in a paper presented by Dr Mohammad Al-Tabtabaei, Chairman of the Kuwaiti Fatwa Committee for Personal Status, to the 30th session of the supreme conference for Islamic affairs. Good citizenship is in harmony with the Islamic Sharia (law), Dr Al-Tabtabaei says in the paper. He warned in this respect of misconceptions about nationalism, cautioned against fanaticism and degradation of peoples of different views, doctrines and civilizations.

Both the homeland and our religion are revered and there is no contradiction by being faithful to the two, he opines, also drawing the attention to the fact that the Islamic Sharia "guides patriotism." The assertion by the ranking Kuwaiti scholar came amid spread of extremism in some parts of Arab and Islamic countries. Many militants, especially those belonging to notorious and shadowy groups, advocate anti-establishment and anti-State norms and thoughts.

Kuwait, people and State, advocates a moderate, contemporary line of Islam.

Modern vision for Fiqh

In related news, President of Kuwait-based International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq called Sunday for introducing a modern vision for Fiqh rulings that would adapt to the modern state. Fiqh, or Islamic jurisprudence, vis-a-vis the modern national state that deal with citizenship, democracy, freedom, woman, co-existence and selection of the ruler has been static, Al-Maatouq, also Amiri Diwan Advisor and UN Secretary General's special advisor, said in remarks at a 30th conference of Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs.

In order for the Islamic Fiqh to improve, he said, was through its ability to combine core values and modern reality. The conferees were discussing Fiqh rulings related to the modern vision of the building of a state. Deputy Grand Mufti of Al-Quds and Palestine Ibrahim Awadhallah said Islam defined the state as a "civilian state implementing Islamic Sharia rules, and the consensus on the selection of the leader." — KUNA

Kuwait, IAEA to sign cooperation agreements

VIENNA: Kuwait is set to sign two cooperation agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), during the agency's general conference held in Vienna. One of the agreements involve safety, nuclear security, food, agriculture, water resources, energy and industry, Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria and Permanent Envoy to the United Nations Sadiq Marafi told KUNA yesterday. He added that they will also sign an agreement on protecting marine environment and another one on using nuclear technology. Meanwhile, the ambassador noted that Kuwait is highly cooperating with the agency to enable the country to use nuclear power and boost the performance of governmental bodies. — KUNA



Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria Sadiq Marafi

Kuwait Fund approves \$23m loan for Ghana road repair

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed a loan deal worth KD 7 million (USD 23.8 million) for the rehabilitation of hundreds of kilometers of roads in Ghana. The deal also aims to keep the impoverished nation's economy afloat through improving infrastructure, the Kuwait-based fund said in a statement yesterday. Large swathes of roads in Ghana's capital Accra are in shambles and proper infrastructure not only ensures seamless traffic but also makes life easier for Ghanaians, added the statement. The deal follows 10 previous loans the Gulf state has provided Ghana, targeting crucial sectors running the gamut from healthcare and education to energy, it revealed. — KUNA



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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Clear skies above the skyline of Kuwait City. — KUNA

Bayt.com's future of work report predicts jobs in Kuwait to rise in next 10 years

90% of Kuwait professionals feel confident and excited about the future of work

KUWAIT: Nearly four in five recruiters in the Middle East say that the hiring process is going to change in the future, according to new research by Bayt.com and YouGov. Nearly nine in 10 say the process will be fully online, significantly faster, and more reliant on artificial intelligence, automation, and people analytics.

At the same time, the great majority of Kuwait respondents (90%) feel either "confident" about the future of work and believe they will be successful or they feel "excited" and see a world full of possibilities. 8% expressed that they are "worried" about what the future might hold, while only 2% were "uninterested", saying they don't think too far ahead.

Bayt.com, the Middle East's leading career site, and YouGov, a global pioneer in online market research, released the results of the Future of Work in the MENA 2019 report, based on a study amongst nearly 5,000 employers and working professionals in the region. The survey revealed a variety of insights on the skills employees must have to be competitive today, the most significant changes driven by technology, the most effective ways to hire and develop talent as well as the future of job seeking.

"We're really excited about this survey and its bright results on current and future employment," said Omar Tahboub, General Manager, Bayt.com. "Bayt.com was started in the year 2000 at a time when there was a very limited number of people with access to the Internet in the Arab world. Today, we are at the forefront of innovation in technology, having won many awards. In the past two decades, we've helped millions of people find jobs and we look forward to helping millions more in the future. We're really excited to see what the future of work will bring. We have so many plans to bring together technology, AI, and people to drive experiences and intelligence in the hiring process."



Omar Tahboub, GM, Bayt.com

The future of skills and qualifications

Kuwaiti companies favor employees with both interpersonal and technical skills. Results show that while soft skills such as time management (96%), teamwork (92%) and communication (95%) are considered the most important today, 45% believe that both technical and soft skills will be equally important 10 years from now.

On the other hand, two in five respondents (44%) believe that technical skills will become more important.

Organizations in Kuwait are focusing on strategically recruiting and retaining for a skilled workforce. According to respondents, computer skills (92%), creative thinking (93%) and communication (91%) will be the top skills for jobseekers in the next 10 years - followed by job-specific skills (89%), teamwork (85%), time management (87%), adaptability (84%) and people management (83%).

From a hiring perspective, previous job experience (92%) and CV presentation (78%) are considered as the most important factors in finding qualified people. Degree specialization, diversity and cultural fit also play a major role in hiring decisions. 10 years from now, Kuwait respondents say that previous job experience (80%) will continue to be the topmost factor influencing hiring, followed closely by specialization of the candidate (73%) and CV presentation (69%).

The future of job roles

Organizations of the future will increasingly use tech-

nology to create extraordinary products, services, and experiences that were previously impossible. As technology is augmenting and enhancing jobs in Kuwait, about 86% of the respondents believe that the demand of software engineers is likely to increase over the next 10 years along with demand for directors, project managers, system administrators and designers.

Employers in Kuwait could grow and broaden employee's skills, not just through formal learning but by being exposed to a myriad of new jobs and roles inside the company to increase their engagement levels while stemming job hopping. When it came to getting transferred to another job or department when the demand for a current job role decreases, respondents were split on how easy or difficult that task is. Tahboub added: "Company management must take a leadership role in understanding the future of work and how to create a culture which is both personalized and embraces career mobility and provides easy access to on-demand learning."

The future of recruitment

Interestingly, a whopping 95% of Kuwait recruiters agree that online job sites and professional platforms will dominate and be the most popular recruiting tools within 10 years. The pace of change is only expected to accelerate further - nearly four in five recruiters believe that the hiring process is likely to change in the next 10 years. 88% of Kuwait respondents agree that managing the employer's brand and reputation will be critical for attracting talent.

Compared to traditional methods, Kuwait recruiters have huge hopes for AI and technology in the hiring process. 84% of recruiters agree that response time to

applicants is likely to improve using Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS). 81% of recruiters also suggest that the future of hiring will rely more on automation, Artificial Intelligence, and analytics.

"What's most amazing is that the future is already here. Even today, thousands of organizations in the MENA use Bayt.com's ATS solution Talentera, streamlining their recruitment process from A-to-Z," Tahboub said. "We are also heavily working on AI-powered interview tech of the future, where our Evalfy product helps hiring managers assess the sentiment of candidates using AI."

On the jobseeker's end, considering an increased need for reliable information from the frontlines of change - respondents believe that online job boards and career websites (48%) and social and professional networks (48%) will be the most reliable job seeking sources in the future. Interestingly, only about one third of the respondents (27%) consider company website to be more reliable in the future.

Kerry McLaren at YouGov said: "Throughout the MENA region, organizations share common challenges in terms of managing the hiring process within the evolving work landscape. A particular focus of our new survey with Bayt.com is on arriving at a better understanding of the potential of new technologies, methods and skills that will vastly improve the job quality and productivity of professionals in the future. The findings will be extremely useful to businesses, individuals, and governments alike."

Data for the Future of Work in the MENA 2019 survey was collected online from June 20 to July 10, 2019. Results are based on a sample of 4,803 respondents from the following countries: UAE, KSA, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, and others.

Kuwait bourse benchmark ends Monday's trading in red zone

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait ended trading yesterday in the red zone as the Premier Market Index went down by 133.93 points to 6,100 points. Main Market Index went down by 6.71 points to 4,726 points, and the Share Market Index also dropped by 92.52 points to stand at 5,632. Stock volume was 159 million shares, in 7,285 dealings, valued at KD 42,975,363.963 million.

The exchange rates of the US Dollar and the Euro were stable at KD 0.303 and KD 0.336 Sunday, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) yesterday. The CBK added, in its bulletin, that the British Pound Sterling was down to KD 0.378; however, the Swiss Franc was up to KD 0.307. The Japanese Yen remained the same at KD 0.002.

Elsewhere, OPEC daily basket price stood at USD 60.02 a barrel last Friday, compared with USD 60.51 per barrel the previous day, OPEC said yesterday. The OPEC Reference Basket of Crudes (ORB) is made up of the following: Saharan Blend (Algeria), Girassol (Angola), Djeno (Congo), Oriente (Ecuador), Zafiro (Equatorial Guinea), Rabi Light (Gabon), Iran Heavy (Islamic Republic of Iran), Basra Light (Iraq), Kuwait Export (Kuwait), Es Sider (Libya), Bonny Light (Nigeria), Arab Light (Saudi Arabia), Murban (UAE) and Merey (Venezuela). — KUNA



KUWAIT: Al-Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Sabah addresses the conference. — KUNA photos



Chairman of the Regional Social Responsibility Network speaks at the conference.

Ahmadi Governor honored

KUWAIT: A conference about "social responsibility at Islamic banks," currently held in Kuwait, on yesterday granted Al-Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Sabah the title, "international ambassador for social responsibility." This came during the opening of the fourth session, themed "banking leadership and its role in boosting practice of social responsibility."

Sheikh Fawaz, in a statement while he was being honored, called on all local development stakeholders to join hands for serving national economic, social and environmental affairs. The conference is co-organized by the Arab Planning Institute, Regional Social Responsibility Network and Al-Baraka Banking Group.

KUCS employed 752 illegal residents by end of 2018

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Union of Cooperative Societies (KUCS) announced yesterday that the number of illegal residents employed in the union is 752 employees by the end of 2018. KUCS head of the committee for Media and Public Relations Salah Al-Azmi told KUNA that Saad Al-Abdullah Cooperative Society ranked first hiring 112 of illegal residents, followed by Jaber Al-Ahmad Cooperative Society, 47 employees, and Al-Naseem with 42 employees.

Al-Azmi added that Al-Andalus and Al-Raq'ei came fourth with 37 employees, Al-Jahraa, 34, and Al-Sulaibiya, 33. Al-Azmi noted number of cooperative societies employing illegal residents has reached 46. He praised continuous cooperation between the Central Agency and the Federation, and efforts exerted to ensure success in the recruitment mechanism, adding that the directives of President Saleh Al-Fudhala urged to take such measures, in securing a job opportunity for illegal residents, especially in the cooperative sector.

Local

Kuwait govt forms committee to address contracts' shortcomings



KUWAIT: Kuwait cabinet yesterday formed a committee tasked with addressing shortcomings occurring in government contracts as well as remarks by auditing authorities, a senior official said. The committee, chaired by Minister of State for Economic Affairs Maryam Al-Aqeel and consists of experts, will table proposals aimed at speeding up the process of signing contracts which will contribute to rapid implementation of projects, Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Acting Ministers of Interior and Finance, Anas Al-Saleh said in a statement. He said His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who chaired the cabinet meeting, instructed a quicker implementation of development projects through swift procedures that would make sure deadlines were met.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and acting Defense Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the cabinet about his recent visit to Saudi Arabia where he delivered a letter from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to King Salman bin Abdulaziz over a host of issues.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also briefed the executives about the outcome of yesterday's urgent meeting of Foreign Ministers of OIC member countries, who categorically rejected Israeli announcement of annexing the Jordan Valley, north of the Dead Sea and settlements in the occupied West Bank. The foreign ministers, said Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, considered the Israeli announcement a blatant violation of international law, UN Charter and UN resolutions.

They called on the UN Security Council, international courts and global organizations to confront this illegitimate colonial policy. The cabinet, turning to domestic affairs, approved a nuclear energy agreement with the European Union, and an agreement with Iraq on avoiding dual taxation and preventing tax evasion on income capital. The government commended the Ministry of Health for taking legal action against people in Kuwait Health Office in Frankfurt, Germany, who were accused of mismanagement. The government assigned the Ministry of Public Works to update the cabinet in two weeks about the construction of Kuwait International Airport's Terminal Two (T2) and relocation of Abdullah Al-Mubarak Airbase. — KUNA



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister during the weekly meeting. — KUNA



Municipality campaign in West Abu Fateera

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Municipality public relations said Mubarak Al-Kabeer branch carried out an intensive campaign in occupational West Abu Fateera. The campaign was aimed at implementing the law and removing encroach-

ments on state property, removing random signs and making sure all safety licenses and storages were in order. The campaign was led by Mubarak Al-Kabeer Branch Director Fahd Al-Khraj and accompanied by other officials. He said some stores were closed administratively and road occupancy violations were checked.



MoH reshuffles its central directorates

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Health Minister Dr. Basel Al-Sabah yesterday conducted a partial reshuffling in some central directorates in the Ministry of Health, said informed sources. The sources explained that the reshuffling included appointing Elham Akbar as manager of the assessment department, Eman Qayem as manpower development

manager, Ibrahim Nather as health insurance department manager, Eid Al-Mutari as purchases manager, Dr Abdullah Al-Sane' as manager of the medical responsibility department, Nawaf Al-Thafiri as administrative affairs manager at Kuwait Institute for Medical Specializations, Dr Saad Al-Zanki as head of the internal medicine department at the Amiri hospital and Dr Hessa Al-Kandary as head of the pediatrics department.

Students, parents protest against school fees

KUWAIT: A number of private school students and their parents recently demonstrated outside their school in protest towards the increasing of the school's tuition fees as a result of upgrading the school category from B to A, said informed educational sources. It is also worth noting that the charity fund only pays the fees for needy students in category B schools while parents have to pay the difference in category A schools. Furthermore, the sources added that private schools can be upgraded once they meet certain conditions set by the private

education directorate and only then can they legally increase their fees.

University expansion

Drake & Scull International Company announced concluding the first phase of a project to expand the Sabah Al-Salem University campus in Kuwait, adding that the second phase of the project is expected to be concluded by the end of this year. Drake & Scull added one of its subsidiary companies in Kuwait has taken over the project.

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Johnson the Brexit's 'Hulk' finally meets EU's Juncker

Lilly, Thailand's Greta Thunberg, wages 'war' on plastic



SRINAGAR: Shaheena (2nd left), the mother of 17-year-old Asrar Khan cries with relatives as they look at picture of the youth, who she says died a month after being fired upon and seriously injured by Indian paramilitary soldiers, in Srinagar. — AFP

Screams in the night in Indian Kashmir

'It's better to die with a bullet than undergo such torture'

HIRPORA: The soldiers came after midnight, Abid Khan says, his hands trembling, one of around two dozen young men in just one part of Kashmir who say they have been tortured by the Indian army. The alleged abuse, residents say, is aimed at creating a climate of fear after India stripped the long-restive, blood-soaked Himalayan region of its autonomy on August 5.

Khan, 26, from Hirpora village in Shopian district, says he was dragged out and blindfolded along with his brother, who has learning difficulties, on August 14. "They gave electric shocks to my brother right on the road outside. I heard him scream painfully," Khan told AFP, showing marks on his arms, legs and buttocks.

Once inside the nearby Chowgam army camp, Khan said soldiers stripped him tied up his legs and wrists, suspended him and beat him with rods. The camp major, Khan said, accused him of inviting Riyaz Naikoo from Hizbul Mujahideen - one of several militant groups fighting Indian rule - to his recent marriage. An uprising in Indian Kashmir - backed New Delhi says by Pakistan which since 1947 has controlled

the other part of the region - has killed tens of thousands since 1989, mostly civilians.

"I kept repeating that was not true," Khan said. "Then they gave me electric shocks again on my wounds. One of them said 'I will make you impotent.'" After being released at dawn and barely able to stand, Khan says he kept vomiting for 10 days and only managed to start moving around again after 20 days. "I can't eat properly anymore," he said. "I don't go into the room my wife sleeps in anymore... It's better to die with a bullet than undergo such torture."

'People-friendly'

New Delhi says its Kashmir lockdown since last month, with mobile service and the internet still snapped in most areas, is to prevent "terrorists" backed by Islamabad from stirring up trouble. India's national security advisor has denied that the military has committed any atrocities, a statement echoed by Colonel Rajesh Kalia, an army spokesman in Kashmir. "All counter-terrorist operations are conducted in the most professional and people-friendly manner. Allegations of manhandling leveled against the army are completely baseless," Kalia said.

But people in Hirpora say they often hear screams from the army camp at night. Three other villagers said they were also tortured. In total, around two dozen young men in the villages of Shopian told similar stories. "The army is making examples of two or three young men from each village," said one resident of Shopian who has compiled a list. The pattern is often of soldiers raiding homes, taking identity cards and mobiles and telling young men to report to the camps to retrieve them.

One 21-year-old, who declined to be named but shared with AFP photos of his wounds, said he has reported to the Pahnoo camp three times since August 27 and was abused each time. An officer accused of him of giving food to rebels and then offered him money for information, he said. Another time, he was grilled about a former classmate who is now a militant. "They gave me electric shocks inside a dark room for about two hours," the man said, showing scars on his forearm.

'Come back with names'

Obaid Khan, also 21, from Gugloora village said he had to go to the same camp



HIRPORA: Abid Khan, 26, shows marks of torture on his leg during an interview with AFP at Hirpora village in Shopian district. — AFP

to retrieve his ID and phone on August 26. "Eight soldiers kept beating me with rods for a long time. Before they let me go, they asked me to come back with names of stone throwers in my village," he said, referring to protesters who clash with

security forces. Sajjad Hyder Khan, a local official in Pinjoora village told AFP he has seen a list of 1,800 people detained by police and soldiers from Shopian alone, one of the four districts in the southern Kashmir Valley. — AFP

600,000 Rohingya Muslims at serious 'risk of genocide'

YANGON: Rohingya Muslims remaining in Myanmar still face a "serious risk of genocide", UN investigators said yesterday, warning the repatriation of a million already driven from the country by the army remains "impossible". The fact-finding mission to Myanmar, set up by the Human Rights Council, last year branded the army operations in 2017 as "genocide" and called for the prosecution of top generals, including army chief Min Aung Hlaing.

Some 740,000 Rohingya fled burning villages, bringing accounts of murder, rape and torture over the border to sprawling refugee camps in Bangladesh, where survivors of previous waves of persecution already languished. But in a damning report, the United Nations team said the 600,000 Rohingya still inside Myanmar's Rakhine state remain in deteriorating and "deplorable" conditions.

"Myanmar continues to harbor genocidal intent and the Rohingya remain under serious risk of genocide," the investigators said in their final report on Myanmar, due to be presented today in Geneva. The country is "denying wrongdoing, destroying evidence, refusing to conduct effective investigations and clearing, razing, confiscating and building on land from which it displaced Rohingya", it said. Rohingya were living in "inhumane" conditions, the report continued, adding more than 40,000 structures had been destroyed in the 2017 crackdown.

'War crimes'

The mission reiterated calls for the UN Security Council to refer Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC)

or to set up a tribunal, like for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. It said it had a confidential list of more than 100 names, including officials, suspected of being involved in genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, in addition to the six generals named publicly last year.

The report also repeated calls for foreign governments and companies to sever all business ties with the military, urging a "moratorium" on investment and development assistance in Rakhine state. The maligned Muslim community has long been subjected to tight movement restrictions, making it difficult or impossible to access healthcare, work and education. The Rohingya are denied citizenship in Buddhist-majority Myanmar and are accused of being illegal immigrants from neighboring Bangladesh.

The army justified the crackdown as a means of rooting out Rohingya insurgents. Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a repatriation deal two years ago, but virtually no refugees have returned to date. The investigators described conditions in Myanmar as "unsafe, unsustainable and impossible" for returns to take place. Nearly 130,000 Rohingya have been trapped in camps in central Rakhine since a previous bout of violence seven years ago.

Described as "open-air prisons" by Amnesty International, people there remain reliant on humanitarian aid and are rarely granted permission to leave. Those outside the camps fare little better, needing special authorization - and often hefty bribes - to leave their village boundaries. Their homes flattened by bulldozers and land commandeered, refugees in Bangladesh fear they will be subjected to the same, or even worse, treatment if they return to the processing camps built by Myanmar.

The UN team also accused the army of fresh "war crimes", including forced labor and torture, against civilians in the north of Rakhine state. The area has once again become embroiled in conflict as the military wages war on the Arakan Army (AA), rebels fighting for the rights of ethnic Rakhine Buddhists. — AFP

Attacks expose threat to Saudi infrastructure

RIYADH: The strike on Saudi oil infrastructure highlights the easy vulnerability of such facilities even as the kingdom has splurged billions on sophisticated defense hardware. Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi rebels claimed responsibility for the weekend assault, saying they sent a swarm of drones far across the border, but Washington has squarely blamed Iran. Here is a round-up of the nation's key infrastructure potentially exposed to attacks:

Oil facilities

Saudi Aramco, the world's biggest energy company, operates Ghawar and Safaniyah, two of its biggest oil fields. While its oil wells, scattered over a vast geographical area, may be a difficult target, its various oil processing facilities are more exposed. The Abqaiq facility - one of the two sites targeted on Saturday - is the "most vulnerable" among them, the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) said in a report. The Abqaiq plant is the world's largest oil processing facility, with a capacity of more than seven million barrels per day, according to the company.

Aramco's vast system of pipelines, pumping stations and its ports along the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea are also vulnerable to potential attacks. The Houthis claimed their drones targeted two oil pumping stations on Saudi Arabia's key east-west pipeline in May, shutting it down for several days. The nation's oil infra-

structure is also vulnerable to cyber attacks. In 2012, Aramco was among the firms hit by Shamoon, an aggressive disc-wiping malware, in what is believed to be the country's worst cyber attack yet.

Desalination plants

Desalination plants provide more than 70 percent of the kingdom's drinking water, according to official figures. Ras al-Khair, the world's largest desalination plant located on the kingdom's Gulf coast, is an obvious target. The kingdom's water supply could be severely affected in the event of a major attack on the plant. "Cyber attacks also present a serious threat to Saudi desalination plants like Ras al-Khair," the CSIS report said.

Electrical grid

Saudi Arabia's electrical grid has struggled to keep pace with the demands of its rising population and industrial infrastructure. An attack on the oil and gas industry could severely impact the electrical grid as the kingdom is largely dependent on hydrocarbons as fuel for the electricity sector. Its network of transformers and substations are vulnerable to explosive attacks, the CSIS report said. The electrical system can also be disrupted by cyber attacks, it added.

Industrial control systems

Industrial control interfaces that help regulate large-scale infrastructure such as gas pipelines, transportation systems and power transmission networks are also potentially at risk, the CSIS report said. "All of these components may be vulnerable to attack by direct human interference such as the deployment of malware in the master unit or by poor design or configuration, which opens up the system to remote cyber exploitation," the report said. — AFP

International

Islamic State fills the void in Nigeria as soldiers retreat to 'super camps'

New strategy affecting access by aid workers to some areas

ABUJA: When Islamic State gunmen stormed the northeast Nigerian town of Magumeri on the night of August 21, they had free rein. Nigerian soldiers had left the town earlier that month under a new strategy of withdrawing to "super camps" that can be more easily defended against insurgents the army has been struggling to contain for a decade. Unchallenged, the Islamist militants torched a clinic in Magumeri, ransacked government buildings and looted shops before returning to another town they had raided that night called Gubio, residents said.

The new military strategy announced by President Muhammadu Buhari in July to concentrate soldiers in big bases is designed to give troops a secure platform from which they can respond quickly to threats in the region and raid militant camps. People familiar with the military's thinking and security officials, however, say the new tactic for fighting Islamic State's West Africa branch and Boko Haram is mainly an attempt to stem casualties.

The military did not respond to requests for more details about its strategy or the impact it will have on the region. "We strongly believe the days of BH (Boko Haram) moving freely and passing in between static defensive locations are over," Major General Olusegun Adeniyi, who commands the anti-insurgency operation, told reporters last month. Boko Haram launched an insurgency in 2009 to overthrow the government

and establish an Islamic caliphate.

The group, whose unofficial name means "Western education is forbidden", held territory the size of Belgium in 2014 but a multinational offensive recaptured much of it the following year. The group split in 2016 and the faction that has been the greater threat ever since won the recognition of Islamic State. The decade of war has killed more than 30,000 civilians and spawned what the United Nations calls one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, which foreign nations are trying to contain with billions of dollars of aid. But the crisis shows no sign of abating.

'It's a mess'

The army's withdrawal into large bases has coincided with a string of insurgent raids on newly unprotected towns and has left the militants free to set up checkpoints on roads as they roam more freely across the countryside, according to three briefing notes from an international aid and development organisation, two security officials and residents. That has left thousands of civilians without access to aid, according to the briefing notes seen by Reuters.

Soldiers are no longer protecting some key roads, cutting off access for humanitarian workers as more of the region falls under the sway of the insurgents, aid and security sources said. "It's a mess, militarily, and a disaster

for humanitarian actors," one foreign security official said. The population of towns being abandoned by the military is a combined 223,000 people, according to one of the aid agency briefing notes.

The military departures so far have cut off more than 100,000 people from aid and if more soldiers go, as many as 121,000 other civilians could flee their towns, one aid agency briefing note said. "The impact will be one of continued skirmishes - soldiers under constant strain to deal with the insurgency where Islamic State and Boko Haram dictate the momentum," said Jasmine Opperman, a terrorism expert based in South Africa. It's not yet clear how many "super camps" the army plans to set up, where they will be nor how many soldiers each will hold.

'Here to protect you'

The new strategy follows a series of setbacks for the army which has failed to keep a tight grip on territory it has clawed back since 2015. Last year, insurgents repeatedly overran smaller bases and sent soldiers and tens of thousands of people fleeing from larger towns. Security experts put the military death toll since June 2018 at anywhere from hundreds of soldiers to in excess of 1,000.

The military has not released casualty figures but denies that many soldiers have been killed. One security

adviser at an international aid organization said a major goal of the new large bases was damage control, rather than going on the offensive. "It is to consolidate all of the strength in one place to prevent them being overrun every week," the adviser said. He said the areas vacated were being filled by insurgents and that would make it harder for the military to re-enter, leaving civilians vulnerable.

Those concerns were echoed by the governor of Borno - the birthplace of Boko Haram and the state worst hit by the insurgency. Governor Babagana Umara Zulum told reporters last month that recent attacks were the result of a "serious vacuum" following the withdrawal of soldiers. Islamic State is also using its newfound freedom to woo locals. Drained by the decade-long conflict, some are open to moving into areas controlled by the insurgents where life can be more stable, residents said.

Before hitting Magumeri last month, the militants had passed through the town of Gubio, some 40 km to the north. There, an Islamic State fighter led evening prayers followed by a sermon, according to six residents. "We are here to protect you, not to harm any one of you," the IS fighter told residents. "Those with uniforms are your enemies, and we are here to deal with them and their supporters. You should feel free." Rather than flee to a government-controlled city such as Borno state's capital Maiduguri, many Gubio residents stayed. —Reuters

More Palestinians find Israeli work despite conflict

NILIN: Economic growth in Israel and chronic unemployment in the occupied West Bank is seeing more Palestinians cross to the "enemy" side seeking work. The numbers have almost doubled in five years and even another right wing victory in today's elections is unlikely to change that. "All the governments came and went and we went to work, whether with a permit or by smuggling," 58-year-old construction worker Naji Mohammed said.

He has been working in Israel for nearly 20 years to support his nine-member family. "No government has affected our work." In the late afternoon at the Nilin checkpoint, west of the West Bank city of Ramallah, salesmen flog goods to the hundreds of Palestinians returning from a day's work.

Most didn't want to talk politics for fear of jeopardizing their permits. Israel occupied the West Bank in a 1967 war. More than 400,000 Israelis now live in the territory with roughly 2.7 million Palestinians, living in settlements considered illegal under international law. The Jewish state began construction of a barrier cutting off the West Bank during

the violence of the second Palestinian uprising, or intifada, and Palestinians need an Israeli permit to cross.

In 2015, when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu formed a government seen as the most rightwing in Israel's history, around 45,000 Palestinians had Israeli work permits, according to official Palestinian figures. Four years on that number is around 85,000, the overwhelming majority from the occupied West Bank. Tens of thousands of others have permits to work in Israeli settlements or sneak into Israel and work illegally, Palestinian officials estimate. Israelis see the arrangement as a win-win. Palestinian officials accuse the Jewish state of suppressing their economy and sucking up their labor to cut costs.

\$50 more

Israel did not confirm the exact figures, but said the number of permits for employment in Israel had risen 160 percent since 2012. Buffeted by strong economic growth in recent years, Israel has seen a boost in demand for affordable labor, particularly in construction. Workers typically earn between \$70 and \$100 per day working in Israel or in settlements, compared to just \$20-\$30 with Palestinian companies, workers said. With unemployment rates in the West Bank at around 18 percent, according to the World Bank, the revenue is vital for many families.

using a combination of warnings he could lose and a flurry of announcements welcomed by right-wing nationalists, key to his re-election campaign. On Sunday night, he went as far as to cancel his appearance at the final rally for his right-wing Likud party, saying he was instead holding an "emergency consultation", warning the potential of low turnout could lead to his defeat.

For Israelis, it was a familiar tactic that Netanyahu has used repeatedly in the past - though this time the risk may be greater since voter fatigue could play a role due to the repeat election. He has also hit on his other campaign themes: portraying himself as Israel's essential leader, dismissing his main opponents as "weak" and "left" despite their security credentials, and highlighting Israel's economic growth.

'Historic change'

Netanyahu has issued a controversial pledge to annex the Jordan Valley in the occupied West Bank if he wins - a third of the territory. He says he would then move to impose Israeli sovereignty over settlements in the wider West Bank in



NILIN: Palestinian workers return home after finishing a work-day in Israel, after crossing from an Israeli security checkpoint near the Palestinian town of Nilin, west of Ramallah. —AFP

Working inside Israel was for a long time controversial for Palestinians, viewed as accepting Israeli occupation, but has become more normalized in recent years. Employment in settlements in the West Bank, however, remains a taboo, with Palestinians typically wary of publicly admitting such employment. Israelis go to the polls today, with rightwing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seeking a sixth term.

Yousef Al-Naasan, 63, does fear a far-

right Israeli government. "I have concerns. There are some parties, especially from the Israeli right, with demands and opinions which affect the status of Palestinian workers," he said. Rami Mahdawi, a senior official at the Palestinian Labor Ministry, was skeptical. He said the Israeli occupation of the West Bank undermined the Palestinian economy, forcing people to seek work in Israel. "The first and last beneficiary of the (Palestinian) labor force is Israel." —AFP



This combo photo shows Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (left) and retired Israeli general Benny Gantz, one of the leaders of the Blue and White (Kahol Lavan) political alliance. —AFP

coordination with US President Donald Trump, whose long-awaited peace plan is expected to be released after the vote. "We find ourselves at the high point of an historic change in the history

of the Jewish people and the state of Israel," Netanyahu wrote in Maariv newspaper, which gave space to both of the main candidates to spell out their positions. —AFP



MAAR HITAT: A Turkish military convoy heads towards an observation point near the town of Maar Hitat in Syria's northern Idlib province. —AFP

The only provision of the deal that was implemented was the removal of heavy weapons from the buffer zone by jihadists and rebels by the end of October 2018. Jihadists including former

Al-Qaeda affiliate Hayat Tahrir al-Sham however refused to fully withdraw themselves and the buffer zone never became a reality, with joint patrols also never materializing. —AFP

East Libyan forces carry out air strike on central city

BENHAZI: Eastern Libyan forces have mounted an air strike on the central city of Sirte held by the internationally recognized government, an official and residents said, widening a conflict engulfing the capital Tripoli. Khalifa Haftar's eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA) force has been trying since April to take Tripoli, which is held by the internationally recognized government, with a ground campaign supported by air strikes.

The campaign has displaced more than 120,000 people in Tripoli alone, killed hundreds of civilians, and risks disrupting oil supplies from the country in chaos since the toppling of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. There have been LNA-claimed strikes in recent days on Sirte, some 450km by road east of Tripoli, but mainly on the outskirts, residents said.

Haftar, who is allied to an eastern parallel administration, might be trying to shift the frontline from Sirte away from Tripoli where he has been unable to breach the city's defenses and even lost his main forward base in Gharyan, said Emad Badi, a Libya researcher. Such a move would also pre-empt attacks on the main LNA supply base in Jufra, a central oasis, which the Tripoli forces have attacked by air, said Badi, a non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute.

The Sirte strike hit a building near a feedstock plant where the local force securing Sirte is based, which an LNA official said had been targeted. The Tripoli-based government also said on Facebook that drones operated by the United Arab Emirates had carried out strikes against the positions of a force allied to it. The UAE has been backing the LNA alongside Egypt, according to UN reports, but neither country has confirmed this. Turkey is backing the Tripoli forces.

Working airport

Mitiga airport, the only working airport in Tripoli, was also targeted in the early hours of Monday, an eastern military source told Reuters. It has been closed for two weeks due to continued air strikes. Haftar and his backers say they are trying to free the capital from armed groups which they blame for destabilizing Libya since the fall of Gaddafi in a NATO-backed uprising.

Haftar's critics accuse him of trying to seize power through a military coup, deepening a conflict between factions based in the east and west of the sprawling North African country. Sirte, Gaddafi's birth place, was a stronghold for Islamic State militants until Tripoli-forces backed by US airstrikes expelled the group in December 2016. The coastal city lies at the unofficial border of areas of influence of the Tripoli forces in western Libya and the LNA controlling the east.

The LNA suffered a setback when two commanders of an allied force in the town of Tarhouna south-east of Tripoli got killed late on Friday. Tarhouna is the main forward base from where arms and troops arrive from the east after the force lost Gharyan, a town some 70 km south of Tripoli, late in June. Air strikes have increased in recent weeks as both sides try to gain territory ahead of a conference Germany is planning to bring together the main foreign powers active in Libya. —Reuters



TRIPOLI: A journalist covers the frontline during clashes between forces loyal to strongman Khalifa Haftar and fighters loyal to the Libyan internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), south of the Libyan capital Tripoli. —AFP

Netanyahu, Gantz spur supporters on tense Israeli polls

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his main opponent Benny Gantz sought to galvanize supporters yesterday on the eve of a tense election with the political fate of the country's longest-serving premier in the balance. The vote today will be Israel's second in five months after Netanyahu suffered one of the biggest defeats of his political career when he failed to form a coalition after April polls.

Opinion polls indicate another tight race that may see ex-defense minister Avigdor Lieberman, Netanyahu's former right-hand man who is now a rival, play a kingmaker role with his campaign to "make Israel normal again." The slogan is a reference to what the staunch secularist says is the undue influence on politics of Israel's ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties.

Netanyahu has spent recent days seeking to boost turnout among his base,

A year on, is Sochi deal on Idlib dead?

BEIRUT: A deal Moscow and Ankara reached last year on Syria's Idlib region was meant to prevent a bloodbath, but bombardment since late April has claimed a mounting death toll. Most of the main objectives of the deal have not been reached. But as the Russian, Turkish and Iranian presidents meet in Ankara yesterday, is the agreement for northwestern Syria completely dead?

Announced on September 17, 2018 in the Russian resort of Sochi, the agreement was ostensibly presented as a way of averting an all-out government onslaught against the last major opposition bastion in Syria. Months earlier, Russian-backed regime forces had reconquered the Eastern Ghouta enclave on the outskirts of

Damascus with an operation that capped a years-old siege. With around three million people living in the Idlib region, the aid community feared an offensive would trigger death and displacement on a scale yet unseen this century. The truce deal provided for a horseshoe-shaped demilitarized zone to isolate the jihadist-dominated bastion from government-held areas.

The buffer zone loosely followed the borders of Idlib province, straddling slivers of the neighboring provinces of Aleppo, Hama and Latakia. All fighters were to remove their heavy weapons while hardliners were to withdraw combatants altogether from the demilitarized zone, which was due to be patrolled by Russian and Turkish forces. The agreement also stipulated that two key highways running through the region - one linking second city Aleppo to Damascus, the other to the port city of Latakia - should be reopened by the end of 2018.

International

Johnson the Brexit's 'Hulk'
finally meets EU's Juncker

Brexit deal is possible, British PM insists

LUXEMBOURG: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson met EU chief Jean-Claude Juncker for talks yesterday insisting a Brexit deal is possible, despite deep scepticism from European capitals with just six weeks to go before departure day. After a weekend in which he compared himself to comic book super-smasher Hulk, the British leader will enjoy a genteel working lunch of snails and salmon in Luxembourg with the EU Commission president.

Downing Street has confidently billed the Luxembourg visit as part of efforts to negotiate an orderly divorce from the union before an October 17 EU summit. A UK spokesman said Johnson would tell Juncker that "progress has been made, given that before the summer recess many said reopening talks would not be possible."

"The UK needs to enact the referendum result and avoid another delay; the UK wants to deliver Brexit and move on to other priorities, and EU member states' leaders want to renegotiate an orderly Brexit." But Brussels has played down talk of a breakthrough, insisting Johnson has yet to suggest any "legally operable" proposal to revise a previous withdrawal accord. As he shook hands with Johnson, Juncker declared himself "cautiously optimistic" and insisted that "Europe never loses patience" despite the tortuous Brexit saga dragging on over three years.

Finland's European affairs minister, Tytti Tuppurainen, who was chairing an EU ministerial meeting in Brussels, gave a more downbeat assessment, repeating the bloc's longstanding complaint that London has simply not come up with detailed ideas for replacing the so-called "Irish backstop" section of the divorce deal. "The European Union is always ready to negotiate when a proper proposal from the UK side is presented," Tuppurainen said. "So far I haven't seen any proposal that would compensate the backstop."

The EU's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier, who joined the leaders for their talks in Juncker's native Grand Duchy, said last week he has "no reason to be optimistic". The European Parliament will this week vote on a resolution rejecting Johnson's demand that the backstop clause be stripped from the deal. Johnson insists this measure, which temporarily keeps the UK in the EU customs union, has to go if he is to bring the agreement back to the House of Commons.

But the accord will also have to win the support of the other 27 EU leaders and the European Parliament if Britain is not to crash out with no deal on October 31 - a scenario that businesses warn would bring economic chaos. Johnson, in turn, boasts that he would rather be "dead in a ditch" than ask his European counterparts to postpone Brexit for

a third time. "Be in no doubt that if we cannot get a deal-the right deal for both sides-then the UK will come out anyway," Johnson said, writing in the Daily Telegraph yesterday.

'Hulk smash!'

A UK spokesman said that Britain would refuse an extension even if one were offered. It is difficult, then, to see what might come from the lunch. There is no plan for a joint statement, but Barnier will meet Britain's Brexit minister Stephen Barclay for separate discussions. Speaking to the BBC on Sunday, Barclay indicated that any post-Brexit transition period could be extended past 2020 in order to resolve issues with the border.

Johnson, meanwhile, compared himself to Marvel comics hero Hulk, the rampaging mutant alter-ego of a mild-mannered nuclear scientist. "The madder Hulk gets, the stronger Hulk gets and he always escaped, no matter how tightly bound in he seemed to be," Johnson told the Mail on Sunday. Johnson's strategy faces resistance at home, where rebel and opposition MPs have passed a law aimed at forcing him to seek a Brexit delay.

Britain's Supreme Court will rule this week on a bid to overturn Johnson's decision to suspend parliament and limit time to debate the crisis. Barnier will address the European Parliament session in Strasbourg on



LUXEMBOURG: EU Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker (left) welcomes British Prime Minister Boris Johnson prior to their meeting yesterday in Luxembourg. — AFP

Wednesday as MEPs vote to reaffirm and reinforce the EU Brexit stance-and insist that the backstop must stay. After his lunch with

Juncker, Johnson is due to meet Luxembourg's Prime Minister Xavier Bettel. The pair will hold a joint news conference. — AFP

News in brief

2 die in Bali boat accident

JAKARTA: Two foreigners - a Brazilian and South African - have died after their boat capsized in rough seas near Bali, the search-and-rescue agency said yesterday. The small tourist vessel flipped near the treacherous Devil's Tear cove on Nusa Lembongan, east of the Indonesian holiday island. The boat's passengers, a 48-year-old Brazilian and a 43-year-old South African, were declared dead in hospital, the agency said. The boat's 35-year-old captain survived with serious injuries, it added. Maritime accidents are not uncommon in Indonesia, a Southeast Asian archipelago of some 17,000 islands where safety standards are often lax. — AFP

Colombia plane crash kills 7

BOGOTA: At least seven people were killed and another three injured when a small plane crashed in southwestern Colombia on Sunday, a firefighter said. "Nine people were on board the plane. Seven died, while two are seriously injured," Juan Carlos Ganan, the commander of firefighters in the area said. The third person injured was a child on the ground in the area where the plane crashed, Ganan said. Firefighters were trying to stop fuel leaking from the aircraft, Ganan added. The plane, which crashed at 2:11 pm, was headed from Popayan to Lopez de Micay, both in Cauca department. The cause of the crash was not known and an investigation was under way, Ganan said. — AFP

Scores of sheep swept away

OSLO: Heavy rainfall in Norway has caused rivers to overflow their banks, with a waterway in the west of the country sweeping away more than 100 sheep, police said yesterday. "Firefighters and police are now trying to rescue stranded sheep." More and Romsdal regional police wrote on Twitter. "Currently there are reports of more than 100 sheep carried off by the waters," it added. "I have never experienced anything like this," sheep farmer Harald Kragnes told the newspaper Verdens Gang. "There are many dead sheep floating down the river," he added. Floods in central Norway after a weekend of heavy rain and winds have so far claimed no human victims. However around 25 houses and a retirement home have been cut off due to rising water levels, according to public broadcaster NRK. — AFP

Russia deploys S-400 missiles

MOSCOW: Russia has placed S-400 missile defense systems at the Novaya Zemlya archipelago as Moscow seeks to increase its military presence in the Arctic, the defense ministry said yesterday. The surface to air-missile regiment of the Northern Fleet's air defense forces based on the archipelago's southern Yuzhny Island has been fully equipped with new S-400 systems, the fleet said. The regiment was earlier equipped with S-300 systems, a previous version of the missile. The S-400 is one of the most advanced missile defense systems in the world and can hit enemy targets at up to 400 kilometers. Over the past few years Russia has significantly upgraded its military infrastructure in the Arctic. In addition to the Novaya Zemlya forces, the country has stationed troops in the Franz Josef Land, the New Siberian Islands and several other places. — AFP



KUBINKA: Russian S-400 anti-aircraft missile launching system is displayed at the exposition field in Kubinka Patriot Park outside Moscow. — AFP

Italy arrests migrants' 'torturers,' denounce Libyan camp horrors

ROME: Italian police arrested three people yesterday accused of the kidnap, torture and trafficking of migrants hoping to set sail from Libya to Europe. Their accusers described a catalogue of abuse including the systematic rape of women and the murder of some migrants. A 27-year-old man from Guinea and two Egyptians, aged 24 and 26, were taken into custody in a detention centre in Messina, Sicily, after police gathered testimony against them from other migrants. The arrested men had crossed the Mediterranean themselves, landing in Lampedusa before being transferred to Sicily.

Witnesses said the three ran a prisoners' camp in a former military base in Zawya in Libya, where those ready to

attempt the perilous sea crossing were forcibly held until they could pay a ransom. Those interviewed said they had been "beaten with sticks, rifle butts, rubber pipes, whipped or given electric shocks", and had seen other prisoners die, police said. They had also been refused water or medical attention for their wounds or for diseases contracted in the camp, they said. Anyone unable to pay up was passed on to other traffickers "for sexual and/or work exploitation", or was killed.

The testimonies were gathered from migrants spread in reception centers across Sicily and on the island of Lampedusa. "All the women who were with us... were systematically and repeatedly raped," one witness was quoted as saying. "They gave us seawater to drink and, sometimes, hard bread to eat. We men were beaten to get our relatives to pay sums of money in exchange for our release," he said. "I saw the organizers shoot two migrants who had tried to escape".

'Shot for bread'

Another said he was "whipped by electrical wires. Other times I was beaten, even around the head". One survivor described how the electric shocks "made you fall to

the ground unconscious", adding that he had "personally witnessed many murders by electric shock". Some migrants died of hunger, according to another cited witness, who described seeing a jailer "shoot a Nigerian in the legs for having taken a piece of bread".

Libya, despite being wracked by chaos and conflict since the 2011 uprising that killed the dictator Muammar Gaddafi, has remained a major transit route for migrants, especially from sub-Saharan Africa. According to figures from the International Organization for Migration in July, at least 5,200 people are currently trapped in official detention centers in Libya, often in appalling conditions.

There are no figures for the number of people held in illegal centers run by human traffickers, who brutally torture them to try to extort money from their families. Italy's tough line on migrants arriving from North Africa, and European Union cooperation with the Libyan coast-guard, has seen some of those attempting the crossing picked up at sea and returned to the chaos-wracked country. The UN and aid groups have warned those returned face rampant human rights abuses in both official and illegal centers. — AFP



BIARRITZ: In this file photo, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (left) and US President Donald Trump speak during a bilateral meeting in Biarritz. President Donald Trump will join Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a massive gathering of Indian-Americans in Houston. — AFP

In a show of bond, Trump to join Modi in Houston rally

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump will join Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a massive gathering of Indian-Americans in Houston, the White House said Sunday, in a symbolic show of the bond between the two leaders and countries. The September 22 rally - dubbed, with a touch of Texan twang, "Howdy, Modi!" - will mark a rare joint appearance between a US president and a foreign leader before an ethnic community, and be the pair's third meeting this year. Organizers say that more than 50,000 people have registered for the event, which will take place inside the NRG Stadium of the Houston Texans football team.

The gathering is "a great opportunity to emphasize the strong ties between the people of the United States and India, to reaffirm the strategic partnership between the world's oldest and largest democracies and to discuss ways to deepen their energy and trade relationship," the White House said. The White House said Trump would travel the same day to Ohio to showcase an Australian-owned factory alongside Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who will be on a state visit. The two joint appearances amount to a day-long attempt to nurture relationships with foreign leaders by Trump, whose brash style and outspoken remarks have frequently unnerved allies.

The rally with Modi indicates that the two countries have turned the page on an incident in July when Trump baffled India by saying, in a meeting with Pakistani

Prime Minister Imran Khan, that Modi had sought mediation on Kashmir, a flashpoint for conflict between the nuclear-armed powers. India has for decades rejected any outside role in Kashmir. Last month, India revoked Kashmir's autonomous status and snapped communications for much of the Muslim-majority region. India's actions drew criticism from the UN human rights chief and rights groups, with Pakistan urging pressure on India, although Trump has voiced support for Modi's actions.

Reaching across aisle

Trump and Modi have frequently drawn comparisons to each other, with the two right-wing leaders elected on vows to promote the identity of the majority community. But organizers hope to keep the September 22 rally non-partisan, with a cultural performance planned and invited speakers including Steny Hoyer, the number-two Democrat in the House of Representatives. The joint event shows "the personal chemistry and friendship" between Trump and Modi, Harsh Vardhan Shringla, the Indian ambassador to the United States said. "These are two leaders who are used to thinking outside of the box," he said, describing the joint appearance as "unconventional and unique." "The event will also reflect the strong bipartisan support there has been for US-India relations," he said, describing Indian-Americans as an "organic bridge" between the world's two largest democracies.

Shringla said that Modi would also meet in Houston with energy companies before heading to New York for the UN General Assembly. Some four million Americans trace their origins to India and the community is among the most educated and prosperous in the United States. The average Indian-American household earned some \$100,000 in 2015, nearly double the US average, according to the Pew Research Center. — AFP

One possible culprit in vaping lung illnesses: The 'Dank Vapes'

ILLINOIS: As US health officials scramble to identify the root cause of hundreds of severe lung illnesses tied to vaping, one possible culprit identified so far is a line of illicit marijuana vape products sold under the brand names "Dank Vapes" and "Chronic Carts." A study published last week in the New England Journal of Medicine found that more than half of patients with the lung illness - 24 of 41 - who were extensively interviewed in Wisconsin and Illinois reported having used the "Dank Vapes" brand.

The New York State Department of Health identified "Dank Vapes" and "Chronic Carts" as products containing Vitamin E acetate, a thickening agent in THC oil that has been a key focus in its investigation into the illnesses. THC is the psychoactive compound in cannabis. While Vitamin E acetate is often applied to skin or used as a dietary supplement, the US Food and Drug Administration has warned against inhalation because "data is limited about its effects" on the lungs.

The agency has advised consumers to avoid vaping THC oils or using devices bought outside of stores. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which is investigating 380 confirmed or probable cases of lung illnesses tied to vaping, said the condition has not definitively been linked to a specific product or ingredient, including Vitamin E acetate.

The CDC advises against using any e-cigarette or vaping products, since most of the patients interviewed used both THC and nicotine liquids, while 20 percent used only nicotine. Leading makers of nicotine e-cigarettes, including Juul Labs Inc, British American Tobacco Plc and Imperial Brands Plc, said this week their products do not contain Vitamin E compounds or THC.

Available online

Packaging using the "Dank Vapes" name until recently was available on Amazon, according to caches of the product links, and a Reuters review shows they are still widely available elsewhere on the Internet. Amazon.com Inc said it took down vape paraphernalia this week in line with its policies, though the company did not specify the exact products it removed. It said THC and e-cigarettes were not, and are not, offered on its platform.

One merchant that appeared to sell packaging for Dank Vapes and another brand on Amazon was known as Cart

Essentials, according to the cached links, which are now defunct. Cart Essentials had 39 ratings this year, almost all of them five stars. The merchant did not immediately respond to a request for comment sent via Amazon's platform, and Reuters could not determine who was behind the company.

What is it?

Marijuana extracts used in vaping "pens" have been one of the fastest-growing segments of the cannabis industry in recent years. It is an easy way to use the product, can be concealed, and users can better control how much they take in, said David Downs, California bureau chief for cannabis website Leafly.com. The category grew from 2% of the legal market in 2014 to 16% last year, according to BDS Analytics, an industry tracker.

The "Dank Vapes" brand is an illicit product that uses diluted THC oil, Downs said. Drug dealers, looking to make as much money as possible, cut THC oil with Vitamin E acetate to dilute it but make it still appear pure to consumers, Downs said. "It can cut THC oil while keeping it thick." It is difficult to determine whether "Dank Vapes" is an actual company or a brand used by multiple operators. No one responded to calls and emails sent to numbers and addresses listed on a website, dankvapes.org.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo directed the state health department earlier this week to subpoena three companies he said market Vitamin E acetate to vape oil manufacturers. The three companies are Honey Cut Labs LLC in Santa Monica, California; Floraplex Terpenes in Ypsilanti, Michigan; and Mass Terpenes in Amherst, Massachusetts. Cuomo's office in a statement said the thickeners were being marketed as a "cheaper, safer alternative that does not negatively impact flavoring or odor" and "can be used to cut vape products to any level of THC." Honey Cut and Mass Terpenes could not be reached for comment. Floraplex said in a statement it will "work with all appropriate governmental agencies in a transparent and constructive way," and continue its "distribution of quality products." The mass-terpenes.com website had a message to customers saying it was "alarmed" by reports that Vitamin E acetate had been linked to serious lung problems and will "cooperate fully" with state and federal health authorities. — Reuters

International

Blasphemy accusation in Pakistan sparks ransacking of Hindu temple

Latest case to raise concern about the fate of religious minorities

KARACHI: A crowd in Pakistan ransacked a school and Hindu temple after a Hindu principal was accused of blasphemy, police said yesterday, the latest case to raise concern about the fate of religious minorities in the predominantly Muslim country. The violence erupted in the southern province of Sindh after a student accused the Hindu principal of blasphemy in comments about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The enraged crowd ransacked the school and damaged a nearby temple, a district police chief said. The principal had been taken into protective custody and police were investigating both the alleged blasphemy and the rioters, he added. "It seems the principal had not done anything intentionally," the district police chief, Furrugh Ali, told Reuters.

Insulting Islam's Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) carries a mandatory death penalty in Pakistan, which is about 95 percent Muslim and has among the harshest blasphemy laws in the world. No executions for blasphemy have been carried out in Pakistan but enraged mobs sometimes kill people accused of it. Rights groups say the blasphemy law is often exploited by religious hardliners

as well as ordinary Pakistanis to settle scores. The independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan condemned the weekend violence, footage of which was recorded in a video and circulated on social media. It



Pilgrim corridor to Sikh temple to open

called on authorities should take prompt action. "The video ... is chilling: mob violence against a member of a religious minority is barbaric, unacceptable," the commission said in a post on Twitter. Hindus make up about

1.6% of Pakistan's population of 208 million, the majority of whom are Sunni Muslims.

In January, the Supreme Court upheld the acquittal of a Christian woman who spent years on death row after being convicted of blasphemy in a case that had drawn alarm from religious and human rights advocates. In March, Pakistan's government sacked a provincial minister for making offensive comments about Hindus as tension between Pakistan and Hindu-majority neighbor India ran high after a militant attack in the Indian-controlled portion of the contested Kashmir region.

Indian Pilgrim corridor

In another development, a corridor for Indian Sikh pilgrims travelling to a holy temple in Pakistan will open in November, in time for one of the religion's most sacred festivals. The visa-free border crossing from India to Kartarpur, Pakistan will be inaugurated on Nov 9, just ahead of the 550th birthday of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak on Nov 12, Pakistani project director Atif Majeed said yesterday.

The project is a rare recent example of cooperation

between the nuclear powers, who came close to war in February following a militant attack on police in Indian-controlled Kashmir. India revoked the special status of its portion of the disputed territory last month, inflaming relations once again.

The Sikh minority community in India's northern state of Punjab and elsewhere has long sought easier access to the temple in Kartarpur, a village just over the border in Muslim-majority Pakistan. The temple marks the site where the guru died. To get there, travelers currently must first secure hard-to-get visas, travel to Lahore or another major Pakistani city and then drive to the village, which is just 4 km (2-1/2 miles) from the Indian border.

Indian pilgrims will pay Pakistan \$20 to use the corridor, which includes roadways, an 800-metre bridge over the Ravi River and an immigration office. Up to 5,000 Indians will be allowed access daily, with plans to eventually double capacity, Majeed said. Costs of the corridor were not released. Many Sikhs see Pakistan as the place where their religion began. Its founder, Guru Nanak, was born in 1469 in a small village near the eastern Pakistani city of Lahore. — Agencies

185 arrested over raging forest fires across Indonesia

JAKARTA: Indonesia has arrested nearly 200 people over vast forest fires ripping across the archipelago, police said yesterday, as toxic haze sends air quality levels plummeting and sparks flight cancellations. Jakarta has deployed thousands of personnel to battle blazes that are turning land into charred landscapes and consuming forests in Sumatra and Borneo islands, where thousands of schools have been shut over health fears.

The fires—usually started by illegal burning to clear land for farming—have unleashed choking haze across Southeast Asia, triggering diplomatic tensions with Indonesia's neighbors. Yesterday, authorities said they had arrested some 185 people suspected of being involved in activities that led to out-of-control fires sweeping the country.

"Indonesian Police will enforce the law against anyone who is proven to have carried out forest and land burning, whether it was done intentionally or through negligence," National Police spokesman Dedi Prasetyo told reporters in Jakarta. "This is a last resort. The most important thing is prevention." Four corporations were also being investigated, he added. Last week, Indonesia sealed off dozens of plantations where smog-belching fires were blazing, and warned that owners—including Malaysia and Singapore-based firms—could face criminal charges if there was evi-



PALANGKARAYA: This aerial view shows the haze covered airport in Palangkaraya, central Kalimantan. — AFP

dence of illegal burning. Some of the most serious fires occur in peatlands, which are highly combustible when drained of water to be converted into agricultural plantations. Thick haze in Borneo—where air quality levels have plummeted to "dangerous" levels in some areas—caused the cancellation of about a dozen flights Sunday, national airline Garuda said. Rival Lion Air said about 160 Borneo flights had been affected at the weekend. Meanwhile, nearly 150,000 people have been treated for acute respiratory infections linked to the haze in recent months, according to Indonesian health authorities.

While forest fires are an annual problem, the situation this year has been worsened by drier weather in Indonesia, with diplomatic tensions soaring as toxic smog drifts over to neighboring Malaysia and Singapore. The haze pushed Singapore's air quality to unhealthy levels for the first time in three years at the weekend. In 2015, Indonesia suffered its worst forest fires for almost two decades, which dramatically increased its greenhouse gas emissions. Huge fires tearing through the Amazon are also compounding concerns about the long-term impact of such blazes on keeping global temperature levels stable. — AFP

Dozens of tigers dead after confiscation from temple in Thailand

BANGKOK: More than half of the 147 tigers confiscated from a controversial Thai temple have died, park officials said yesterday, blaming genetic problems linked to in-breeding at the once money-spinning tourist attraction. For years, the Wat Pha Luang Ta Bua temple in the western province of Kanchanaburi pulled tourist hordes who could be photographed — for a fee — next to scores of tigers.

But in 2016 park officials began a lengthy operation to remove the big cats amid allegations of mismanagement, and claims the creatures were being exploited. Dozens of dead cubs were found kept in freezers, sparking claims the carcasses were being sold by a temple rumored to have raked in hundreds of thousands of dollars each year from visitors. Tiger parts can fetch enormous sums in China and Vietnam, where they are falsely believed to have medicinal properties.

The surviving adults were taken to two breeding stations in nearby Ratchaburi province but only 61 of the 147 have survived so far, parks officials told reporters. "It could be linked to in-breeding," Pattarapol Maneon, of the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation said. "They had genetic problems which posed risks to body and immune system." Many suffered from tongue paralysis, breathing problems and lack of appetite that led to fatal seizures.

Legal cases ongoing

"Most of the tigers were already in distressed state stemming from the transportation and change of location... later their health problems emerged," Sunthorn



KANCHANABURI: In this file photo, a wildlife official scans the microchip implanted in a tiger at the Wat Pha Luang Ta Bua tiger temple in Kanchanaburi province. — AFP

Chaiwattana, another department official said. Legal cases against the temple are ongoing. Conservationists questioned whether authorities had looked after the seized animals appropriately, with small, cramped cages enabling the spread of disease. "To be very honest who would be ready to take in so many tigers at once?" said Edwin Wick, founder of the Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand.

Conditions at the enclosures were "not good enough to house so many tigers and the set up was wrong", he

added. Tens of millions visit Thailand every year, and a lucrative wildlife tourism industry has grown in-step with visitor numbers. But critics say cash often trumps animal welfare at many attractions. For a price, visitors can ride and bathe with elephants, hold monkeys and pose for selfies with tigers. Animal rights groups have long criticized the industry, with chained up animals kept in small quarters with inadequate veterinary care, or forced to perform tricks for tourists. — AFP

Lilly, Thailand's Greta Thunberg, wages 'war' on plastic

BANGKOK: Skipping school to glide through a dirty Bangkok canal on a paddleboard, Lilly fishes out rubbish in her mission to clean up Thailand, where the average person uses eight plastic bags every single day. "I am a kid at war," the bubbly 12-year-old says after a painstaking hour-long routine picking up cans, bags and bottles bobbing in the canal. "I try to stay optimistic but I am also angry. Our world is disappearing," she adds. Thailand is the sixth largest global contributor to ocean pollution, and plastic is a scourge.

Whether it's for wrapping up street food, takeaway coffees or for groceries, Thais use 3,000 single use bags per year - 12 times more than someone from the European Union.

In June, Lilly won her first victory: she persuaded Central, a major supermarket in Bangkok, to stop giving out plastic bags in its stores once a week. "I told myself that if the government did not listen to me, it would be necessary to speak directly to those who distribute plastic bags and convince them to stop," she explains.

This month some of the biggest brands, including the operator of the ubiquitous 7-Eleven convenience stores, pledged to stop handing out single-use plastic bags by January next year. Mindsets have started to shift this year with the deaths of several marine mammals whose stomachs were lined with plastic, stirring emotions. The demise last month of a baby dugong was mourned on social media, reviving discussion in the government over a proposed ban on most single-use plastics by 2022.

But critics say along with new rules there need to be enforcement mechanisms such as fines. For now young activists like Lilly can help capture attention. "You might be able to tune out all of the evidence and advocacy in the world, but it's very hard to ignore a child when they ask why we're trashing the planet that

they have to live on," says Kakuko Nagatani-Yoshida, regional coordinator for chemicals, waste and air quality with UN Environment.

'It's up to us'

Lilly is Ralyn Satitdanasarn's nickname. The US-Thai youngster started campaigning at the age of eight after a seaside vacation in southern Thailand where she was horrified by a beach covered in rubbish. "We cleaned up with my parents, but that was not helpful because other waste was thrown out by the sea the next day," she recalls.

Then came the global movement initiated by 16-year-old Greta Thunberg, who has become a key face in the battle against global warming. Inspired by the young Swede, Lilly did sit-ins in front of the Thai government buildings. "Greta Thunberg gave me confidence. When adults do not do anything, it's up to us children to act," she insists. Though she often skips class to carry out her activism, she will not be in New York alongside Thunberg for a protest on September 20 just days before the UN climate conference. "My place is here, the fight is also in Southeast Asia," she says. — AFP



BANGKOK: 12-year-old Ralyn Satitdanasarn (front 2nd right), known by her nickname Lilly, and her friends collect plastic waste during the Trash Hero cleaning initiative at the Khung Bang Kachao urban forest and beach in Bangkok. — AFP

North Korean leader Kim invited Trump to Pyongyang in a letter

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un invited US President Donald Trump to visit Pyongyang in a letter sent in August amid stalled denuclearization talks, a South Korean newspaper reported yesterday, citing diplomatic sources. Kim, in the letter sent in the third week of August, spoke of his "willingness" for a third summit and extended an invitation for Trump to visit the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, the JoongAng Ilbo newspaper reported, citing an unidentified source. Trump on Aug 9 said he had received a "very beautiful letter" from Kim.

But US officials have not said anything about a second letter in August. Trump and Kim have met three times since June last year to discuss ways to resolve a crisis over North Korea's missile and nuclear programs, but substantive progress has been scant. Their first two meetings were formal summits, the second of which, in Vietnam in February, broke down after they failed to narrow a gap between US demands for North Korean denuclearization and a North Korean demand for relief from sanctions.

They met for a third time on June 30 in the Demilitarized Zone between the two Koreas and agreed to restart working-level talks but that has not happened. Since the June meeting, North Korea has several times tested short-range projectiles. The White House, the US State Department and the North Korean mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the report.

'Threats and hurdles'

An unidentified director-general for US affairs at North Korea's foreign ministry said on Monday he hoped a "good meeting" with working-level US officials would take place "in a few weeks". But whether a meeting would lead to a "crisis or chance" was up to the United States, the official said, calling for a more flexible approach. "The discussion of denuclearization may be possible when threats and hurdles endangering our system security and obstructing our development are clearly removed beyond all doubt," the official said in a statement carried by North Korea's official KCNA news agency.

North Korea's vice foreign minister, Choe Son Hui, said last week Pyongyang was willing to have "comprehensive discussions" late this month. Trump subsequently said he would be willing to meet Kim at some point this year. South Korea's foreign minister, Kang Kyung-wha, asked about the newspaper report, said there were "detailed explanations about such a letter" but declined to elaborate.

Kang said it could be "too much to expect" that Trump and Kim would meet before any working-level talks. "No agreement was reached between the two leaders in Hanoi even after working-level negotiations," Kang told a parliamentary panel. "For the sake of the success of another summit, their working-level teams should meet and have primary discussions on the outcome of the summit," Kang said. — Reuters

Analysis

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US asylum lockdown turns up heat on tiny Mexico migrant agency

Mexico's tiny asylum agency is already overwhelmed with applicants who are abandoning the American dream because of US President Donald Trump's hardline immigration measures. Now, the agency fears the burden on employees already working up to 15 hours a day will increase after the US Supreme Court decided to restore a Trump administration policy banning most asylum applications at the US-Mexico border.

Like many others in Tapachula, a gateway city between Guatemala and Mexico, Danny Perez, a 29-year-old Honduran taxi driver who said he fled to escape extortion by gangs, dreamed of reaching the United States. But as the reality of Trump's immigration policies sets in, he is trying to settle in Mexico. Perez cannot work without papers while his claim is being processed, and he has no money to rent a room. "This isn't easy," said Perez, who began the process of seeking asylum last week and worries he may go "crazy."

Resigned to waiting, he spends his nights on a patch of sidewalk across the street from the refugee office in Tapachula, where he feels safe amid the steady churn of migrants, trying to snatch a few hours of sleep under the street lamps' neon glow. Wednesday's Supreme Court action, which reinstated a US policy stipulating that migrants crossing another country en route to the United States must apply for asylum in that country, will likely exacerbate the demand in Mexico, said Andres Ramirez, head of the Mexican refugee agency, COMAR. "It's worrying," Ramirez told Reuters. "We expect this will add to the growing numbers we've been seeing." Alexander Espinoza waited half a year. His life once revolved around making it to US soil: The 33-year-old Salvadoran says he tried to enter illegally 10 times, including six attempts in six months. But as Trump ratcheted up his anti-immigration rhetoric, Espinoza decided to call Mexico home. Last week, COMAR recognized him as a refugee, ending a wait that began in March. He faces more delay for his residency card. But he was not downhearted, showing off the braided bracelets he has made, his fledgling business.

15 hours

Even before Wednesday's Supreme Court action, applications at COMAR were expected to hit 80,000 in 2019, more than double last year's total. In August alone, requests more than tripled from last year to 8,178. On Friday morning in Tapachula a few dozen asylum-seekers waited for their appointments, armed with colorful plastic folders carrying the paperwork that will determine their fate.

Sitting at a desk stacked high with manila case folders, Claudia Briseno said COMAR employees like her have been working at a grueling pace. The office's 63 employees are processing 16,350 applications - or about 260 per person. Days stretching 10, 12 or even 15 hours are the norm. Briseno said, her voice cracking. "We're making triple the effort so we can give everyone access to the refugee system," she said.

The staff has streamlined processes, reducing the frequency with which asylum-seekers must report in, Briseno said. But the latest change in US immigration policy may upend that progress. The agency's shoestring budget compounds its problems. COMAR received federal funding of 20 million pesos (\$1 million) in 2019, the lowest sum in seven years. The proposed 2020 budget would increase it to 27 million pesos - still far short of the 117 million pesos COMAR chief Ramirez says the agency needs. COMAR leans heavily on the United Nations' refugee agency, which has provided 112 staff and helped open three new offices. But until COMAR is better funded, migrants will be short of support to rebuild their lives in Mexico, said Enrique Vidal, coordinator for human rights group Fray Matias de Cordova. "COMAR lacks, on a structural level, the capacity to attend to the reality we're living in," he said.

Next stop, USA

For some, asylum in Mexico is simply a stop on the road. Under the US policy reinstated by the Supreme Court, migrants may still have a shot at US asylum if their application is rejected in another country. Roger Fuentes, a Cuban home goods vendor who arrived in Tapachula in August, said the United States remains his goal. "You have to request (asylum in Mexico) or you won't have other options," said Fuentes, 34. He said he will not try to throw his Mexican asylum case, though he knows that rejection could help his US bid.

Similarly, Teresa Cardonell said fear of deportation back to Cuba has made her determined to do everything right in Mexico - including applying for asylum. But her mind is fixed on the United States. Terrified after being robbed in Tapachula, she dyed her blonde locks brown to try to blend in. "We're seeking freedom," the 34-year-old said. "In Mexico, I'm still not free - I can't go out." — Reuters

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



Indonesian firefighters spray water to extinguish a fire in Kampar yesterday. — AFP

Indonesia struggles to douse underground fires

Thousands of Indonesian firefighters are locked in an around-the-clock game of Whack-a-Mole as they battle to extinguish an invisible enemy - underground fires that aggravate global warming. Vast blazes are ripping across the archipelago's rainforests, unleashing a toxic haze over Southeast Asia that has triggered health fears and sent diplomatic tensions with Indonesia's neighbors soaring.

Jakarta deployed more than 9,000 personnel to battle fires turning land into charred landscapes and consuming forests in hard-hit Sumatra and Borneo island. But many of the blazes smoulder deep underground in once-swampy areas known as peatlands, where they can last for months and release eye-watering amounts of thick, acrid smoke.

"It's so much harder to fight fires on peatlands," a dirty and exhausted Hendri Kusnardi told AFP outside smog-hit Pekanbaru city in Sumatra. "Even after we've managed to put out a fire on the ground, sometimes it is not over because it's still burning underground. And then the next morning the ground fire will just reignite."

'Human behavior'

The culprit behind Indonesia's blazes is usually illegal fires set to clear land for the lucrative palm oil and pulpwood industries - and the situation this year has been worsened by drier weather. Some of the most serious fires happen in carbon-rich peatlands - topped with layers of decomposed plant material several metres thick - which

become highly combustible when they're drained of water to be converted into plantations.

"The forest and peatland fires that occur every year are a crisis created by human behavior," said Rusmadya Maharuddin, a forest campaigner at Greenpeace Indonesia. "Sometimes the fires will continue to burn for months, releasing emissions and causing haze." Peat fires can belch out three times as much smoke per kilogram of material than high-temperature forest fires, she added.

At the peak of Indonesia's 2015 forest fires - the country's worst in two decades - blazes in peat swamp forests emitted nearly 16 million tonnes of carbon emissions daily, more than the entire US economy in the same period, according to watchdog The International Union for Conservation of Nature. Across the Pacific Ocean, huge fires tearing through the Amazon are compounding concerns about the long-term impact, as increasing fire outbreaks globally creates more greenhouse gas emissions and makes it harder to limit temperature rises, experts say.

Detection drawback

Fighting peatland fires comes with myriad challenges because they're often in remote locations, the soft soil makes them inaccessible by car and firefighters need huge amounts of water - often pumped below ground - to get at subterranean blazes. Indonesia has deployed water-bombing helicopters, but the onset of the rainy season, which usually starts in October, could be the only thing

able to douse the fires. "When you're dealing with large areas of peat burning it's just so expensive to bring in large quantities of water," said Michael Brady, an Indonesia-based peatlands expert at the Center for International Forestry Research.

"Water-bombing is not very effective because you just can't drop enough water" to douse them, he added. Satellite radar used to find hotspots - areas of intense heat which indicate a high chance of fire - does not always pinpoint below-ground blazes. "It may not show up as a hotspot... (because) there might not be enough heat at the surface of the ground," Brady said. "So, one of the challenges is just to detect them."

'Not going away'

Authorities are beefing up law enforcement to catch those responsible for illegal burning and have moved to restore degraded peatland forests - a key buffer against annual flooding and home to endangered species, including Sumatran orangutans. But despite Indonesia's progress over the past few decades, fighting fires is still a challenge even for countries like the United States, Canada and Australia which have some of the top technologies and fire prevention programs, Brady said. "This is not going to go away," he added. "We're not going to find a solution to eliminate fires on the landscape completely and we're not going to 'tackle' it. This requires an ongoing investment." — AFP

Roghun hydropower plant's second unit launch ceremony

On the 9th of September, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon visited Roghun to participate in the launch ceremony of second unit of the Roghun hydropower plant. Prime Minister of Tajikistan Qohir Rasulzoda, Mayor of

Dushanbe Rustam Emomali, Director of the Open Joint Stock Company of Roghun Hydropower Plant Khayrullo Safarzoda and other officials met Emomali Rahmon at the temporary airport located near the construction site.

The launch of the second unit of this grand hydropower facility has been front-page news covered by the national and international media. More than 140 local and foreign journalists, reputable international news agencies from the United States, Italy, Germany, Russia, Japan, United Kingdom, China, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan and other countries covered this historical event.

The Leader Emomali Rahmon got familiar with the

construction processes in CT-4 deviation tunnel, spillway tunnel of T-9, air trunk and tunnel, trunk of the turbine of the first unit, construction camp of 5A and exit of the deviation tunnel of CT-3 in the site. Overall, the length of the CT-4 diversion tunnel, including its exit, is 1798 m and its realizing capacity is 3500m³ per second.

The CT-4 deviation tunnel will serve to spill water during water-abundant seasons in the process of the plant's construction at the point between 1090 and 1210 m height. Two headrace spillway tunnels that will be constructed at the level of 1190 m, will be connected to CT-4 branches and they will have the capacity of spilling 1750 m³ of water per second each.

— From the Embassy of Tajikistan in Kuwait

Niamey residents flee after worst floods in 50 years

"At last, we're here!" Amina and Halima, who live in Niger's capital Niamey, exulted after reaching high ground following the worst floods to hit the city in 50 years. Two weeks ago, authorities in Niamey declared a red alert when the waters of the Niger river - the third biggest in Africa - rose to a level "not seen in more than 50 years". The floods have affected more than 6,300 people in the traditionally dusty city. Nearly 60 have been killed and 130,000 displaced across the nation this rainy season, officials say.

Amina and Halima are among those who have been evacuated to tent shelters at Sagua in the highlands overlooking Niamey. The women travelled in a van, but officials have been chartering all kinds of transport to move people in trouble, while others hire taxis, ride motorbikes and even walk. Sagua is a patch of land owned by the army and usually off limits to the public. In 2012, it was used to house about 400 soldiers from neighbouring Mali who had fled an offensive by Tuareg rebels.

For access to the site, people need "tickets" that are distributed in schools serving as transit centres for flood victims, according to the armed paramilitary police checking new arrivals. The heights give a panoramic view of the homes and rice paddies largely submerged by the water.

'Surprised in our sleep'

Inside the camp, the fire brigade and municipal employees have put up dozens of white tents supplied by the Red Cross and the United Nations. "When people arrive here, they are installed in tents (...) and we have enough food for them all," Niamey governor Issaka Assane Karanta told AFP. A generator and a fresh-water well have both been repaired, lamp posts will soon be installed and a medical centre is open "for the treatment of emergency cases", the governor said. Some 122 households, comprising 854 people, have been allocated tents and the site can take in a



A barefoot child walks past tents on Sept 11, 2019 in the makeshift camp of Sagua near the capital Niamey after the Niger river floods forced inhabitants out of the area. — AFP

total of 1,200 flood victims, he added. "They gave us rice, millet, mosquito nets, blankets and drinking water," said Aissa Salifou, putting on makeup in her tent, her head and shoulders covered in a broad veil. "The water surprised us in our sleep," added the woman from one of Niamey's hardest-hit districts, Kirkissoye. "We had to demolish the walls in neighbouring houses to scramble out." "We live on the low ground where we were trapped by the water, but this place is spacious, well-aired and above all safe," said Fatouma Boubacar, another Kirkissoye resident, watching her cooking pot on the fire.

'I was lucky'

Though Boubacar arrived only two days earlier, she has resumed her customary job, selling vegetables. "I was lucky," said Ramatou Abdou, reclining in an armchair with a toothpick stuck between her teeth. "I barely got out of

the house before the roof fell in. I'm expecting my first baby in a month and I shall call it Sagua." In the shade of a huge tree, a dozen new arrivals awaited the completion of their shelters before moving in.

Barefoot children meanwhile made up football teams and chased a rag ball on a makeshift pitch in the baking heat. On the far side of the camp, a policeman with a gun slung over his shoulder watched over a bunch of children carrying plates and queuing for a hot meal provided by an NGO. "We're trying to live here and waiting to see what Allah has in store for us," Boubacar said. The level of the Niger has fallen slightly after bursting its banks, but governor Karanta is urging people from affected areas to be watchful and "to keep well away from the bed of the river". Upstream in Mali, technicians have opened floodgates on a major dam and the extra water is "slowly but surely" flowing down to Niger, Karanta said. — AFP

Business

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Zain Group teams up with GSMA to disclose climate impacts

GSMA-led climate initiative to develop de-carbonization pathway for mobile sector



LONDON/KUWAIT: Zain announces it has teamed up with the GSMA and many of the world's largest mobile operator groups to start disclosing their climate impacts as part of a major new GSMA-led initiative to develop a mobile industry climate action roadmap in line with the Paris Agreement.

Zain along with more than 50 mobile operators - which together account for more than two thirds of mobile connections globally - are now disclosing their climate impacts, energy and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions via the internationally recognized CDP system (Global Disclosure Project). The move will enable full transparency for investors and customers involved in the mobile sector. Many of the companies are disclosing for the first time as part of the GSMA-led initiative.

The disclosures form the first phase of an industry-wide, climate action roadmap. The next phase will see the development of a de-carbonization pathway for the mobile industry aligned with the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi), to be in place by February 2020. This will include the development of an industry-wide plan to achieve net-zero GHG emissions by 2050 in line with the Paris Agreement.

Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO commented, "Zain is taking an affirmative step to align with the UN global ambition to reduce carbon emissions by 50 percent by 2030, aiming to be carbon neutral by 2050. We recognize that climate change is a material risk that not only impacts humanity today, but also will impact the ability of future generations to thrive."



Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

"Today's announcement marks the start of an unprecedented, collaborative action by the mobile industry to tackle the climate emergency, demonstrating how the private sector can show leadership and responsibility in addressing one of the gravest chal-

Bader Al-Kharafi:
"Climate change is a material risk that not only impacts humanity today, but also will impact the ability of future generations to thrive"

lenges facing our planet," said Mats Granryd, Director General of the GSMA. "The mobile industry will form the backbone of the future economy and therefore has a unique opportunity to drive change across multiple sectors and in collaboration with our suppliers,

investors and customers."

"We welcome this landmark move by the mobile sector to disclose its climate impacts via CDP, which demonstrates a clear step-up in commitment to providing transparency to its investors and customers as part of an industry-wide approach," said Paul Simpson, CEO of CDP. "As a result of these disclosures, mobile operators will be able to measure and understand their environmental impact, helping them to build sustainability into the heart of their businesses."

The new methodology designed specifically for the mobile sector in limiting global warming will provide parameters to accelerate the rate at which mobile operators set their own targets. The timescale at which individual companies reach the target will depend on several factors, including their geographic location and their ability to access renewable energy. It is expected that some companies will meet the net zero target significantly ahead of the 2050 deadline.

Zain along with the mobile industry is also committed to advancing mobile technology innovations in areas such as big data and IoT that can enable energy efficient and environmental solutions across multiple sectors, including transport, manufacturing, agriculture, building, energy.

This agreement between the Zain and other mobile operators with the GSMA forms part of the industry's journey to support the delivery of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG #13 on Climate Action, and its mission to intelligently connect everyone and everything to a #BetterFuture.

EU divided over budget; Germany wants to curb bloc's spending

BRUSSELS: The European Union may need to scale back its plans to boost growth and counter climate change if it fails to quickly agree on a long-term budget, European officials said yesterday, as Germany and other northern states push to restrict spending.

The EU administration is funded with a seven-year budget. The size and targets are often subject to prolonged haggling among its member states. But divisions over the next 2021-2027 financial framework run deeper than usual at a time when the bloc faces risks of a new economic recession and uncertainty over the outcome of the Brexit process - which is expected to lead Britain, one of the largest contributors to the EU coffers, out of the union.

"My big concern is that Europe will be in a difficult economic and geopolitical situation if there is no budget by the first of January," the EU commissioner in charge of the talks, Guenther Oettinger, told an EU ministers' meeting in Brussels. He said the urgency to strike a deal was heightened by the bloc's weakening economy, with Germany and other EU states stagnating. He said it would take years to find a compromise at the current pace of negotiation.

The long-term financial framework needs to be adopted well in advance of its starting date because it has to be translated into yearly spending programs

which also usually require long negotiations.

The EU's executive commission proposed last year a seven-year budget of roughly 1.1 trillion euros (\$1.22 trillion) which would represent 1.11 percent of the bloc's Gross National Income (GNI), a measure of domestic output. The estimate does not include funding from Britain, which is planning to leave the EU at the end of October.

But Germany, the EU's largest economy and the main contributor to the budget, has made it known that it wants to limit spending to 1 percent of economic output, according to a document seen by Reuters. Sweden and the Netherlands openly support Berlin's more cautious spending plans.

The budget for the current seven-year period also amounts to 1 percent of GNI, but Brussels said it has to go up because of planned higher spending on research, digital economy, border control and defense. Berlin said the proposed cap would represent a net increase in spending by EU states, as the bloc would have to do without contributions from Britain. It also urged more spending to counter climate change. The European Parliament, backed by southern and eastern European states who are net receivers of EU funds, wants a bigger budget, set at 1.3 percent of the bloc's GNI.

Lawmakers also urged further funding for new projects on climate change and for unemployment benefits as mentioned by the commission's president-designate Ursula von der Leyen in her inaugural speech after appointment in July.

Spain's state secretary for EU affairs, Marco Aguiriano Nalda, said differences between the proposals made it almost impossible to find a compromise before the end of the year.

"I have to express strong worries and reservations on the state of play of the financial framework," he told his counterparts at a televised session of the



BRUSSELS: Reforming the European Union's budget rules sharply splits Germany and other richer members.— AFP

ministerial meeting. Poland's State Secretary for European Affairs, Konrad Szymanski, told the same meeting that reduced spending caps would inevitably translate into lower ambitions.

A compromise is made more difficult also by plans to make EU funding conditional on upholding the bloc's values, including the rule of law. Germany

called for this "conditionality" in its confidential document reviewed by Reuters. That proposal could spark a confrontation between countries in the liberal West and the ex-communist Poland and Hungary in the bloc's east. The EU has accused Poland and Hungary of undermining democracy with controversial justice and media reforms. — Reuters

Business

Gulf is moving from oil economy to knowledge-based economy: Expert

IMA president rules out global recession

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: The Gulf region is on the threshold of a transition from an oil-based economy to a broader knowledge-based economy and Kuwait is also part of that great transformation with its ambitious New Kuwait 2035 vision, said Jeffrey C Thomson, President and CEO of Institute of Management Accountants (IMA) yesterday.

"I believe that the countries in the entire region are trying to lessen their reliance on oil and move towards a knowledge-based economy. Countries including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have embarked on that vision, which is just a decade away. Knowledge will be the key driver of that change incorporating artificial intelligence (AI), fintech, blockchain, etc.," he told Kuwait Times in an exclusive interview.

In Kuwait, the IMA Kuwait Chapter will be part of that evolution by helping organizations develop competencies for accounting and financial planning, risk management and internal control systems and supporting merger and acquisition activ-

ities, Thomson said.

In view of the current volatile economic and financial situation, individual investors and organizations must pay attention to the fundamentals of the economy. "Markets may move up and down based on social media tweets or geopolitical tensions. You must also be ready to accept some volatility in the market, otherwise you shouldn't be in the game," he said.

"But if you want to be a good investor, you really need to watch and monitor the economic scorecard based on the fundamentals in the Middle East such as real GDP, GDP per capita, funding, tax rates and consumer confidence. Also, an investor must spend time to think what is ahead in terms of economic environment, consumer confidence and purchasing power, otherwise you will lose sight of where the market is heading," Thomson pointed out.

"Today, there is a lot of excitement and buzz about evolving technologies such as AI, fintech, blockchain, etc in different parts of the world. But at the end of the day, it is the talent of your finance and accounting team that matters. It is all about advancing compe-

tence and talent in management accounting and finance and corporate strategy," he explained.

Recession

"It is hard to predict if there is a global recession around the corner," Thomson said in response to a specific question. "There are a lot of reactions about a looming recession in the market today due to geopolitical tensions in the Middle East or trade issues. But the US economic fundamentals are pretty strong, with solid corporate earnings, consumer confidence, real GDP growth, etc. So, in the short-term, we don't see the signs that would suggest a global recession, at least from the CMA perspective," Thomson stated. According to him, it is all about maintaining a healthy financial profile with strong balance sheets, good cash reserves, smart investments, smart risk management and internal controls.

IMA - with chapters all across the world - celebrated 100 years of service a couple of months ago in Santiago. Thomson arrived in Kuwait to attend IMA Kuwait Chapter's annual conference yesterday.



Jeffrey C Thomson during the interview

Oil prices rocket as attack slashes Saudi output

LONDON: Oil prices saw their biggest daily gain since the 1991 Gulf War yesterday after drone attacks on two Saudi oil facilities halved output in the world's top crude exporter, fuelling fresh geopolitical and growth fears. Europe's benchmark Brent crude surged by 20 percent and US counterpart WTI by 15 percent as commodities trading got underway after President Donald Trump warned that the US was "locked and loaded" to respond to the attacks that Washington blamed on Iran.

Both contracts later came off their peaks, but were still up around 12 percent at the close of European trading. The price surges weighed across world stock markets on fears that a sustained higher cost of crude could impact already weakening global economic growth.

'Another headwind'

"Growing tensions in the Middle East are another headwind for the global economy in already uncertain times and a full-blown conflict could trigger another leg in the global downturn," said Jennifer McKeown, head of Global Economics at Capital Economics. However, share prices of energy majors jumped, with traders seeing higher profits down the line for the likes of BP and Shell.

In foreign exchange, the dollar was down against the yen and up against the euro, while the pound slid, with the EU saying that Britain had offered no new, viable Brexit proposals after Prime Minister Boris Johnson held Brexit deal talks with EU chief Jean-Claude Juncker. Gold, which along with the yen is seen as a haven in times of geopolitical and



DUBAI: Traders sit below the stock market screens at the Dubai Financial Market in the Gulf emirate yesterday. —AFP

economic unrest, rose.

"Oil price shocks like this are bad news for growth," Neil Wilson, chief market analyst at trading group Markets.com, said.

'Risk premium'

"It raises stagflation risks too-higher oil prices suppress growth and raise inflation. Of course it depends how long this lasts, does the risk-premium mean higher prices for the rest of the year or does it fade quickly if it comes back on stream this week?" Saudi Arabia was on Monday expected to restore at least a third of the production lost to the attacks, according to experts and reports.

The Saturday strikes on national energy giant Aramco's Abqaiq processing plant and Khurais oil field knocked 5.7 million barrels per day off production, more than half of the OPEC kingpin's output.

Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman on Sunday said the kingdom would use its vast inventories to partially compensate for the lost production and the US also authorized the release of its reserves. "The attack wiped out around half of Saudi Arabia's production-representing around five percent of global daily output-and highlighted the vulnerability of security at these facilities to drone attacks," noted Oanda senior market analyst Craig Erlam.

"Spikes in oil prices when the global economy is already flirting with the idea of recession is not ideal and, if repeated and sustained, could ultimately be what tips us over the edge," he added. Facing a dauntingly uncertain economic horizon amid the US-China trade war, the Federal Reserve is set to cut interest rates this coming week, analysts predicted. —Reuters

Aramco: From 'Prosperity Well' to energy giant

DUBAI: From its beginnings in 1938 when it first struck oil with the aptly named "Prosperity Well", Saudi Arabia's national energy giant Aramco has delivered unimaginable riches to the desert kingdom.

It has since grown into the world's largest and most profitable energy concern, generating 10 percent of global crude supplies and trillions of dollars in income. However, it has been hit in recent months by a string of serious attacks on its oil facilities, the latest on Saturday halting the flow of 5.7 million barrels of oil per day, over half of its output, in drone strikes.

The strikes threaten to undermine plans for Aramco to make its stock market debut, in a listing that could generate \$100 billion based on a \$2 trillion valuation of the company. Aramco has its origins in a 1933 concession agreement signed by the Saudi government with the Standard Oil Company of California. Drilling began in 1935 and the first oil began flowing three years later.

It gained its current name from the subsidiary created to manage the agreement that was called the Arabia American Oil Company in the late 1940s. In 1949, oil production hit a milestone 500,000 barrels per day and the following year Aramco built the 1,212-kilometre (753-mile) Trans-Arabian Pipeline to export Saudi oil to Europe across the Mediterranean Sea.

Production rose rapidly after the dis-

covery of large offshore and onshore oilfields including Ghawar, the world's largest with some 60 billion barrels of oil, and Safaniya, the biggest offshore oilfield with 35 billion barrels. In 1973, with prices spiking at the peak of the Arab oil embargo-imposed against the US over its policy on Israel-the Saudi government acquired 25 percent of Aramco to increase its share to 60 percent and become a majority stakeholder.

Seven years later, it was nationalised, and in 1988 it became the Saudi Arabian Oil Company, or Saudi Aramco. From the 1990s, Aramco invested hundreds of billions of dollars in massive expansion projects, raising its oil output capacity to over 12 million bpd, besides making bold international acquisitions and joint ventures.

Currently, Aramco has some 260 billion barrels in proven oil reserves, the second largest in the world after Venezuela, in addition to 300 trillion cubic feet of gas. Based in Dhahran in the country's east, the firm has key oil operations in the United States, China, India, South Korea and several European and Asian nations. Aramco has also built a network of domestic pipelines and refineries inside and outside the kingdom and expanded its presence in the petrochemicals industry.

In April, it opened its account books for the first time, announcing it posted \$111.1 billion in net profit in 2018, up 46 percent on the previous year, and generating \$356 billion in revenues. The opening of its secretive accounts was designed to increase transparency ahead of the IPO which is the cornerstone of de facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's "Vision 2030" reform plans for the country. However, the listing has been repeatedly delayed, with analysts citing low oil prices as well as squeamishness over disclosing facts and figures about the firm which have traditionally been viewed as state secrets. —AFP

Purdue files for bankruptcy in bid to settle opioid crisis cases

NEW YORK: Purdue Pharma has filed for bankruptcy in a settlement agreement in a move it hopes will head off further legal proceedings in relation to its role in spreading the opioid crisis in the US, the company said in a statement on Sunday.

Owned by the wealthy Sackler family, the pharmaceutical giant is facing thousands of state and federal lawsuits blaming its prescription painkiller OxyContin for plunging millions of Americans into addiction.

If approved by a bankruptcy judge, Purdue says that it expects the proposed restructuring to provide more than \$10 billion to help tackle addiction and see the new company's profits re-directed in ways that benefit the claimants and the American people. Purdue Chairman Steve Miller said the settlement will "provide billions of dollars and critical resources to communities across the country trying to cope with the opioid crisis."

The company has filed for reorganization under Chapter 11 of the US Bankruptcy Code and, if the proposal receives court approval, it will then dissolve and transfer its assets to a trust managed by a new governing board. The new board will be selected by the claimants, who include thousands of municipal governments and nearly two dozen states, and will be approved by the Bankruptcy Court.

This body will then oversee the operation of the new company, including the continued sale of Oxycontin, so that its profits and assets can be used to benefit those impacted by opioid addiction.

Miller said the restructuring will avoid



In this file photo taken on April 2, 2019 Purdue Pharma headquarters stands in downtown Stamford, Connecticut. Purdue Pharma said on Sunday that they had filed for bankruptcy in a bid to settle opioid crisis cases. —AFP

"wasting hundreds of millions of dollars and years on protracted litigation." But around 26 states are expected to contest the filing and further pursue litigation against the Sackler family, according to Bloomberg.

Sinking into addiction

The cases against Purdue seek to address the costs of millions of Americans sinking into addiction after using potent opioid painkillers that doctors freely, and often criminally, prescribed over the past two decades. Well over 400,000 people died of opioid overdoses in that period, while the pharmaceutical companies involved raked in billions of dollars in profits. And while the flood of prescription opioids into the black market has now been curtailed, addicts are turning to heroin and highly potent fentanyl, where the risk of overdose and death is even higher.

In 2017, 47,000 people died in the United States as a result of overdosing on opioids including prescription drugs, heroin and fentanyl, according to the Centers for Disease Control. As part of the settlement, Purdue says it will potentially provide communities with

millions of addiction treatment drugs, at no or low cost, to help tackle the crisis. "Purdue has received FDA fast-track designation for nalme-fene hydrochloride, a much-needed treatment that has the potential to reverse overdoses from powerful synthetic opioids such as fentanyl," the company said in its statement. The development of a nasal naloxone product, that can be sold over-the-counter, is another addiction reversal medication that the newly restructured company could continue to support.

As well as giving up control of Purdue, the settlement will also see the Sackler family personally contribute \$3 billion, with the potential for further monetary contributions. Forbes estimates the wealth of the Sackler family at \$13 billion, but their international reputation has taken a hit in recent months after demonstrations against their role in the opioid crisis. New York's Guggenheim Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and London's Tate Modern have said they would stop accepting donations from the family, and the Louvre Museum in Paris recently removed the Sackler name from its Sackler Wing of Oriental Antiquities. —AFP

Facebook's Libra in regulators' sights

ZURICH/LONDON: Facebook's attempt to drag cryptocurrencies into the mainstream with its Libra digital coin met with further scepticism yesterday when an ECB board member said such "stablecoins" posed serious risks. Benoit Coeure told central bank officials from around the world that the new breed of virtual currencies were largely untested and pledged a tough regulatory approach, adding to warnings from authorities around the world.

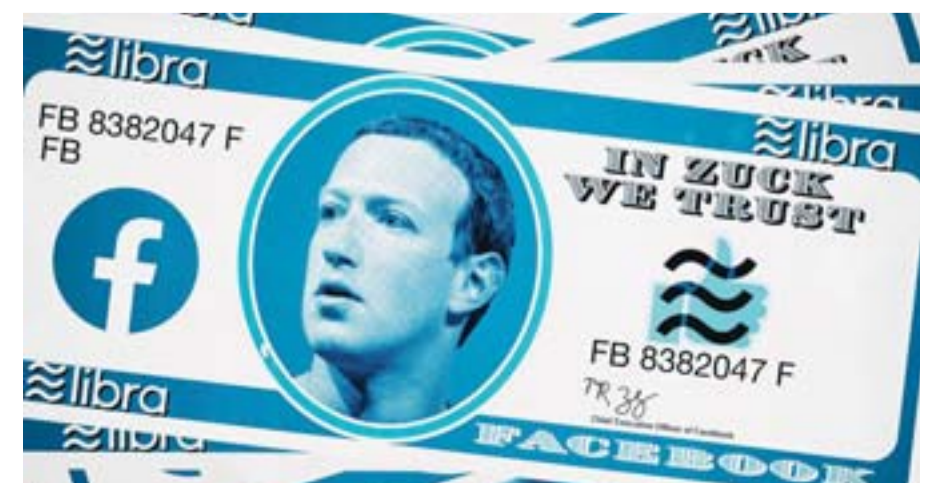
Facebook's planned Libra is the most well-known of the stablecoins, cryptocurrencies backed by assets such as traditional money deposits, short-term government securities or gold.

The social media giant's project, announced in June as it expands into e-commerce, is a high-profile attempt to draw cryptocurrencies into the banking and corporate establishment its creators

sought to subvert. A decade after being born on the web, digital currencies - led by bitcoin - remain a largely unregulated and opaque sector, offering users near-anonymity and associated by many people with hacks, heists and illicit activity.

Enter stablecoins which, by virtue of being underpinned by more established and predictable assets, aim to overcome the extreme volatility that plagues cryptocurrencies and renders them impractical for commerce and payments. However, authorities around the world have poured cold water on Libra, with concerns centering on what the critics say is its potentially destabilising effect on the global financial system and potential for use in money laundering.

Coeure's comments came during an event at the Bank of International Settlements (BIS) in Basel, where the Group of Seven working group on stablecoins met to discuss regulatory issues posed by the new digital currencies. "Stablecoins are largely untested, especially on the scale required to run a global payment system," said the European Central Bank executive board member, who chairs the BIS-hosted Committee on Payments and Market Infrastructures. —Reuters



Business

Burgan Bank to sponsor Central Bank's int'l conference, 'Shaping the Future'

Digitalization creating unprecedented disruption in banking sector: Hayat

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, the progressive financial powerhouse in Kuwait and the region, announced yesterday its sponsorship of the inaugural of Central Bank of Kuwait International Banking Conference. The event, which takes place on Monday, September 23, 2019, will be held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, at the Four Seasons Hotel.

Reinforcing its role as a keen contributor to the evolution of technological banking services, Vice Chairman and Group CEO at Burgan Bank Group Masaud Hayat said, "Digitalization and innovative technologies are creating unprecedented disruption in the banking sector, and the rate of change is acceler-

ating. Banks are facing crucial decisions as technology shifts customer expectations and changes in regulatory landscape. We are now seeing the need to innovate, become more agile, utilize data and advanced analytics to support cost reduction and revenue improvement, and build partnerships with organizations who may also be competitors."

Burgan Bank will be present among global industry peers from the financial sector, along with prominent delegates, CEOs, industry experts, and key figures from government and regulatory bodies. In the interest of sustainable economic growth and development across the nation, the high-level event is initiated to address the ongoing challenges faced by the com-

mercial banking sector on various fronts.

The talks are aimed at mitigating potential risks by stepping out of traditional business models and investing in dynamic transformational change that will secure long-term consumer satisfaction and rising expectations. Embracing the need for new, innovative and enhanced digital and technological solutions, Burgan Bank will be participating in an exhibition on the sidelines of the International Banking Conference. The exhibition will witness the active participation of more than 40 exhibitors from the national and international banking realm, including regional telecommunications and several specific financial technology companies.



Masaud Hayat

EY launches GigNow platform, offers opportunities to freelancers in MENA

DUBAI: EY announces the launch of GigNow in the MENA region, an online platform that connects people seeking short-term contracts (gigs) with opportunities at EY. Advancements in workplace technology enables freelancers to access job opportunities that allow them to work remotely, giving them more flexibility and freedom in their professional careers as they support on-demand work.

The launch of the GigNow platform is in line with the increasing global trend of organizations leveraging contingent workers, also known as freelancers who are employed on short-term contracts, to respond to growing work demands during peak seasons.

As an online talent marketplace, GigNow will offer freelancers from across the MENA region the opportunity to engage with EY on a per project basis, giving contract workers the chance to combine flexibility and diverse gigs with exceptional experiences.

The platform also aims to provide further supply to increasing workforce demands across a wide range of skillsets, including business consulting, transaction assistance, insurance, tax advisory and IT, as well as other business-related areas.

Abdulaziz Al-Sowailim, MENA Chairman and CEO, EY, says: "EY is committed to building a workforce for the future and the launch of the GigNow platform reflects the disruption we are seeing to the traditional business models in the MENA region. The gig economy is gaining traction with the growth of on-demand expertise and the rising trend of skilled professionals seeking flexible working arrangements that will allow them to expand their qualifications and experiences."

"The use of contingent workers through GigNow not only allows EY to engage the right talent for the right opportunities at the right time, but will also support freelancers and specialists who want the flexibility of a short-term contract with the high engagement, innovation, and diversity that projects at EY offer. The ability to harness the best talent from across the region faster and more effectively will in turn allow us to better serve our clients and their ever-changing needs."

The GigNow platform offers an immersive experience that ensures quick on-boarding, so that anybody can join a project across any location quickly and begin to make valuable contributions in a shorter span of time. The talent pool contracted through GigNow will further benefit from EY's world-class learning, such as virtual courses from which they can earn valuable digital credentials for developing new skills. Furthermore, the platform provides a single location for EY alumni to find new contractor opportunities for themselves and to refer high-quality contractor talent. GigNow is part of a series of new global programs from EY designed to prepare the workforce and business for the future of work. GigNow has been launched in Australia, India, New Zealand, the United States and the United Kingdom prior to being launched in the MENA region.

NY Fed Empire State business index slips in Sept

NEW YORK: The New York Federal Reserve said yesterday its gauge of business growth in New York state declined more than forecast in September, suggesting sluggish regional activity amid a US-China trade dispute. There were conciliatory gestures between Washington and Beijing in a bid to defuse trade tensions as the two nations are expected to meet in Washington for trade talks in the coming weeks.

The regional Fed's "Empire State" index on current business conditions fell to 2.0 points this month from 4.8 points in August. For September, analysts polled by Reuters had forecast a reading of 4.0.

A reading above zero suggests an expansion in regional business activity. Details in the New York Fed's latest snapshot of the state's factory sector were mixed. The measure on new orders, a proxy on future activity, decreased to 3.5 points from 6.7 in August, while the shipment index fell 4 points to 5.8, the lowest reading in nearly three years, the New York Fed said. —Reuters

Some 46,000 GM auto workers strike in US

DETROIT: The United Auto Workers union began a nationwide strike against General Motors yesterday, with some 46,000 members walking off the job after contract talks hit an impasse. The move to strike, which the Wall Street Journal described as the first major stoppage at GM in more than a decade, came after the manufacturer's four-year contract with workers expired without an agreement on a replacement.

Local union leaders met in Detroit "and opted to strike at midnight on Sunday," the UAW said on its Twitter account. "This is our last resort," Terry Dittes, the union's lead negotiator with GM, told a news conference after the meeting. "We are standing up for the fundamental rights of working people in this country."

UAW officials said the two sides remained far apart in the contract negotiations, with disagreements on wages, health care benefits, the status of temporary workers and job security.

"Our members have spoken; we have taken action; and this is a decision we did not make lightly," Ted Krumm, chair of the UAW's national bargaining committee, said in a statement.

"We are standing up for what is right," Krumm said. Hours before the strike

began, US President Donald Trump tweeted: "Here we go again with General Motors and the United Auto Workers. Get together and make a deal!" Democratic presidential hopefuls also took to Twitter, to voice support for the strike.

"A job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about dignity and respect," frontrunner Joe Biden wrote. Bernie Sanders urged GM to "end the greed." "Sit down with the UAW and work out an agreement that treats your workers with the respect and dignity they deserve," the Vermont senator tweeted.

GM's last major strike, according to the Journal, was in 2007 when 73,000 workers at more than 89 facilities walked off the job for two days.

In a statement, GM said it was "disappointing" that the UAW's leadership had decided to call the strike, saying it had presented a "strong offer" in contract negotiations. "We have negotiated in good faith and with a sense of urgency. Our goal remains to build a strong future for our employees and our business," it said. UAW's leadership had previously won overwhelming approval from its rank-and-file for a strike if it became necessary.

Strong sales, unclear outlook

Workers at Ford and Fiat Chrysler agreed to extend their contracts, but GM management was informed Saturday that the union would not extend its contract.

Earlier on Sunday, contract maintenance workers walked off the job at GM plants in Michigan and Ohio in a parallel dispute with contractor Aramark. GM has enjoyed several years of strong sales, posting \$11.8 billion in operating profits

In Zimbabwe's crisis, surviving means improvising, and some luck

HARARE: In crisis-stricken Zimbabwe, where prices are soaring, the local dollar is plummeting and time is always short, even a trip to the gas station can be an adventure in the struggle to survive. Filling a tank used to require just a few minutes. Now it takes a day of patience and some ingenuity at the gas station. Even then, success is not guaranteed.

As the sun sets on Harare, Tinashé Magacha is about to spend the night in his car, like hundreds of motorists in the queue, hoping to refuel the minibus he uses for work. "While I am queuing, my bus is on the road with my driver transporting passengers. If I fill up this car, I will drain the fuel with a hose pipe to the commuter bus." All that effort comes with a hefty price tag. Fuel prices more than doubled in January, triggering protests suppressed in a bloody crackdown by President Emmerson Mnangagwa's regime.

For months, lines of cars stretching for several kilometers at petrol stations have become the latest manifestation of the economic ruin left by Robert Mugabe, who died on September 6 almost two years after a coup ended his 37-year rule. Zimbabwe has been mired in the crisis since the early 2000s after Mugabe's controversial land reform program that saw the violent seizure of white-owned farms and investors fleeing the country. Zimbabwe never recovered. Today there are shortages of everything. From fuel to washing powder, to license plates and passports. Even local currency is in short supply.

Cash shortages

Ruined by hyperinflation and the plummeting Zimbabwean dollar, the country and its banks are desperately short of currency. Forced to pay his bus tickets in hard currency to go to work, Crispin Mudzengerere must spend hours at his bank to withdraw, if he is lucky, at best 100 dollars (about 8 euros) in cash. He could buy some from street traders, but the service is "taxed" at least 30 percent commission. "To get 20 dollars, I need to spend 26 dollars. I have to pay for my own money," he said. To cut back on transportation costs, Mudzengerere got creative. He now does double shifts at his restaurant, which allows him to have four days of rest, and travel less.

In Zimbabwe, resourcefulness and patience have become indispensable weapons for dealing with daily survival. But hustling cannot solve everything. The first victim of the crisis has been the value of wages, destroyed by hyperinflation — 175 percent in June and the depreciation of the local currency.

Within a year, Zimbabweans say, the value of their



HARARE: A man walks on a foot path towards a farm near Chegutu, about 107 kilometres southwest of Harare. At its zenith, the Mount Carmel farm in northern Zimbabwe boasted 500 livestock and shipped its mangoes and lemons to Europe, a continent away. In 2009, that halcyon time ended abruptly when the farm was seized by thugs operating in the name of Robert Mugabe's land reform. —AFP

salaries has been divided by fifteen. The toll has been harsh. Wakanai Murambidzi, a cleaner in a bank, was unable to pay her children's school fees. They were forced out of school earlier this month. "I did not pay the full last school fees. I don't know what to do. I am stuck," she said. "We regret removing Mugabe," she said, referring to the military coup that ended the former president's reign in 2017. "We used to buy bread for one dollar. Now it is 10."

'Contraband'

Amidst the economic ruin, a new type of market has emerged in Harare, in the poor district of Mbare. Shoppers here won't find any fresh vegetables, fruit or meat, but only non-perishable foods like rice, sugar and bars of soap, all illegally imported from neighboring South Africa.

Prices, untaxed and sold without intermediary, are unbeatable here. "We are smuggling," shopkeeper Blessing Chiona says, with all her goods laid on a wooden pallet in the mud. "The prices change up to three times a day." Beside her, dozens of her colleagues wait for customers under the sun. Here, two liters of cooking oil go for 24 dollars in cash, compared with 34 dollars in supermarkets.

Sheltered under an umbrella, Chiona sends text messages of shopping lists to delivery drivers, known as "malayitsha" or couriers in Ndebele language, who travel back and forth between Zimbabwe and South Africa with minibuses full of passengers and goods. As if these struggles were not enough, Zimbabweans also have to work around the country's interminable power cuts, sometimes up to 18 hours a day. Street seller Mishiwek Masarirevhu has found his solution: with a mini solar panel, he charges a car battery during the day, which he uses to charge his phone once at home.

Jocelyn Chaibva, a 59-year-old pharmacist, gets up in the middle of the night, when the electricity is back on for a few hours in her neighborhood, to put on the washing machine. —AFP



FLINT: General Motors Co. Chevrolet and GMC pickup trucks are parked outside the Flint Assembly plant in Flint, Michigan, yesterday. The United Auto Workers union began a nationwide strike against General Motors yesterday, with some 46,000 members walking off the job after contract talks hit an impasse. —AFP

last year, prompting union officials to argue it is time to share the wealth with workers who have borne the brunt of downturns.

But the outlook for GM is less clear, with concerns growing that a recession may be in the offing amid protracted trade tensions. GM announced last November it was effectively shuttering five plants in North America, including facilities in Michigan and Ohio that were "unallocated" for production. Protecting jobs and saving those plants have been key issues in the negotiations.

In its response to the strike, GM's management revealed that its offer included a promise of \$7 billion in investments that would save or protect

5,400 union jobs and address the issue of the two "unallocated" plants. It also promised that a new all-electric truck would be built in a US plant.

Adding to the friction is a federal corruption probe of the union leadership, which resulted in an FBI search last month of the home of UAW President Gary Jones.

A member of the UAW's executive board, Vance Pearson, was arrested on Thursday on charges of conspiracy to use union dues for lavish personal expenses. Pearson, a UAW director in St. Louis, Missouri, was accused of using union conferences as a cover to justify long-term stays at luxury resorts in California. —AFP

Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 15th September 2019 announcing the names of the winners for the week of 8-12 September 2019. The weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners of this week are:

Tareq Faisal Jassim Alrubaiaan
Rashed Ahmed Saad Alobaid
Murtaza Pattherwala
Ahmed Khaled Ahmed Al-Jassar
Ali Hussain Aasser Al-Baloushi

Gulf Bank's third Al-Danah quarterly draw for the prize of KD 500,000 will be held on 25 September 2019. The final Al-Danah draw for KD 1,000,000, will be held on 16 January 2020, where the Al-Danah millionaire will be announced at a live event.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services. Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, 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 chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. To take part in the Al-Danah 2019 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw. Furthermore, loyal Al-Danah customers are rewarded with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous year which are added to the customer's chances the following year.

What's On

Al-Thiqa Restaurants Company wraps up its first internship program with LOYAC

Al-Thiqa Restaurants Company recently welcomed a group of LOYAC interns at its restaurants and cafes as part of its summer internship program. The interns worked for five weeks among different service functions of Al-Thiqa's restaurants, which included Gia, Chicster, Eggslut, The Backburner, and Shrimpy. The internship program was designed to offer interns an opportunity to get acquainted with the nature of work in the food and beverage industry, from preparing different meals to handcrafting several types of coffee, in addition to interacting with customers and working within a team.

In this regard, Group Executive Director of Corporate Services at Al-Thiqa Restaurants Company, Aseel Alturkait said: "We were delighted to welcome this group of ambitious young men and women to work with us this summer. It is very promising to see our youth eager to learn the ins and outs of the food & beverage service industry, and practice the daily tasks required to run a cafe or restaurant. We appreciate LOYAC's efforts to empower young people in various sectors and look forward to continuing this fruitful relationship with them."

On her part, Managing Director and Deputy Chairman of

the Board of Directors at LOYAC, Fadia Almarzouq said: "LOYAC programs aim to spread love and peace among the youth by promoting their professional, mental, psychological, and physical development. The LOYAC internship program is designed to serve this purpose through a collaboration with a wide range of sectors that believe in our organization's vision and mission regarding local youth. We are proud of our positive cooperation with the Al-Thiqa Restaurants Company team, and of their keenness to support the personal and professional growth of local youth through the LOYAC internship program."

Intern Khalid Alhajery commented on his summer internship saying: "This summer, I worked at Gia, one of Al-Thiqa's restaurants. Through the program I learned many new skills and gained experience in different domains, including learning how to prepare different kinds of coffee! I also interacted with customers directly, and I gained valuable relationships with the colleagues I worked with. I would like to thank Al-Thiqa Restaurants Company and LOYAC for giving me this opportunity." Al-Thiqa is scheduled to welcome their second batch of interns next month, and are looking forward to engaging more of Kuwait's youth in the long term.



Aqua Park contacts co-ops on expired tickets

Aqua Park Director and member of the board of directors, Mohammed Abdul Redha Khorsheed stressed that Aqua park would not be responsible for any expired tickets in sale centers at various co-ops after October, 6 2019. Redha added that in view of the nearness of concluding the summer season and out of its commitment towards its clients, Aqua Park managed to contact all boards of directors at co-ops that bought Aqua Park tickets in 2018 and 2019 to notify them



that the tickets would only be valid until October 6, 2019 while those sold before 2018 will be nullified.



Lulu Hypermarket launches Onam Celebration 2019

Lulu Hypermarket, the leading hypermarket chain in the region, launched its Onam Celebration 2019 festival on September 9 at the hypermarket's Al Rai outlet, in the presence of a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers, as well as top Lulu management in Kuwait. The unique Onam festival, a popular 10-day harvest festival in Kerala is celebrated by Keralites all

over the world with great fervor and enthusiasm. The promotional campaign to mark this festival in Kuwait includes various competitions and cultural programs.

The Onam promotion, which is being held at all Lulu outlets in the country, is slated to end on September 14. A variety of Onam-related products, food items and department store goods are on offer at knock-out prices during the festival campaign. In addition, a number of special booths dedicated to offering traditional Onam cuisine such as Onam sadhya and payasam.

Other highlights of the campaign include cultural programs showcasing some of the traditional dances and performances held

during Onam festival, such as Onam Maveli, Chendamelam, Pulikali, and Kathakali, by enthusiastic performers at Lulu's Al Rai outlet. On September 13, a special Onam floral design competition was held at the Al-Rai outlet where 10 teams competed to create vibrant and elaborate designs on the floor using flowers.

The winner of the competition was awarded a gift voucher worth KD 100, while the second and third place winners each received KD 75 and KD 50 worth of gift vouchers respectively. Consolation prizes were awarded to all the participants in the competition. Enhancing the festive mood during the campaign were brilliant cardboard cutouts and decorations representing traditional Onam features that added color to the festival venues.

Onam Celebration 2019 is a continuation of LuLu Hypermarket's customer-centric endeavor to always be in sync with the community when it comes to celebrating traditions, festivals and foods from various countries. Colorful events held at the hypermarket to celebrate these special occasions offer a wide variety of products and food items at highly competitive prices. These promotional campaigns also help make shopping an enjoyable and fun experience for customers and their families.



Lulu announces raffle draw winners

Lulu Hypermarket, the largest hypermarket chain in the region, announced the names of the raffle-draw winners of its recent 'Back-to-School' promotion. The promotion, which ran from August 21 to September 10, witnessed a large number of young shoppers along with their parents mak-

ing a beeline to Lulu outlets to buy popular school items at very competitive prices. The highlight of the promotion was the raffle draw powered by Byjus.com, the online learning app for kids. For every KD 10 worth of purchase during the promotion period, shoppers were entitled to a raffle coupon that could win them one of ten prizes, each worth KD 1,000. The raffle draw, which took place on September 16 at the Ministry of Commerce premises was held in the presence of ministry officials and top Lulu management, saw ten winners take home cheques for KD 1,000 each.



Armed with tech tools, Colombian cities combat mosquito-borne diseases

App helps monitor, reduce spread of infectious diseases

BOGOTA: Armed with a mobile app, Glens Barragan has been knocking from door to door in the poor neighborhoods of Colombia's northern city of Cucuta, aiming to combat the spread of the Zika virus, a mosquito-borne disease. In the past year, Barragan has helped fellow residents identify and destroy mosquito breeding grounds - from water stored in containers and buckets in homes to puddles of water, rubbish and discarded tires in city streets and parks.

Using a phone app and platform created by Premise, a US-based data and analytics company, the information collected was recorded, georeferenced and photographed and then passed on to city health authorities. Results from the pilot project, which ran from early 2018 until July this year, found that when people are shown mosquito breeding grounds and informed about the Zika virus, they are more likely to inspect their own homes and keep them mosquito-free, Premise said.

"When we went back to the homes we visited after two months, they didn't have breeding grounds, people were applying chlorine to destroy them," Barragan said. "We're raising awareness among people that solving and avoiding the problem is in our very own hands," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in a phone interview. Barragan is

part of a network of more than 7,000 people who participated in the project run by Premise in three cities in Colombia - Cucuta, Cali and Santa Marta - across which about 108,000 homes were inspected, Premise said. Participants were paid either in bitcoin - a digital currency - or by bank deposit. In all about 70,000 mosquito breeding sites were destroyed, and the average number of mosquito breeding sites found in each home dropped from 3 to 1.8 in a year, according to Premise. The technology company hopes the initiative will be expanded to other cities in Colombia, as well as across the continent.

Citizen participation

The Zika virus is spread to humans by biting *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes - the same species that carries other diseases such as chikungunya, yellow fever and dengue. The project, funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), arose in response to the 2015-2016 Zika epidemic in the Americas, which was then declared a global emergency. While Latin America is not currently facing a Zika epidemic, the region is grappling with a huge dengue outbreak where at least 2 million people have caught the virus so far this year and more than 720 have died,

according to the World Health Organization. As the region faces new mosquito-borne outbreaks, there is a growing need to find new ways to monitor and reduce the spread of infectious diseases like Zika and dengue, which includes giving affected communities tech-based solutions. People living in densely populated slum areas with no running water or proper sewage and rubbish collection systems are most at risk of catching Zika and other mosquito-borne diseases, medical experts warn.

During heavy rainfall, slums often flood because drains are non-existent or blocked, leaving puddles of stagnant water outside people's homes where mosquitoes can breed. Barragan said she and other community leaders visited homes in hillside slums that health authorities cannot reach due to transport and security issues. Getting local communities involved in collecting data to monitor disease outbreaks can help to complement the work done by health officials who have typically carried out such tasks.

"This is quite an innovative and a new approach to include a participatory approach, meaning citizens monitoring outbreak surveillance," said Antoine Flahault, director of the Institute of Global Health at the University of Geneva. "This kind of data may be comple-



NHA TRANG, Vietnam: This file photo shows a laboratory assistant examining mosquito samples at the Pasteur Institute in the southern Vietnamese city of Nha Trang. — AFP

mentary, which may add to traditional surveillance (data)," the health researcher said.

One challenge is ensuring health officials can sift through all the data collected by citizens and respond in time, he added. Maury

Blackman, head of Premise, said the collected data includes heat maps, historical tracking and frequency charts, allowing health officials to see when, and in which city neighborhoods, they should intervene. — Reuters

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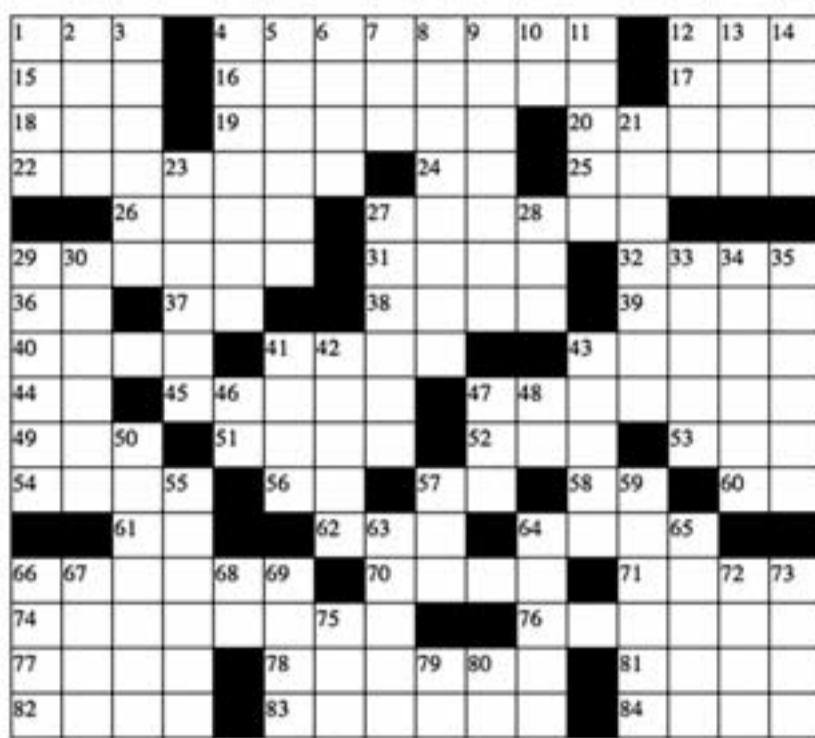
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 4. A viral disease of cattle causing a mild skin disease affecting the udder.
 12. Standard time in the 8th time zone west of Greenwich, reckoned at the 120th meridian west.
 15. Towards the side away from the wind.
 16. In the process of being born or beginning.
 17. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
 18. Bulky grayish-brown eagle with a short wedge-shaped white tail.
 19. A clerk who sorts things (as letters at the post office).
 20. Of or relating to or involving an area.
 22. Supreme military leader exercising civil power in a region especially one accountable to nobody when the central government is weak.
 24. A motorized wheeled vehicle used for camping or other recreational activities.
 25. Arboreal snake of central and southern Africa whose bite is often fatal.
 26. A tiny or scarcely detectable amount.
 29. Capable of wounding.
 31. That which is responsible for one's thoughts and feelings.
 32. Type genus of the family Arcidae.
 36. Before noon.
 37. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
 38. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
 39. An official language of the Republic of South Africa.
 40. Dutch astronomer who proved that the galaxy is rotating and proposed the existence of the Oort cloud (1900-1992).
 44. A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
 45. (law) A defense by an accused person purporting to show that he or she could not have committed the crime in question.
 49. A defensive missile designed to shoot down incoming intercontinental ballistic missiles.
 51. Genus of prickly shrubs and small trees of the Caribbean region.
 52. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
 53. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
 54. (criminal law) Money that must be forfeited by the bondsman if an accused person fails to appear in court for trial.
 56. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
 58. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
 60. A public promotion of some product or service.
 61. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
 62. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
 66. A member of the Circassian people living east of the Black Sea.
 70. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
 71. Fallow deer.
 74. Of or relating to James I or his reign or times.
 76. A man who serves as a sailor.
 77. (botany) Of or relating to the axil.
 78. A landlocked republic in eastern Africa.
 81. A small vessel for travel on water.
 82. Fully developed or matured and ready to be eaten or used.
 83. A deep bow.
 84. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- DOWN**
1. (often followed by "of") A large number or amount or extent.
 2. Queen of the Olympian gods in ancient Greek mythology.
 3. (Norse mythology) An enormous wolf that was fathered by Loki and that killed Odin.
 4. An ACE inhibitor (trade name Vasotec) that blocks the formation of angiotensin in the kidney and so results in vasodilation.
 5. Away from the mouth or oral region.
 6. A line made of twisted fibers or threads.
 7. A vacuum tube in which a hot cathode emits a beam of electrons that pass through a high voltage anode and are focused or deflected before hitting a phosphorescent screen.
 8. Of or relating to inertia.
 9. (Hinduism and Buddhism) The beatitude that transcends the cycle of reincarnation.
 10. Not out.
 11. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
 12. A composition written in metrical feet forming rhythmic lines.
 13. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
 14. The basic unit of money in Western Samoa.
 21. Elongate very slender water scorpions.
 23. Ctenophore having tentacles only in the immature stage.
 27. A mountainous region in central Italy.
 28. A lipoprotein that transports cholesterol in the blood.
 30. Naked freshwater or marine or parasitic protozoa that form temporary pseudopods for feeding and locomotion.
 33. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
 34. A chain of connected ideas or passages or objects so arranged that each member is closely related to the preceding and following members (especially a series of patristic comments elucidating Christian dogma).
 35. Surveying instrument consisting of the upper movable part of a theodolite including the telescope and its attachments.
 41. A genus of Mustelidae.
 42. A promontory in northern Morocco opposite the Rock of Gibraltar.
 43. A village of huts for native Africans in southern Africa.
 46. 16 ounces.
 47. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
 48. The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.
 50. Edible mushroom.
 55. City in northeast Pakistan.
 57. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
 59. A member of an agricultural people in southeastern India.
 63. Obvious and dull.
 64. State in northeastern India.
 65. A constitutional monarchy on the western part of the islands of Samoa in the South Pacific.
 67. An island in Indonesia east of Java.
 68. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
 69. (Greek mythology) The supreme god of ancient mythology.
 72. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
 73. (prefix) In front of or before in space.
 75. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
 79. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
 80. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You are in a mood of self-enjoyment and can appreciate your own better qualities. Circumstances can throw you into positions where you must use your mind and deal with communications—repair of radio or computer equipment or detective work. You may deal with education, psychology, spiritual enlightenment or teaching principles and techniques. Creative ideas will have greater meaning just now. You may be very expressive in speaking or communicating. Others will understand just what you mean. You love to communicate and discuss ideas with other people. Your ideas are usually fair and impartial, especially when it comes to other people and the social scene.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This is a significant day; the energies are not too lazy or too stressful. There is time for accomplishing tasks or setting things up to work in your favor. Educational matters may be high on your priority list now. You may even be considering the job of tutoring someone else in order to make a little extra income. Intense—passionate feelings and drive will be at your command for a long time. You want to accomplish things and get others to do the same. Take time to smell the flowers. You could find yourself driven to dig and search deep within the human passions, deep in the psyche.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Although you will find an overall increase in your finances this month, you may also find an increased urge to spend. Less is sometimes better—every month may not fare so well. Savings and investments should take uppermost attention now. Consider that your financial earnings could be best found in the medical or health food fields. At this time, you may consider travel to a foreign land, especially if your job is in import-export. There is a greater than usual interest in social connections and the arts. Seeing both sides of an issue—and figuring out resolutions to opposing views—take on more importance in your life. The ideal partnership, the perfect balance, the highest standards of truth and beauty are some of the things that quicken your pulse.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Meeting yourself in another person is a subject you may ponder at this time. Relationships—romantic, business, social—are the areas where this may be played. Coming to know the other person and what causes ties that bind two people helps you to a better understanding of yourself. It's easy in theory, but it's only in practice that it comes to mean anything real—so practice until you get it right! You will be able to use your finely tuned skills and expertise to solve problems and feel successful. Figuring things out, spotting the fly in the ointment and separating the sheep from the goats begin to take on a special appeal for you.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You seem to be in charge of some new project this Monday. A solid plan needs developing very early. Make it as simple and practical as possible, especially if there are going to be several hands in the making of the end result. If you need a loan, today brings high probabilities of having a loan granted to you. Refinement and relationships are the keys to emotional satisfaction for you on the home front. Discussions about education may draw your attention and you give thought to how society goes about educating the young. Close personal ties to people are a focal point for your feelings—marriage and other partnerships could be a key arena for this. You may become more actively involved on a social level, taking a bigger part in collective events.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

After a busy weekend you are ready to return to the work world. Time away from regular responsibilities gives you new insight and renewed appreciation of just where you are in life. A business luncheon goes well. Do something physical before returning to work this afternoon—it can give you a lot of extra energy as well as sharpen your mental activity. There could be an offer for a part-time activity that could bring you substantial earnings—consider this carefully. Refinement and relationships are the keys to emotional satisfaction for you. Harmony and beauty are deeply satisfying—and the lack of them can be emotionally unsettling.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Real-estate investments offer lucrative rewards but at some risk. You will be spending most of your time today studying such investments. Talking to co-workers and looking at houses after the workday is over may put you in a good position for finding that future home for which you and your loved ones have been searching. This is also a good time to secure your professional position. Family and home are the big focus now. Old familiar patterns will undergo permanent changes. Time flows in one direction only and you are determined to create the most positive of times. You are appreciative of your place in life and you aim to show your appreciation to your loved ones. Romance, recreation and creativity take on an inspirational quality this evening.



Scorpio (October 23-November 18)

Your mind is quick and sharp and your words are the only tools you will need for now. Tune up your lie detector and cull out the working partners or co-workers that want something for nothing. You have insight into what is real and a careful tongue that will help you get your message across in the most successful of ways. Secrets have a short half-life around you—you have them out in a wink of an eye. You are brilliant when it comes to insights into other people's psychologies or your own. There are plenty of opportunities to get into some deep conversations with those you love this afternoon.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 18)

You may find that both your personal growth and your career depend upon how you can handle some sensitive material that may be coming up now between co-workers. You will benefit from analytical insights, getting to the truth of a matter, penetrating. Your mind is clear and your thoughts will bring a sharp focus to any difficult situation at this time. It should be easy to organize your thoughts—communication of all kinds can be furthered. Your thoughts count—use your mind—communicate. Take time for a lunch break away from your business—whether you are at home or in an office.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may not feel as though you are clear with your instructions to others... Perhaps you are not as familiar with some product as you would like. Consider a little research as well as requesting some hands-on study. This makes it much easier to explain or answer questions. There are also times that you get so busy you may not realize you have not been clear. Take turns to ask questions and discover how you can clarify or enlighten others. Take time to write down one or two words that will help you remember where you were when you do become distracted or interrupted. There are good practical job-related thoughts and ideas this afternoon.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

There is a growing self-confidence and outgoing attitude—the constant inward examination and learning will soon come to a close. You have a growing sense of direction and self-worth and will find the urge strong to reach out and establish yourself. This is a period of great social involvement—especially with neighbors and brothers or sisters. Learning and teaching seems to satisfy an important need and being more in touch with other people gives you a sense of belonging. You may have the urge to overspend or indulge too much just now.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

A period of great mental activity and heightened communication with others begins now. Intellectualism, the idea of being smart as a fox, has a special appeal to you just now. Mental discipline and patience are outstanding as you enter into a new cycle. Thinking things through, accounting for all the details and making careful measurements keep your mind active and involved. An interest in health and work may come to the top of your to-do list. Once you set yourself to a task, it is virtually impossible to distract you. The more you want to turn a dream into a reality, the more successful you become. Others could use you as a mentor! Checking off your accomplishments as the day moves along gives you a feeling of achievement.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Family Ties

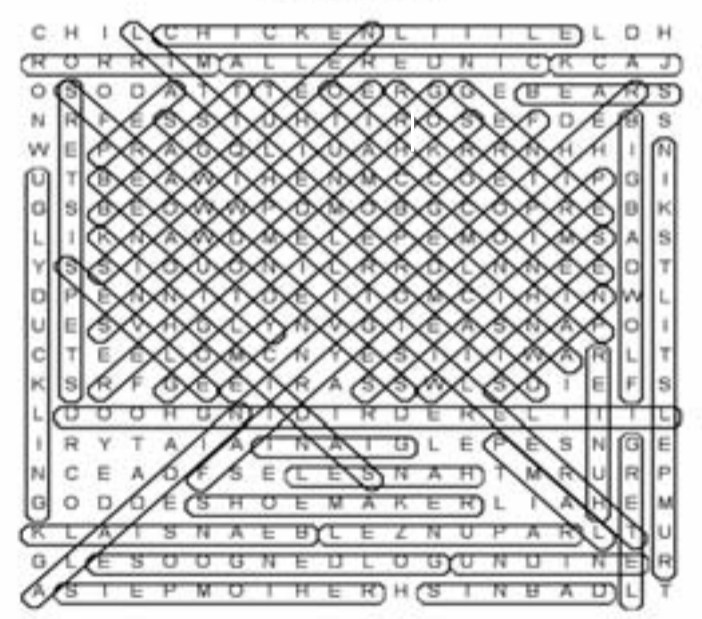
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a special occasion for families.



- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| ANCESTOR | FATHER | MOTHER | SISTERS |
| AUNT | FOLKS | NEICE | SON |
| BOND | GENEALOGY | NEPHEW | SPOUSE |
| BROTHERS | GRANDPARENT | NEWLYWED | STEPPARENT |
| CHILDREN | HALF BROTHER | OFFSPRING | TRIPLETS |
| CLAN | HALF SISTER | PARENTS | TWINS |
| COUSINS | HUSBAND | PROGENY | UNCLE |
| DAD | KIN | RELATIONS | WIFE |
| DAUGHTER | MARRIAGE | RELATIVES | |
| DESCENDANTS | MOM | SIBLING | |

Yesterday's Solution

Fairy Tales



- | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| ALADDIN | FROG PRINCE | LAMP | SNIBAD |
| BEANSTALK | GENIE | LITTLE MERMAID | SNOW QUEEN |
| BEARS | GIANT | LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD | SNOW WHITE |
| BEAST | FOLKS | MORROR | STEPMOTHER |
| BEAUTY | GOLDSLOCKS | PEA | STEPSISTERS |
| BIG BAD WOLF | GRANDMOTHER | PRINCESS | SWAN |
| CHICKEN LITTLE | GRETEL | RAPUNZEL | THREE LITTLE PIGS |
| CINDERELLA | HANSEL | RUMPELSTILTSKIN | THUMBELINA |
| ELVES | HUNTER | SEVEN DWARFS | UGLY DUCKLING |
| EMPEROR | JACK | SHOEMAKER | UNDINE |
| FAIRY GODMOTHER | KING HIDAS | | WISHES |

The hidden message is: CHILDHOOD ENDS WHEN FAIRY TALES CEASE TO DELIGHT

Yesterday's Solution



Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2019



People hold kites during a tribute to the late Mexican plastic artist Francisco Toledo (1940-2019) at the Alameda Central, in Mexico City. — AFP photos

Barbie celebrates Day of the Dead, but not everyone is happy

Barbie has been many things—from a bathing beauty to an astronaut to even president. Now, she is donning skeleton face paint and a crown of marigolds to honor Mexican culture, but some are crying foul. Mattel has unveiled a new version of the iconic doll that is inspired by Mexico's traditional Day of the Dead celebration. The doll—to be sold for \$75—is based on the famous "Catrina" character drawn by cartoonist Jose Guadalupe Posada in 1912. She wears a black gown decorated with marigolds, butterflies and skulls.

Diego Rivera also immortalized the character in a mural completed in 1947. The Day of the Dead festival, celebrated in Mexico on November 1-2, is believed to be when the gateway separating the living and the deceased opens, allowing people to pay their respects to those who have passed. "That the tradition is recognized with this doll, the best known in the world, is something that makes me proud," Mexican toy collector Jaqueline Vidal told AFP in Mexico City, where the collectible doll was officially unveiled on Thursday.

The doll has nevertheless aroused controversy by some who consider it "cultural appropriation"—using a time-honored tradition to make money. "The design of this Barbie has no elements identical to indigenous clothing," said Octavio Murillo, director of cultural heritage at the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples (INPI). "More than plagiarism against indigenous people, it would be plagiarism against those who hold the rights of Guadalupe Posada and Diego Rivera," Murillo added. More than one billion Barbies have been sold globally since the American brand's launch 60 years ago. — AFP



A Barbie doll "Death Day" version is displayed during the presentation in Mexico City. — AFP photos

Artist hopes gold toilet taken by 'Robin Hood' types

The artist whose solid gold toilet was stolen from Britain's Blenheim Palace said he hoped it had been taken in a "Robin Hood-inspired action", as police scrambled Sunday to locate it. Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan told the New York Times that when he first heard news of Saturday's pre-dawn theft of his fully-functioning work "America", he thought it was a prank. "Who's so stupid to steal a toilet? I had forgotten for a second that it was made out of gold," he said, adding: "I wish it was a prank."

Cattelan has described the 18-carat gold work, famously once offered on loan to US President Donald Trump, as "one-percent art for the 99 percent". "I hope it still is. I want to be positive and think the robbery is a kind of Robin Hood-inspired action," he said, referring to the character of English folklore who stole from the rich to give to the poor. Blenheim Palace chief executive Dominic Hare meanwhile revealed that the toilet, which was only put on display at the English stately home on Thursday, had been valued at around \$5 to \$6 million.

He told the BBC that the palace, the birthplace of wartime leader Winston Churchill and a UNESCO World Heritage site, had a sophisticated security system. But he added: "Clearly we need to challenge ourselves on that." He also said it was "not out of the question [that it] would be melted down" by the thieves. The gang, who had at least two vehicles, left behind flooding that damaged the building. Police arrested a 66-year-old man who remains in custody, and said Sunday they were still following a



In this file photo a fully functioning solid gold toilet, made by Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan, is going into public use at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. — AFP

number of lines of enquiry. The toilet was one of the star attractions in an exhibition of Cattelan's works, with visitors able to book three-minute time slots to use it. When the work was on display at New York's Guggenheim museum, more than 100,000 people lined up to use the loo during the course of a year. — AFP

Fire and thread: Bayeux-inspired 'Game of Thrones' tapestry unveiled in France

The French town of Bayeux has been home for nearly a millennium to a tapestry depicting a bloody battle for power. Now it has another. An exhibition featuring a tapestry illustrating the events of hit HBO TV show "Game of Thrones" opened in Bayeux, Normandy, on Friday - just down the road from the museum where its eleventh century inspiration is housed. The tapestry was created in Northern Ireland, one of the principal filming locations for the series. Around 30 stitchers worked for some 1,500 hours on the stretch of linen, which begins with King Robert Baratheon visiting the Starks in Winterfell. Some 87 meters (95 yards) later, it ends in fire and blood with the final, controversial, scenes of the eighth season. Depicting all that gore using jacquard threadwork was not easy, said project chief embroiderer Valerie Wilson.

It would have been a challenge that also faced the medieval embroiderers, who created the famous 70-meter

Bayeux tapestry to recount the invasion of England by William the Conqueror. The work brings to life scenes such as the 1066 Battle of Hastings, where Harold of Wessex is shown dying with an arrow to the eye. "The 'Game of Thrones' tapestry references the Bayeux tapestry stylistically and in terms of some of the motifs that have been used and the way that the story unrolls in a linear fashion," said Wilson. The two tapestries also address a common theme, said Antoine Verney, chief curator of the Bayeux Tapestry Museum. "It's whether we can justify violence to claim power," he said.

The show was based on the "Song of Ice and Fire" books by George R.R. Martin. The "Game of Thrones" exhibition in Bayeux runs from Sept. 13 to Dec. 31 at the Hotel du Doyen, on the site where the Bayeux Tapestry itself was originally displayed before its eventual move to the dedicated museum nearby. — Reuters



Guide William Van Der Kells of Winterfell Tours points at the Game of Thrones Tapestry in Bayeux, France. — Reuters

Lifestyle | Gossip



Rod Stewart reveals prostate cancer fight

Rod Stewart has been given the all-clear after battling prostate cancer, the British pop stalwart has revealed. The 74-year-old, who released his 30th studio album last year, told the audience at a weekend prostate charity fundraiser that he was diagnosed two years ago. The raspy voiced singer said he received positive news about remission in July following treatment, according to Britain's Daily Mirror. "Two years ago I was diagnosed with prostate cancer," Stewart told the audience at the event in Surrey, southwest of London, it reported. "No one

knows this, but I thought this was about time I told everybody," he added. "I'm in the clear, now, simply because I caught it early. I have so many tests." The father-of-eight, who appeared at the event with former Faces bandmate Ronnie Wood—who was previously diagnosed with lung cancer—urged men to have their prostates checked regularly. "Guys, you've got to really go to the doctor."

Beyoncé announces TV special Making The Gift

Beyoncé has announced a TV special giving fans an inside look at the making of her 'The Lion King: The Gift' album. The 38-year-old superstar - who voiced Nala in this year's 'The Lion King' remake - released the LP inspired by the Disney movie, which features collaborations with the likes of husband Jay-Z, their seven-year-old daughter Blue Ivy Carter, Kendrick Lamar, Childish Gambino, Pharrell and more, in July, and now the documentary 'Making The Gift' will air on ABC at 10pm on tonight (16.09.19) and reveal "Beyoncé's creative process". Alongside a teaser for the show, Beyoncé wrote on Instagram: "ABC Network, 10pm." The Destiny's Child star documented her headline performance at Coachella in the Netflix film 'Homecoming' last year. Speaking about the 'The Lion King: The Gift', which she also produced, Beyoncé said she wanted to make sure it was "produced by the best African producers" and said that "authenticity and heart were important" to her. The 'Spirit' singer said previously: "This is sonic cinema. This is a new experience of storytelling. I wanted to do more than find a collection of songs that were inspired by the film. It is a mixture of genres and collaboration that isn't one sound. It is influenced by everything from R&B, hip-hop and Afro Beat. I wanted to put everyone on their own journey to link the storyline. Each song was written to reflect the film's storytelling that gives the listener a chance to imagine their own imagery, while listening to a new contemporary interpretation. It was important that the music was not only performed by the most interesting and talented artists but also produced by the best African producers. Authenticity and heart were important to me." The 'Halo' hitmaker also featured



on Disney's original soundtrack in the remake of the Disney classic, a version of Sir Elton John's 'Can You Feel the Love Tonight', alongside Donald Glover, who voices Nala's love interest Simba in the film.

Simply Red announce autumn 2020 UK tour

Simply Red have announced a 2020 UK tour. The 'Fairground' hitmakers will head out on an 11-date run, kicking off in Newcastle October 6, 2020, and wrapping in Bournemouth on October 23, following the release of the band's upcoming LP 'Blue Eyed Soul'. Frontman Mick Hucknall said he hopes his long-standing bandmates - who have played with him consistently since 2003 - will "enjoy playing" the shows and that fans will "get up and move around" and that everyone will "put their heart into it". He added: "It's all about capturing the groove." The 'Something Got Me Started' hitmakers returned with their first album in eight years, 'Big Love', in 2015. The follow-up to 1995's 'Life' came about after the 59-year-old singer started to wonder how the band were going to sound on tour. After getting a concept for Simply Red's live sound in his head he then got inspired to start writing and then he couldn't stop penning tracks. The 'Holding Back the Years' singer previously explained "Once I began wondering how Simply Red were going to sound, I started writing songs." While he hadn't worked with Steve Lewinson, Kenju Suuki, Kevin Robinson, Dave Clayton and Ronnie Roth for eight years, their break meant that Mick developed a much clearer appreciation for Simply Red's legacy. And he admitted that the reason it had been so long since a completely original album, was because he'd been "fighting" the idea of Simply Red's sound, but he's now "comfortable with the band being a "blue-eyed soul group". Mick said: "With (Simply Red's 2007 album) 'Stay' I was running away from Simply Red. "But now I'm comfortable with the notion of us as a blue-eyed soul group. "I had to stop myself fighting that idea. Our sound is original too. I honestly don't know of another band that has pulled so many musical strands together." 'Blue Eyed Soul' is released on November 8. Tickets for Simply Red's 2020 UK tour are available at 10am on Friday.



'IT' stays atop box office but 'Hustlers' draws raves

Horror film "IT Chapter Two" stayed atop the North American box office this weekend, but the buzzy new Jennifer Lopez movie "Hustlers" notched a strong second place, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday. The latest Stephen King-inspired "IT" film, starring Jessica Chastain, James McAvoy and Bill Skarsgard, earned Warner Bros an estimated \$40.7 million for the three-day period, down from its \$91 million opening last weekend. "Hustlers," based on a true story about strippers who plot to steal from their wealthy clients in recession-hit New York, took in \$33.2 million for STX Films, that studio's best start ever. J-Lo has gotten rave reviews: "Rolling Stone" called her "dazzling," "electrifying" and Oscar-worthy. "Hustlers" also stars Constance Wu of "Crazy Rich Asians" fame, along with Julia Stiles, Cardi B and Lizzo. Lionsgate's "Angel Has Fallen," with Gerard Butler as a Secret Service agent accused of attempting to kill the US president, notched \$4.4 million to place a distant third. In fourth was "Good Boys," a raunchy tween comedy from Universal, at \$4.3 million. And in fifth place was Disney's updated "The Lion King," at \$3.6 million. Its North American total has surpassed \$533 million, making it the 12th largest domestic release of all time, according to BoxOfficeMojo.com. Meantime, Warner Bros.' widely promoted drama "The Goldfinch," adapted from a Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, earned a mere \$2.6 million in what the Hollywood Reporter called "one of the worst starts ever" for a movie in wide release.



Osbourne's new album saved him after recent health scare

Ozzy Osbourne says working with Post Malone and making a new album saved him after his recent health scare left him thinking he was "dying". The 'Paranoid' hitmaker has fought with pneumonia and suffered a nasty fall - which resulted in him having 15 metal rods placed in his spine, and was made worse as the tumble aggravated an old injury he suffered during his infamous 2003 quad bike accident - in the past year. And the 70-year-old rocker has admitted that if it wasn't for the 24-year-old rapper asking him to appear on their hit single 'Take What You Want', and him subsequently making a new solo record with the rapper's producer Andrew Watt, he would still be sofa-bound and "lying in [his] own self-pity". In an interview with The Sun newspaper, Ozzy said: "I've made a new album and it's helped get me back on track. "I was just lying in my own self-pity for months. It's the greatest album I've done." Ozzy had no idea who the 'Wow' hitmaker was until he asked him to feature on the track, but said recording the new songs with Andrew for his first LP since 2010's 'Scream' got him back on his feet. He continued: "I'd never even heard of this kid. He wanted me to sing on his song 'Take What You Want', so I did and then one thing led to another. "I started recording a new album with Post Malone's producer Andrew Watt. "It's only nine tracks but it was a catalyst to get me to where I am today." Ozzy also admitted he felt like he was "dying" until the new music got him "off [his] a**e". He added: "If it wasn't for making this record I would still be on traction, thinking, 'I'm going to be lying here for ever'. "I've missed music so badly. "My fans are so loyal and so good. "Up until making the album I thought I was dying. But that got me off my a**e." The 'Crazy Train' rocker also confessed he's "out of touch" with how the music industry works these days and struggles to get his head around streaming, and he quipped that he thought Spotify was a skin condition. He said: "This is my first recording in a studio for ten years, so I do feel a bit out of touch. Music goes straight online these days and that's quicker than it takes me to write a text. It's all about downloads and streaming now. What does that mean? What's Spotify? I thought it was a skin problem where you woke up spotted. "The album was all finished in four weeks. I said to Sharon that I didn't feel like I'd made an album because we haven't ended up screaming at each other."

Radcliffe loved pairing extreme violence with physical comedy

Daniel Radcliffe enjoyed balancing extreme violence with "physical comedy". The 'Guns Akimbo' star plays mild mannered Miles Cassonva who gets kidnapped and revived with guns bolted to his hands in a world where morbid online underground group 'skism' casts random strangers in fights to the death. He told Variety: "I feel like it was such a fun and exciting script, it had this insane idea in the middle of it that was really fully explored. "It's not just a device for crazy fight scenes, having guns for hands. It's also a device for a lot of physical comedy that I really enjoyed. "How do you dress yourself, how do you pick up your phone, how do you go through life," which [director and writer Jason Lei Howden] practiced very early on." Howden admitted he had a very hands-on approach to the concept when it came to figuring out the practicalities. He laughed: "I got water pistols and taped them to my hands and I spent a day just going around my flat, [just asking] 'How do I go to the toilet?' " There was also a delicate balance to be found between the skism's extreme violence, and making sure he didn't push things too far in that direction. Asked how he solved that potential problem, he added: "You approach it with a certain 'Looney Tunes' cartoony-ness. For me, that takes away from the blow a bit. "No one wants to watch real life violence. When the news comes on, I can't watch that stuff. I can't even watch those medical shows... You reach a point where it goes so over-the-top where it's not realistic."



Hustlers team ditched plans for J-Lo, Lizzo and Cardi B collaboration

Hustlers' music supervisor Jason Markey halted plans for a Jennifer Lopez, Lizzo and Cardi B collaboration. The three pop superstars come together in the cast for the new stripper comedy, and while there were some discussions about a musical conclusion to the movie in a similar vein to Lil' Kim, Pink, Mya and Christina Aguilera's rendition of 'Lady Marmalade' for 'Moulin Rouge', it seemed too "cheesy". Markey told Variety: "At one point, there was some conversation from the producers' standpoint: 'Should we do a big end-title song, like a 'Lady Marmalade' thing?' "I was the first person to stand up and go, 'I think that's cheesy!' " He argued his point to director Lorene Scafaria and won over the filmmaker as he suggested a "more poignant" ending than a "big pop number". He added: "I said to Lorene [Scafaria] in sort of a private jest. 'Honestly, I really don't believe in having a Jennifer-Cardi B-Lizzo song in this movie-I just think we could do much better than that.' "And not in a bad way in relation to their artistry, but we can end with a more poignant option, as opposed to this big pop number. And she agreed with me. So we stood our ground-and won the battle." Instead, one of the movie's standout musical moments sees J-Lo pole dancing along to 'Criminal' by Fiona Apple, which Markey admitted was a risk as the singer's 1997 hit had only been licensed a handful of times for TV and never on the big screen. He said: "I was very scared because Fiona notoriously says no to everything. We sent her the clip and she approved it, so I would assume she just liked what she saw. "Maybe she's not a fan of Jennifer, but when you watch her dance, it's undeniable. It's dramatic gold." — Bang Showbiz



Lifestyle | Features



Ethiopian painter Robel Wolde, 25, sits inside his pimped Volkswagen Beetle, in Addis Ababa. — AFP Photos



Ethiopian mechanic Kaleb Teshome, 29, poses in front of his pimped Volkswagen Beetle.



A woman walks past a Volkswagen Beetle in Addis Ababa.

In Ethiopia, busted VW Beetles 'pimped out' for hip youth

When Robel Wolde bought a beat-up 1967 Volkswagen Beetle from a friend for 50,000 Ethiopian birr (about 1,540 euros, \$1,700), it marked the start of an extensive restoration he'd plotted for years. The 25-year-old Ethiopian painter quickly went to work. He installed new grey leather seats, applied black stripes and decals along the orange-and-blue exterior and hired a metalworker to fit oversized headlights to the front bumper. Two months and an additional \$1,000 later, Robel's vision was complete.

And with that, he joined the growing number of young Ethiopian drivers giving the Beetle—which has long occupied a hallowed position in the nation's car culture—a 21st-century upgrade. Some of this restoration work is inspired by shows like the old MTV hit "Pimp My Ride"—"pimped out", American slang for customized vehicles, has been adopted in Addis Ababa. But love for the Beetle in Ethiopia goes back decades, and is rooted in both economics and nostalgia.

Volkswagen is hoping to capitalize on this goodwill. In January, it signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ethiopian government to set up a domestic auto industry, including an assembly plant. Regardless of what comes of this project, Robel says the Beetle's popularity will endure. "Most of the time, Beetles are driven by old people," he said, leaning on the bonnet of his car near one of Addis' busier roundabouts. "But when they are custom and pimped like this, they are a fashion statement for young people."

The 'car for everyone'

Initially developed in Nazi Germany as an instrument of propaganda, the origins of the Volkswagen Beetle "people's car" date back to 1938. Beetles became a common sight in Addis Ababa under former emperor Haile Selassie, who ruled for more than four decades beginning in 1930. In 1974, when the communist Derg regime removed him from power, Haile Selassie was famously forced to duck into a Beetle before being escorted away from his palace. Decades later, Beetles remain ubiquitous, in part because exorbitant taxes make buying new cars impossible for many.

Yet it's clear that the cars also have sentimental value. When the Ethiopian-American novelist Maaza Mengiste sees one, she says she is reminded of the pale blue Beetle her grandfather drove—the same car that took her to the airport when she left the country as a young girl not long after the Derg came to power. "I associate that car with Ethiopia, with growing up there and all the happy memories I have," she told AFP.

Last year, Mengiste started posting pictures of Beetles on Twitter, using the hashtag #BeetleEthiopia. Ever since, Ethiopians from a range of backgrounds have been posting photos of their own, sometimes offering equally personal memories. "There was something about a Volkswagen that cut through social lines," Mengiste said. "It was a car for everyone. You could be looking for some form of stability, and you would manage to buy a Volkswagen and that was your step into an upwardly mobile but not extravagant social class."



Elias Wondimagegn drives his Volkswagen Beetle in Addis Ababa.

'I pimp all of it'

Like Mengiste, Kaleb Teshome, a 29-year-old mechanic, has been riding in Beetles all his life. For decades, his family has owned a garage that specializes in fixing up the cars. Now Kaleb works alongside his father at the garage, where more than a dozen Beetles compete for space on a tiny dirt lot, with others lining the nearby road. Many of

the Beetles have been brought in for standard tune-ups. But every few months, Kaleb is asked to do the kind of custom work worthy of "Pimp My Ride," a show he still watches online even though it was cancelled more than a decade ago.

"I've known the cars since my childhood. I know what they need," he said. "It could be paint work. It could be big tyres. It could be a sound system. I pimp all of it." One recent morning, he showed AFP his own "pimped-out" Beetle, a shiny green-and-black 1972 model with massive tyres that would look more at home on a truck. "When I drive it on the street," he said, "even people who drive luxurious cars say 'Wow.'"

'Part of history'

Whether "pimped-out" or not, the Beetles of Addis Ababa seem destined to become collectors' items. In July, Volkswagen marked the end of the Beetle's around eight-decade run by launching a limited, 65-unit "Beetle Final Edition" at its factory in Puebla, Mexico.

For Robel, the painter, the news was further validation of the investment he'd made in his own car. "If production of the Beetles has stopped, that means we have a treasure," he said. "They will become part of history. That is their fate, so I think I am lucky. Even if I get a really good offer, I don't think I will sell." — AFP



People walk past a hostel named 'Bollywood' in Mumbai. — AFP photos



In this file photo Thai performers in traditional costume present the opening act during the IIFA Awards of the 19th International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) festival at the Siam Niramit Theatre in Bangkok.

Booming Bollywood comes home for 'Oscars' 20th edition

Mumbai hosts the "Bollywood Oscars" for the first time in India in 20 years this week with the megastars, movers and shakers of a booming Hindi film industry celebrating another bumper year, including in huge markets like China. With nearly 1,800 titles released in 2018, the South Asian country is the biggest film industry in the world in terms of movies made, its flicks wowing viewers from Australia to Afghanistan to Africa.

The industry grew 12.2 percent in 2018, which included not only Hindi-language-Bollywood-movies, but also titles in regional languages like Tamil and Telugu, according to a report released in March by Ernst & Young and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry. The huge South Asian diaspora in North America, Britain and the Gulf region has traditionally been the major overseas market. Bollywood blockbuster releases in parts of North America and Britain are huge events, with passionate fans often queuing for hours just to catch a glimpse of stars like Shah Rukh Khan. But Indian films have also been making huge inroads elsewhere—most notably in China.

The black comedy "Andhadhun", for example, nominated for best picture at the glitzy Indian International Film Academy Awards on Wednesday, was a huge hit with Chinese viewers, grossing almost \$50 million. Amir Khan, the star of the two top-grossing Indian films in China, has a crazed following there and is known by many as "Nan Shen" ("male god"). Film distributor Akshaye Rathi told AFP that the industry has also seen "great growth" in many European countries and in Canada, New Zealand and Singapore thanks to the South Asian community. "Now it is just a matter of time before we focus on the wider populations in these countries," Rathi added.

And not forgetting 1.3 billion-strong India itself, where there is massive potential for growth. According to the Ernst & Young analysis, industry revenues are estimated to swell from 174.5 billion rupees (\$2.4 billion) in 2018 to 236.1 billion rupees in 2021.

A shot in the arm

As the other nominees for best picture at the IIFA-spy thriller "Raazi", swashbuckling epic "Padmaavat", and middle-aged motherhood comedy-drama "Badhaai Ho"—underline, Bollywood has long ago moved on from the cliched all-singing, all-dancing affair. The industry has also been attracting big, institutional capital and fresh talent, which have helped create greater variety and reaching out to wider, often younger, audiences. There were fears for the industry when major streaming services arrived in India a few years ago, changing the way many Indians consume films.

But the likes of Netflix and domestic players like Hotstar have instead been a shot in its arm, providing a new medium for releasing films and more money for new productions. Unlike regular cinematic releases, they are not subject to

India's notoriously stuffy censors.

Revenues from the sale of digital rights ballooned nearly 60 percent in 2018, according to the EY-FICCI report, with Amazon Prime and Netflix among the major buyers. The major streaming giants have started producing original Indian content, splashing out on big-money titles. Netflix, for example, recruited Bollywood superstars Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Saif Ali Khan for its acclaimed series "Sacred Games". Last week, the streaming giant linked up with Karan Johar, one of the highest-profile producers in Bollywood, to produce films and series exclusively for its platform. "It's going to be P.H.A.T-pretty hot and tempting," said Johar. — AFP



In this file photo fans wait to watch Bollywood movie stars during IIFA Stomp in the Times Square to kick off the 18th International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Festival in New York.

Ocasek, visionary frontman of The Cars, dead at 75

Ric Ocasek, the frontman of synth-heavy new wave innovators The Cars, was found dead Sunday in New York, police said. He was 75 years old. The New York Police Department told AFP they had received a call at approximately 4:00 pm (2000 GMT) for an unconscious male at a townhouse in Manhattan. He was pronounced dead at the scene, police said, and the body was identified as Ocasek. There were no signs of foul play, according to US media.

Under the leadership of the singer-songwriter and rhythm guitarist, the Cars brought the quirky electronic effects of new wave to classically structured, synthesizer-heavy pop songs, generating a string of hits such as "You Might Think," "Shake It Up," and "Drive" in the 1980s. They were among the early regulars on MTV, winning the "Video of the Year" award for "You Might Think" at the first Video Music Awards in 1984. Born Richard Theodore Ocasek on March 23, 1944 in Baltimore, Maryland, the artist moved to Cleveland, Ohio with his family as a teenager.

There, the lanky artist with his signature dark chin-length bob met Benjamin Orr, who would go on to be The Cars' bassist, and the duo began playing the local bar and club circuit. They moved to Boston in the early 1970s, founding The Cars in 1976 after adding Elliot Easton on guitar, Greg Hawkes on keyboards and David Robinson on drums. The band found widespread appeal, satisfying punk rock gurus and poppier tastes alike with hook-savvy hits that unified art rock influences like Lou Reed and David Bowie with more modern new wave melodicism.

"The stylistic synthesis the band has effected so brilliantly should be around for a long time," wrote New York Times music critic Robert Palmer in 1978. "They have taken some important but disparate contemporary trends—punk minimalism, the labyrinthine synthesizer and guitar textures of art rock, the 50's rockabilly revival and the melodious terseness of power pop—and mixed them into personal and annealing blend." The group broke up in the late 1980s, however, and Ocasek began releasing solo work as well as working as a record executive and producing for a number of bands including Weezer and No Doubt. "The weezer family is devastated by the loss of our friend and mentor Ric Ocasek," the California rock band tweeted after news of his death broke. "We will miss him forever, & will forever cherish the precious times we got to work and hang out with him." "Rest in Peace & rock on Ric, we love you."

'Powerful emotional force'

In 2011, the surviving members of The Cars—Orr died in 2000 — reunited and

released their final album, "Move Like This," and briefly toured. "Ben and I had a real cold war going that lasted about 23 years. I could never really figure out exactly why, but I think there was a lot of jealousy because I wrote the songs and I got a lot of attention," Ocasek told The New York Times Magazine in 2011, though he said the grudge had faded by the time Orr passed. The performer married three times and had six sons. His third wife, model and actress Paulina Porizkova, had announced the pair's split on Instagram in 2018.



In this file photo US musician Ric Ocasek attends the 25th anniversary MusiCares 2015 Person Of The Year Gala at the Los Angeles Convention Center in Los Angeles. — AFP

That year the band was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame along with Bon Jovi, the Moody Blues, Dire Straits, Nina Simone and Sister Rosetta Tharpe. The group's polished hooks remained underpinned by moody, disaffected lyrics that gave their pop rock a jagged twist, and into his later years, Ocasek remained firmly committed to that vision. "To me, music's a powerful emotional force. It can make people cry, feel happy or feel sexual," Ocasek told Rolling Stone in an interview published in 1980.

"But more important than all of that, it's a way to communicate without alienating people, a way to get beyond loneliness." "It's a private thing people can have for themselves any time they want. Just turn on a radio and there it is: a sense of belonging. Without having to surrender to anybody else's needs." — AFP

Fashion bad boy **Gvasalia** quits Vetements



In this file photo fashion designer for Vetements, Demna Gvasalia talks to people at the end of his men and women's Spring/Summer 2019 collection fashion show, in Paris. — AFP

Fashion's enfant terrible Demna Gvasalia yesterday quit Vetements, the uber hip streetwear brand he founded, in a move which shocked fashion. The Georgian designer took Paris fashion by storm in 2014 with his customized \$800 hoodies and ironic "poverty chic" aesthetic, taking the clothes of the poor and selling them to the rich. His brother Guram, with whom he co-founded Vetements, confirmed his departure.

The 38-year-old made headlines from the start by cheekily appropriating corporate logos, including McDonald's and DHL, and staging his shows in clubs and downmarket Chinese restaurants. He achieved further notoriety with his \$2,000 "Ikea" bag—a luxury leather version of the 99 cent original—for Balenciaga after he was handed the keys to the venerable Paris fashion house in 2015. "What Demna has accomplished over the past few years represents a key chapter in the story of Vetements,"

Guram Gvasalia told Women's Wear Daily (WWD).

'I was bored of fashion'

Gvasalia's unorthodox approach—staging his last show at a branch of McDonald's on the Champs Elysees, full of cheeky jokes at the madness of consumerism—has made him one of the most influential creators in record time. He once told AFP that he got his inspiration from riding the metro through one of the poorest and most ethnically diverse parts of Paris. He has since quit the French capital for the wealthy and far from edgy Swiss city of Zurich. In a parting statement yesterday to WWD, he said that he had done what he had set out to do.

"I started Vetements because I was bored of fashion, and against all odds fashion did change once and forever since Vetements appeared. "So I feel that I have accomplished my mission of a conceptualist and design innova-

tor. Vetements has matured into a company that can evolve its creative heritage into a new chapter on its own," he added. Gvasalia is expected to present Balenciaga's spring 2020 show in Paris later this month.

A child refugee, the designer fled his then war-torn homeland with his mother and grandmother after fighting broke out with Abkhaz separatists in 1989. He told AFP that they abandoned their car, and in desperation sold an AK47 they had to protect themselves so they could put Gvasalia's elderly grandmother on a horse. The family eventually arrived in Germany via Ukraine and Russia, where he originally studied finance before attending the Antwerp Academy of Fine Arts and then founding Vetements. From the start, it played on a post-Soviet grunge aesthetic. — AFP

DRESSES FLOW FOR BECKHAM, BILLOW FOR GODDARD: LONDON FASHION TRENDS

From Victoria Beckham's flowing dresses to Molly Goddard's airy creations in tulle, London Fashion Week, ending today has rolled out some standout new silhouettes today.

Goddard's billowing dresses

Jodie Comer, the actor who plays Villanelle, the assassin and "fashion victim" of the hit television series "Killing Eve", made a mark when she kicked off Goddard's show Saturday with a candy-pink tulle dress. Fans of the British designer's floaty creations were not disappointed with her show, set in an art deco London gym. She sent out her models in voluminous skirts and dresses, with vibrant colors such as canary yellow and coral, worn with flat leather boots.

Romantic ribbons garnished the shoulders of a pink knit worn over a black robe with a floral print. After the show Goddard said she did not have a particular theme in mind but was focused on "individual looks". "A lot of this was looking back at the things I've done in the last five years that I liked most, and redoing them more and more, bigger and better," she told AFP.

Victoria Beckham's simple elegance

Long silky dresses in powder pink or violet, shirts with oversized collars worn with a houndstooth jacket with straight trousers for a 70s look: Victoria Beckham played the chic and simple card for her show in the Foreign Office's majestic Durbar Court. Her watchwords were lightness, freedom and simplicity.

Beckham's front row included her whole family—husband David, the former star Manchester United footballer, and their four children—as well as the grand priestess of fashion Anna Wintour. The show drew around 20 activists of environmental group Extinction Rebellion, who briefly shut the road outside the venue to protest waste created by fast fashion.

Androgynous lines by Sharon Wauchob

Roomy suits that could be worn by women and men alike were the fare for Irish designer Sharon Wauchob, who said she has "always liked the androgynous style". The show, held in a church of London's upmarket Marylebone

district, was attended by actor and singer Billy Porter—whose half-DJ, half-skirt designed by Wauchob made a splash at the Oscars. "Fashion is all about diversity, inclusion," Porter told AFP. "I want to be the image I never saw when I was a child: a black queer man."

Fyodor-Golan's hybrid identities

Designer duo Fyodor Podgorny and Golan Frydman drew inspiration from the films "Farinelli" by Gerard Corbiau and "Amadeus" by Milos Forman—as well as Queen Marie-Antoinette. Playing with contrasts, they mixed lace with heavy metal T-shirts and paired denim with flimsier materials such as satin and tulle.

"We explored the idea of pansexuality—attraction to a person whatever the person's gender identity," they wrote. The show also had a bedroom theme—a duvet serving as a cape and a pillow repurposed as a bag. Models went out in oversize pyjamas or tights with psychedelic colors, while babydoll nightdresses were transformed into evening gowns.

Style, not trends: Roland Mouret

"The concept of trend is dying. Style is better than trends," French designer Roland Mouret said after his show in the garden of the Royal Academy of Arts. Mouret, who has lived in Britain for years, warned that going after seasonal trends "means consumerism". He said people should be encouraged to set their own styles.

Mouret said he was inspired by the New York of the 1980s when the city was on the verge of bankruptcy—before bouncing back. He went for pastel colors—mauve, pale blue and beige—for his calf-length dresses and wide pantsuits. Asymmetrical skirts and dresses, slit up the front, rounded out the show. — AFP



Models present creations from designer Roland Mouret during a catwalk show for the Spring/Summer 2020 collection on the third day of London Fashion Week in London.

Models present creations from designer Victoria Beckham during a catwalk show for the Spring/Summer 2020 collection on the third day of London Fashion Week in London. — AFP photos



A giant fresco entitled "Beyond Walls" by French land artist Saype representing hands joined together in support to the SOS Mediterranee migrant association, is seen at the Parc de la Grange on Sept 14, 2019 in Geneva. — AFP

Trump rages as NYT clarifies Kavanaugh's story

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump blasted The New York Times yesterday after the newspaper updated a story that detailed a previously unreported accusation of sexual misconduct by Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh to say the alleged victim did not recall the incident. The article made waves when it was published over the weekend, re-examining sexual assault allegations aired last year at Kavanaugh's polarizing Senate confirmation hearing.

The article dealt mainly with one of his accusers, Deborah Ramirez. But it also included a previously unreported account by a Yale classmate who said he saw Kavanaugh expose himself to another female student at another party. The report triggered fierce

reaction, including from several Democratic 2020 presidential hopefuls who called for a new investigation, or even impeachment.

Yesterday, The Times said its story failed to include key details: That the alleged victim declined to be interviewed and "friends say she does not recall the episode". "That information has been added to the article," the Times said in an editor's note. Trump seized on the story and the update to launch a full-throated attack on the Times, urging Kavanaugh to sue for libel and suggesting the Justice Department "come to his rescue".

"DO YOU BELIEVE WHAT THESE HORRIBLE PEOPLE WILL DO OR SAY," Trump tweeted. "They

are looking to destroy, and influence his opinions - but played the game badly. They should be sued!" Trump accused the media of working in lockstep "with their partner", the Democrats. "The one who is actually being assaulted is Justice Kavanaugh - Assaulted by lies and Fake News!" he said.

Kavanaugh has categorically denied engaging in sexually inappropriate behavior. The Times account was adapted from a forthcoming book by the article's authors. The witness notified US senators and the Federal Bureau of Investigation about the account, but the FBI did not investigate, according to the Times. Last September an outcry by Democrats and some concerned Republicans prompted a one-week sus-

pension of Kavanaugh's contentious confirmation process so that the FBI could conduct a fast-track investigation of misconduct allegations against Kavanaugh.

The agency reportedly declined to question dozens of potential witnesses or corroborators. Several Republican lawmakers and party leaders joined Trump yesterday in condemning the Times and Democrats' calls for Kavanaugh's impeachment. Republican Party chairwoman Ronna McDaniel said the Times was "disgraceful" for leaving out evidence in order to "push their own narrative". "Smears like this on Justice Kavanaugh make it impossible to deny the mainstream media's bias," McDaniel tweeted. — AFP

Iran seizes new boat in Gulf for...

Continued from Page 1

countries and by sea to Gulf Arab states. The news of the latest incident comes with tensions brewing in the

Coalition says weapons used in...

Continued from Page 1

"All indications are that weapons used in both attacks came from Iran," coalition spokesman Turki Al-Maliki told reporters in Riyadh, adding they were now probing "from where they were fired". "This strike didn't come from Yemen territory as the Houthi militia are pretending," Maliki said, adding an investigation had been opened. He labelled the Houthis "a tool in the hands of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and the terrorist regime of Iran".

The rebels said they fired 10 drones at the Saudi infrastructure, but the New York Times reported that US officials had satellite images showing the attacks - possibly with drones and cruise missiles - had come from the north or northwest. That indicated they were sourced in the northern Arabian Gulf, Iran or Iraq, rather than Yemen.

The assault on the heart of Saudi Arabia's oil industry, which engulfed the facilities in flames, has been condemned by Washington as an "unprecedented attack on the world's energy supply". Oil prices saw their biggest daily gain since the 1991 Gulf War yesterday after the attacks halved output in the world's top crude exporter, fuelling fresh geopolitical and growth fears. Europe's benchmark Brent crude surged by 20 percent and US counterpart WTI by 15 percent as commodities trading got underway. Both contracts later came off their peaks, but were still up more than 10 percent on the day by the mid-afternoon in Europe.

US Energy Secretary Rick Perry insisted world oil markets still had sizeable reserves saying the market has "a fairly substantial amount of oil out there available". Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman on Sunday said the kingdom would use its vast inventories to partially compensate for the lost production, and the US also authorized the release of its reserves.

The Houthi rebels threatened yesterday to carry out more strikes and urged foreigners to stay away. "We assure the Saudi regime that our long hand can reach any place we want at any time we choose," Houthi military spokesman Brigadier Yahya Saree said in a statement. The

Gulf after weekend drone attacks on two major Saudi oil installations that the United States has blamed on Iran. Arch-enemies Tehran and Washington have been locked in a tense standoff since the US in May 2018 unilaterally pulled out of a multilateral accord that limited the scope of Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. The escalation has been accompanied by ships being mysteriously attacked, drones downed and oil tankers seized in the Strait of Hormuz - a chokepoint for a third of world's seaborne oil. — Agencies

rebels have repeatedly targeted key Saudi infrastructure in the past several months with explosives-laden drones.

Saree said the weekend attacks were carried out with a new type of drone. "We warn companies and foreigners not to stay in the plants that we have targeted because they are still within our reach and could be targeted again," he said. The Houthis claimed a drone strike on two oil pumping stations on Saudi Arabia's vital east-west pipeline in May, forcing a days-long shutdown.

"Growing tensions in the Middle East are another headwind for the global economy in already uncertain times, and a full-blown conflict could trigger another leg in the global downturn," said Jennifer McKeown, head of Global Economics at Capital Economics. With the Houthis threatening further attacks, analyst Oanda senior market analyst Craig Erlam noted Saturday's events had "highlighted the vulnerability of security at these facilities to drone attacks". The kingdom also has a spare capacity of around two million bpd that it can draw on at times of crisis. But a prolonged production delay could potentially see prices climb to "triple digits", warned Saudi economic consultant Sulaiman Al-Assaf.

The attack is a major test for Saudi Arabia as it could dampen investor confidence in Aramco's upcoming two-stage initial public offering (IPO), a mammoth listing that the government hopes will generate up to \$100 billion. Saudi authorities are considering whether to delay an IPO for the oil giant, people with knowledge of the matter said. "They're in the process of assessing the damage. It's a possibility but it's still very early," said one of the sources who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The IPO, earlier scheduled for 2018, has already been mired in delays as it reportedly struggled to reach a \$2 trillion valuation desired by Saudi rulers. Saudi authorities have sought to calm jittery markets, with the Energy Intelligence specialist newsletter citing industry sources as saying Aramco was "close to restoring as much as 40 percent" of the lost production, or about 2.3 million barrels per day (bpd).

The Wall Street Journal cited people familiar with the damage estimates as saying the targeted facilities would take weeks to return to full production capacity. The real extent of the damage at the facilities however remains unclear. All eyes are on official word from the Saudis on the situation, which could offer reassurance to world markets. — Agencies

Outsiders lead in Tunisia...

Continued from Page 1

campaign that Tunisians joke it cost no more than a coffee and packet of cigarettes. Saied, who speaks in public in formal Arabic as if in a faculty meeting, drives an old car and wants to remain in his humble house if elected rather than move into the luxurious presidential palace at Carthage.

A social conservative who wants to restore the death penalty and rejects equal inheritance for men and women, Saied's main focus is decentralization in a country where politicians in the capital have traditionally dominated. With 52 percent of votes counted, Saied was on 18.7 percent, Karoui was in second place with 15.5 percent and the moderate Islamist Ennahda party candidate Abdelfattah Mourou was on 13.1 percent, the official figures showed, proportions that have roughly held since early morning.

In a radio interview on Sunday, Saied described his lead as "like a new revolution", a reference to Tunisia's 2011 uprising that brought in democracy and set off the Arab Spring revolts elsewhere. Tunisia's prime minister, two former prime ministers, the defense minister and a former president were among the political heavyweights

Erdogan hosts Putin, Rouhani...

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"We must take supplementary measures to completely destroy the terrorist menace that comes from the zone of Idlib."

The Turkish presidency said the leaders would discuss the latest developments in Syria as well as "ensuring the necessary conditions for the voluntary return of refugees and discussing the joint step to be taken in the period ahead with the aim of achieving a lasting political solution". Moscow is keen to see progress on establishing a constitutional committee to oversee the next stage of the political settlement in Syria. That would give Putin a political win to add to the military victories, said Doreen Khalifa, senior Syria analyst at International Crisis Group.

After his meeting with Rouhani, Putin said he hoped they were "now in the final stages" of forming the constitutional committee. But Khalifa said expectations should remain low. Even if they can agree on who will form the committee, "this leaves a crux of issues unaddressed for the future of the political process including

competing in a field of 26 candidates. "We received the message sent by the Tunisian people," Prime Minister Youssef Chahed said late on Sunday, conceding defeat.

An official in Ennahda, seen as Tunisia's main anti-establishment force before it joined successive recent governments, said it would now focus on the Oct 6 election for parliament, which wields more power than the presidency. Turnout was 45 percent, down from 63 percent in 2014, though foreign election monitors said this was because of increased voter registration, meaning the total number of voters was about the same.

Karoui, in a statement read by his wife after exit polls were published, said the result was a message to a political elite that he accuses of using the judicial process to try to silence him. Tunisia's electoral commission has said he can stay in the race so long as he has not been convicted, though no date is set for a final verdict. Courts have ruled that he must stay in custody while facing the charges, despite complaints by election monitors that this prejudices his chances. His opponents have said his use of his unlicensed television station should itself disqualify him.

Legal questions over whether he could take the oath of office while in detention, or whether presidential immunity would protect him, are unsettled. A constitutional court to address such issues has not yet been set up. "You punished those who tried to steal the votes by putting me in prison without trial, and who prevented me from speaking to people in the campaign," Karoui's Sunday night message said. — Reuters

the regime's ability and willingness to undertake any kind of political reform," she told AFP.

High on everyone's mind at the summit was the weekend attack on Saudi oil facilities, which Washington has blamed on Tehran, deepening bilateral tensions and putting the region on the brink of further conflict. Iran has been a crucial actor on the battlefield in Syria but has kept a lower profile in recent months. Its focus has been on countering Israeli and US involvement. "The presence of American military forces in a United Nations member and independent country such as Syria endangers its territorial integrity and national sovereignty," Rouhani said at the start of the summit. "American forces should leave the country at once."

Meanwhile, Turkey has other concerns regarding Syria. It has repeatedly threatened to launch a cross-border offensive against Syrian Kurdish forces, whom it sees as allied to Kurdish militants in its own territory. That has strained Turkey's relations with its NATO ally, the United States, which backs the Syrian Kurds as the main fighting force against the Islamic State group (IS). The US has vowed to work with Turkey to move Kurdish forces away from its border, but Ankara says progress has so far been "cosmetic" and it could launch an operation into Syria by the end of this month. Turkey has conducted previous offensives against IS in 2016 and the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia in 2018. — AFP

Sports

Bok loss won't be 'end of the world' for All Blacks: Hansen

'Handling the ball well in wet conditions could be important at this World Cup'

TOKYO: New Zealand coach Steve Hansen has insisted it "won't be the end of the world" if his reigning champions lose their opening Rugby World Cup blockbuster against South Africa.

Every team that has won the World Cup has been unbeaten and Saturday's Pool B clash between New Zealand and South Africa in Yokohama promises to be one of the games of the tournament.

"Clearly this is a big match because it's the All Blacks v South Africa, which is traditionally a massive match anyway," Hansen told reporters at New Zealand's hotel in Tokyo yesterday.

"Logic will tell you whoever wins this game, probably wins the pool. "But as we found it in 2011, you don't have to necessarily win the pool to get into the final. France did it the other way," said Hansen ahead of the All Blacks' bid to lift an unprecedented third successive World Cup.

"It's not the end of the world (if you lose), and it doesn't mean you are going to win the World Cup or get into the final because you win this game. There's a lot of water to go under the bridge."

New Zealand and South Africa have won five World Cups between them and the form of coach Rassie Erasmus's resurgent side, this season's Rugby Championship winners, has heightened expectations.

The last three All Black-Springbok encounters saw a draw and one win each, by just two points both times. "Both teams are pretty close," said Hansen. "Over the last three games, they won, we won one on the death knell and they drew one on the death knell."

"Their defensive system has changed a lot (under Erasmus). They roll the dice big time — their wingers

come in off their wings. And they're good at it, very, very good at it. "You want them to roll a couple of ones, rather than a pair of sixes."

Hansen said his squad understood the danger of expending too much emotional energy in the build-up. "There's a big Test match, a big box of chocolates at the end of the week. You can't eat them on Sunday because there will be none left for Saturday," he said.

"The players are aware of that. You can't play it Monday, Tuesday or Thursday, you've got to be ready to play Saturday." South Africa, with a backdrop of rows over post-apartheid transformation, have endured some painful results since a shock defeat by Japan at the 2015 World Cup, including a 57-0 thrashing by New Zealand at North Shore City two years ago.

But Hansen said their current form was a return to their normal standards. "I'm not surprised," he said. "Every time we've played them, other than once in North Harbour when we had a day out of the box, the games have been reasonably hard-fought and tight."

"They've gone through some challenging processes but I think they are starting to reap the rewards of that now. They are selecting a team on a genuine basis that they are all good enough to be there."

Recent typhoons in Japan have emphasised how handling the ball well in wet conditions could be important at this World Cup.

Wales coach Warren Gatland has been oiling up training balls to make them slippery, and Hansen had a cheeky exchange when reporters told him of



TOKYO: New Zealand's captain Kieran Read (L) and coach Steve Hansen pose for a photograph after a welcome ceremony at Zojoji temple in Tokyo, ahead of the 2019 Rugby Union World Cup which begins on September 20. —AFP

the practice.

"You want to rephrase what you just said?" asked Hansen. "You said 'Warren Gatland has been putting

baby oil on his balls'. That's probably not the headline you want. "We've just been using plain old water. It seems to be working all right." —AFP

Genia puts Wallaby harmony first in World Cup swansong

ODAWARA: Australia scrum-half Will Genia said yesterday he was happy to "fit in" where needed as the Wallabies centurion looks to end a storied career at the Rugby World Cup. The 31-year-old, who is battling it out with Nic White for the starting role in Japan, insisted the team came first as two-time

champions Australia prepare for their Pool D opener against Fiji in Sapporo this weekend.

"Whatever role I'm chosen to play — whether it's from the start or at the back end of games, I'm not particularly fussed," he told reporters at Australia's training base in Odawara. "I'm confident in my game and what I'll bring if given the opportunity," added Genia, who started just one this season's four Rugby Championship games but got the nod in Australia's recent 34-15 win over Samoa in their last Test.

"The main difference is when you start the game you can build into it. When you come off the bench you want to bring energy and bring impact into the game, but you don't want to be trying to do too

much — you want to try and fit in to the way the game is being played."

Genia, who has won 105 Australia caps and is set to bring the curtain down on an illustrious Wallabies career in Japan, joked that flyhalf Bernard Foley could even get a runout ahead of him as an emergency scrum-half.

"He's been feeding the scrum, practising his passing," said the Melbourne Rebel. "If the worst comes to the worst we have got that cute little thing playing half-back as well." But Genia tipped Australia to benefit from the competition between himself and White, the other specialist scrum-half in Michael Cheika's squad.

"We bounce ideas off each other as to how we can get better or what we

would do in this situation," said Genia, a veteran of Australia's 2011 and 2015 World Cup campaigns.

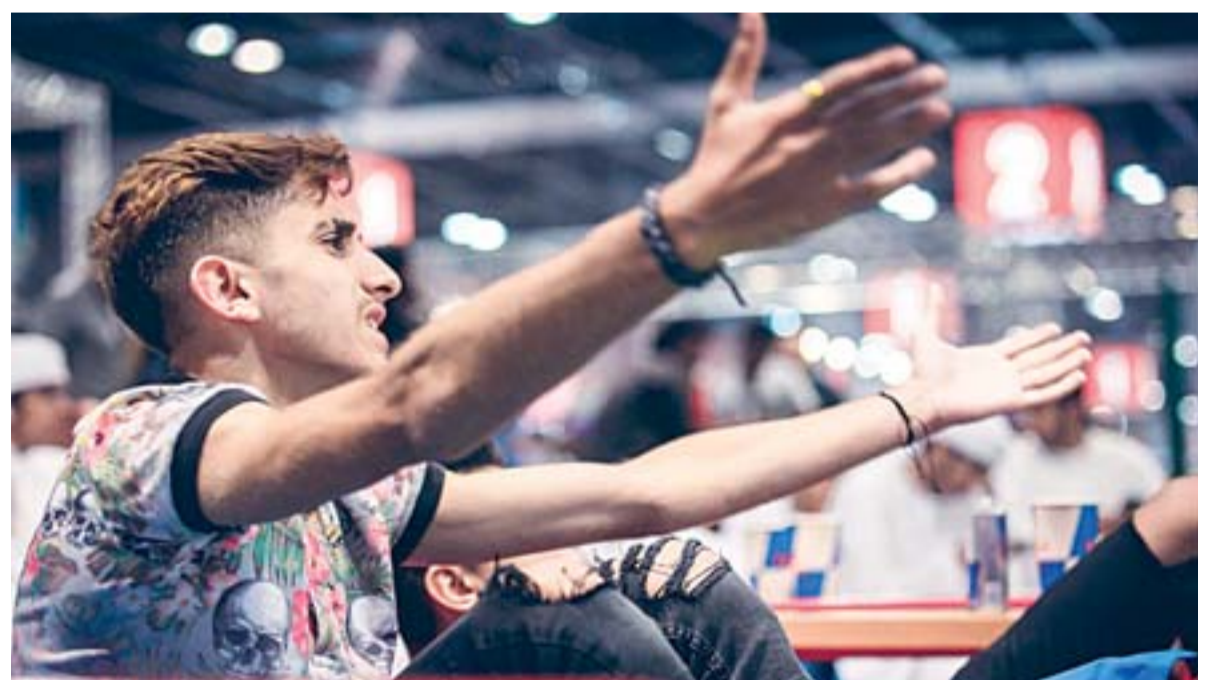
"He's pretty loud and pretty out there, I'm a pretty laid back sort of guy." Australia will be expected to join Wales in the knockout stage from Pool D, which also involves Uruguay and Georgia, but treble-chasing New Zealand, England and South Africa are among a handful of teams tipped ahead of them to win the World Cup.

However, a thumping 47-26 home win over the All Blacks in the Rugby Championship last month demonstrated the Aussies can't be ruled out of the equation and assistant coach Shaun Berne backed Cheika to get the Wallabies firing.

"Michael Cheika is Michael Cheika," he said. "He hasn't changed in the 15 years I have known him — he's good at trying to get the best out of people." Wallabies utility back Adam Ashley-Cooper, meanwhile, will be hoping to join George Gregan as only the second Australian to play at four World Cups.

Ashley-Cooper recalled scoring in Australia's 93-3 rout of Japan at the 2007 World Cup. "I was just a young bloke — fat face, short hair, crew cut," winced the 35-year-old. "I have no idea why I shaved my head, it was an awful look. Hard to put into words." Despite Ashley-Cooper's own proximity to retirement, Genia backed his team mate, insisting: "He's still got it!" —AFP

Mr D0ne's Game On



KUWAIT: Mr D0ne's Game On, is an E-Football initiative comprising of an E-Sports Competition with a compelling twist that's held in 3 different locations across Kuwait in September and October 2019.

Abdulaziz Alshehri, who also goes by the alias Mr D0ne, is a Red Bull E-Sports athlete and the first-ever player from the Middle East to win the FIFA eWorld Cup. The Saudi Arabian player won what was then the FIFA Interactive World Cup Grand Final in Munich, Germany, in 2015 and has ultimately become

an icon of the E-Sports world, acquiring the privilege to be in the company of lifelong legends, Cristiano Ronaldo, Kaka and Lionel Messi.

With smooth and magnetic skills, Mr D0ne's now focusing on developing the profile of E-Football in the Middle East for amateur gaming enthusiasts in the region, starting with Mr D0ne's Game On in Kuwait. The event, which starts September 26 has 5 qualifiers in two different locations in Kuwait. Each qualifier registers teams of two to participate in 16

rounds per qualifier event. Each qualifier acquires winning teams who'll succeed to the Finals taking place on October 17 at 360 Mall.

For the game, the rules are fairly simple, yet full of intensity and suspense: there are 4 players per game, each 2 in a team with one controller per team. The game begins regularly with 2 players; however, the gist is that each team member must tag and switch with their mate within the game when:

- A team gets scored on

- When a red card is given
- At half time

Each team is also granted one free switch when the ball is not in play. Teams who end up in a tie would play a Golden Goal round where it'll lead to a penalty shootout switching players per shoot. Sounds intense huh? To find out more about the event, visit @RedBullKuwait on Instagram and Twitter, and @RedBull on Facebook, or visit www.redbull.com.

Sports

Ben Stokes and Archer promise glittering Test future for England

Captain Root 'desperate' to take the team forward

LONDON: Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer promise a glittering Test future for England but Joe Root's men have work to do if they are to replicate their World Cup success in the five-day game.

England's focus on white-ball cricket paid off handsomely when they became world champions for the first time in July, beating New Zealand in a dramatic final. Their summer threatened to finish with a whimper going into the final Ashes Test at the Oval before a comprehensive victory over Australia levelled the Ashes series at 2-2.

Captain Root said after the win on Sunday that he was "desperate" to take the team forward, and is already looking ahead to the 2021-22 Ashes in Australia. "What a summer of cricket it's been," he said. "I think a huge success for English cricket and I think we've got a great opportunity now to spring the game forward in this country."

The Yorkshireman described the Oval victory as a blueprint for the future, saying England had the foundations in place for long-term success. "That's got to be our main focus, going down there (Australia) and winning and every Test match between that is an opportunity to push your case," he said.

All-rounder Stokes, who produced heroics at the World Cup and then lit up the Ashes with a mesmerising 135 not out in England's one wicket win in Leeds, would walk into any team in international cricket.

Archer is at the start of his Test career but has already shown he can be a phenomenal weapon for England, taking 22 wickets in his first four matches at an average of just over 20.

Sending down 95-per-hour thunderbolts, he gives the attack a new dimension, unsettling even frontline batsmen with his sheer pace.

"He has a way of having a huge impact on the game," Root said of Archer. "You saw his spell here, the way it just changed the whole atmosphere of the ground was incredible."

"For someone right at the beginning of his career to

have such a gift is entertaining, it's great to be able to captain that." Despite Root's optimism, there are questions over a number of other positions in the side in both the batting and bowling departments, with the skipper admitting there were "conversations" to have.

England's record Test wicket-taker James Anderson broke down in the first match at Edgbaston and there is inevitably going to be speculation about the 37-year-old's long-term future. Anderson's long-time new-ball partner Stuart Broad enjoyed a successful Ashes, taking 26 Ashes wickets, but he is already 33.

All-rounder Sam Curran impressed in his one Test at the Oval but back-up seamers Chris Woakes and Craig Overton did not offer enough of a consistent threat.

Bespectacled left-arm spinner Jack Leach took 12 wickets in the series, including 4-49 on Sunday as England surged to victory, and looks to have displaced the out-of-form Moeen Ali — dropped after the first Test — as England's first-choice spinner.

Leach, who turned a few heads when he made 92 as a nightwatchman in the warm-up Test against Ireland, also became an unlikely cult hero after his doughty performances with the bat, notably his obdurate one not out at Headingley, keeping an end going while Stokes produced the fireworks to win the third Test.

BATTING PROBLEMS

England also have questions to address in the batting department, with Root stressing the need for more runs. England's man of the series Stokes was the outstanding performer, hitting two centuries, including a heroic match-winning ton at Headingley, and Rory Burns did a decent job as opener, scoring a maiden Test century and finishing the series with 390 runs.

But too many batsmen failed to fire consistently, with Jos Buttler only finding form in the final Test and Jonny Bairstow well down the team averages. The experiment of opening with one-day specialist Jason Roy backfired, although he could get another chance.

Even Root, long England's top batsman, failed to fire,



LONDON: Australia's captain Tim Paine (C) holds the Ashes Urn as the players celebrate victory after the presentation ceremony on the fourth day of the fifth Ashes cricket Test match between England and Australia at The Oval in London yesterday. England won the fifth test by 135 runs and drew the series but Australia keeps The Ashes trophy.— AFP

averaging just 32.50 in the series, a relative failure thrown into sharp relief by the outstanding form of former Australia skipper Steve Smith.

Former England captain Michael Vaughan said there could be a change of direction for the team but put his faith in Root despite some questions over his position.

"With England, I think we might see a change in approach the Test team takes," he said. "Maybe the

players will miss the one-day games if they are playing all three formats. The Test team needs a little bit of TLC and Joe Root is the skipper to take them forward."

And outgoing coach Trevor Bayliss said England were in good shape for the future. "There's some good young players stacking up behind the players in the team at the moment and that's the best type of pressure of all, is from within." —AFP

NBK grants Eyad's dream to race come true



KUWAIT: Eyad Adnan Al Shami, 16 years old, is undergoing treatment at NBK Hospital and suffers from brain tumor, has always desired to live a racing experience. NBK helped in making his dream come true in cooperation with Kuwait Motor Town, operated by Diwan Al Amiri, Road Rush and Ali Al Ghanim & Sons Automotive Company.

Before the race, NBK and Kuwait Motor Town team welcomed Eyad and provided him with a race-spec outfit. Eyad enjoyed a full and adventurous experience driving a McLaren Racing Car for six laps on track with the International Kuwaiti Racer Mohamad Al

AbdulRazzag. He drove on a professional and fully equipped racing circuit and discovered the sound of high racing engines. "Eyad's dream to race is yet another wish granted through NBK's initiative "I Dream to Be". We are proud to be a part of the children's dreams and expand our support to them as much as possible," said Joanne Al Abdul Jaleel, NBK Public relations officer.

"I Dream to Be" initiative is a lifetime experience for children with life-threatening conditions," she added. "This initiative is a great way to spread joy and show that there's always a positive side to a difficult situation. We ask children



what they want to be and try to fulfill that for them."

NBK has been at the forefront of supporting Kuwait's community through a range of initiatives towards education, health, sports and social responsibilities. NBK's "I Dream to Be" initiative was launched in 2014 and is dedicated to always putting the child's wish first. This initiative aims to improve a quality of life for children facing life-threatening illnesses. This unprecedented initiative aims at creating a sustainable momentum that transcends from the goodwill of a few to a commitment by the community as a whole.



Joanne Al Abdul Jaleel

Bangladesh axe Soumya in further T20 overhaul

DHAKA: Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday axed top-order batsman Soumya Sarkar and called up three uncapped players in a further shuffle of their squad for the ongoing tri-nation Twenty20 international at home.

Batsmen Mohammad Naim, Aminul Islam, Nazmul Hossain will join the squad for the third and fourth match of the tournament after Bangladesh's senior players failed to deliver in the first two matches.

Bangladesh were 60-6 in the opening match against Zimbabwe before somehow managing a three-wicket win while failed to recover in Sunday's second match against Afghanistan after being reduced to 32-4 and lost by 25 runs.

Soumya bore brunt criticism for Bangladesh's woeful batting performance at top, having scored just four runs in two matches. "He did not look in a very good form. So we thought better if we could try some new players," said BCB chief selector Minhajul Abedin.

Pacer Rubel Hossain and Shafiqul Islam were also recalled while uncapped Mahedi Hasan and Yeasin Arafat were released from the squad. Bangladesh will play their next game against Zimbabwe in Chittagong tomorrow.

The tournament will run until September 24. The Tigers have been facing criticism after losing the recent Test match against newcomer Afghanistan.

Squad: Shakib Al Hasan (capt), Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad, Sabbir Rahman, Mosaddek Hossain, Liton Das, Afif Hossain, Taijul Islam, Rubel Hossain, Shafiqul Islam, Mustafizur Rahman, Mohammad Saifuddin, Mohammad Naim, Aminul Islam and Nazmul Hossain. — AFP

GIG's Battle Fitness Festival to lead Middle East fitness events

KUWAIT: Gulf Insurance Group, one of the leading insurance service providers in Middle East and North Africa region announced its long term collaboration with Circuit+ Fitness to organize the region's largest fitness events, 'gig Battle Fitness Festival'.

The event will take place at the Green Island on November 1 and 2, 2019 with more than 2,500 athletes, spectators and volunteers registered to attend. Athletes will compete in a number of games, including the Athlete Games, the Super Team Cup, the Saracen Race, and - for the first time - the Powerlifting Combat.

Speaking on this occasion, gig's Group Senior Manager - Corporate Communications & Investor Relations, Khaled Al Sanousi, said: "Gulf Insurance Group is delighted at this opportunity to support athletes and to take its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to the next level by helping our younger generation lead a more health-conscious life. Competitive sports have gained popularity among young men and women in Kuwait in the recent years, and we hope that this event will serve to further support a more active lifestyle among this seg-



Group photo

ment of the society. We wish the best of luck to the athletes."

Co-founder of Circuit+, Bader Albanna, commented: "We're excited to be elevating our event to the next level by joining forces with gig. Each year, we aim to bring something new to the table to grow our community and keep up the excitement. This year, we're most excited about welcoming powerlifting athletes, who are largely underserved in the region, to The Battle."

The gig Battle Fitness Festival is an all-encompassing fitness festival that goal of creating an annual competition that would unite the excitement of competitive fitness and the thriving athletic communities in the Middle East under one roof. Over the years, this initiative has grown to attract athletes from all around the globe.

Spain World Cup win, US woes blow Olympic basketball wide open

BEIJING: The Tokyo 2020 Olympics basketball suddenly looks wide open after reigning champions the United States suffered their worst World Cup, Spain triumphed and Argentina surprised. World Cup bronze medalists France, and Australia, who were edged out of the medals but pushed eventual winners Spain all the way in the semi-finals, will also be in contention.

And not forgetting Serbia, who along with Gregg Popovich's young Team USA were the favorites in China but were also surprise victims in the quarter-finals. The Tokyo Games are just over 10 months away and after some downtime following their exertions at the World Cup, teams will begin training their sights on next summer.

"It's exactly what I knew it to be because I've been involved with it before and in this day and age basketball in other countries is not a secret," Popovich said after his team's disappointing seventh-placed finish.

"So it's not like there's an epiphany or revelation to be made. "There are wonderful teams and wonderful coaches all over the world so there's no surprise in any of that." If the United States can convince the likes of double gold medalist LeBron James to play in Tokyo, they will be favorites to make it four Olympic titles in a row.

But it remains to be seen whether the flak flying Team USA's way after the China debacle scares the A-listers away or stings them into action. Spain's World Cup triumph, sealed with a comprehensive 95-75 victory over surprise finalists Argentina on Sunday in Beijing, was built on defence and teamwork honed from playing together down the years.

They also had Ricky Rubio, the Phoenix Suns point guard who was named tournament MVP, and the experience and international knowhow of Marc Gasol. Rubio described the Spain team as "a family".

In contrast, the US roster was one of the youngest in China and was thrown together at the last minute. The players were still getting to know each other as the tournament began.

"We were not the tallest or most talented, or in the odds when the tournament started, but we worked hard," said Spain's coach Sergio Scariolo, an assistant at NBA champions the Toronto Raptors.

"They didn't lose faith in themselves, and basketball rewarded them." Australia brought the Americans' run of 78 consecutive wins in major competitions and exhibition games to an end just before the World Cup, a forewarning of what was to come.

The Boomers led Spain for much of their thrilling semi-final, only to lose in double overtime. They similarly ran out of gas in their bronze-medal match against France.

It left Australia still searching for a medal in the worlds or Olympics — a barren run that they hope they can finally snap next summer. Mitch Creek, their forward, hopes that the Boomers will have all their players for Tokyo — they were missing Philadelphia 76ers Jonah Bolden and Ben Simmons in China.

"This team is going to be a very powerful team when it comes to the Olympic Games," he warned. The Australians are still simmering from their one-point defeat to Spain in the bronze-medal match at Rio 2016.—AFP

Sports

Atalanta, Roma back winning as Lazio fall in Serie A

Bologna moved second after gutsy 4-3 comeback win over promoted Brescia

MILAN: Duvan Zapata struck late as Atalanta warmed up for their Champions League debut with a last-gasp 2-1 victory over Genoa in Serie A on Sunday as Roma got their first win this season against Sassuolo, but city rival's Lazio fell at SPAL.

Colombian international Zapata rifled in the winner on 95 minutes in Genoa to seal all three points for Atalanta who qualified for the Champions League by finishing third last season, but lost last week to Torino.

Colombian striker Muriel's 64th-minute penalty had put the Bergamo side ahead in western Italy but Genoa captain Domenico Criscito levelled from the spot after 91 minutes. Zapata had the final say to give Gian Piero Gasperini's side, who are sixth, a confidence boost as they travel to Dinamo Zagreb for their first ever Champions League game next week. AC Milan are just behind Atalanta, also with six points, after Polish striker Krzysztof Piatek got back scoring with a 68th-minute penalty in a hard-fought 1-0 victory over 10-man Verona.

Roma are just behind in eighth after new coach Paulo Fonseca got his first win, a 4-2 defeat of Sassuolo, for the capital side. The hosts were four goals up at the break after Bryan Cristante, Edin Dzeko, Henrikh Mkhitaryan and Justin Kluivert all found the net in a 21-minute spell with Lorenzo Pellegrini providing three assists.

But Domenico Berardi's brace for Sassuolo on 53 and 72 minutes rattled the hosts who are back in the Stadio Olimpico during the week for Europa League action against Istanbul Basaksehir.

"I hope that this will be the first of a lot of victories," said Portuguese Fonseca. "I realised that I had to adapt to the dynamics of the Italian championship. "Today we showed our ability to press high, and while we scored four goals it could have been seven or eight."

"Defensively it was our best performance so far," Lazio suffered their first defeat this season as they paid for their complacency following Ciro Immobile's 17th-minute penalty against SPAL, losing 2-1.

An Andrea Petagna volley just after the hour mark in Ferrara and Jasmin Kurtic's late winner sealed all three points for SPAL. The Romans are ninth with four points from three games.

Bologna moved second after a gutsy 4-3 comeback win over promoted Brescia, inspired by coach Sinisa Mihajlovic who gave instructions from hospital as he undergoes chemotherapy. "At the end of the first half we heard Mihajlovic's anger on the phone and this shook us," said Bologna forward Rodrigo Palacio. "We talked to him before the game, for us it is very important and we miss him. We play like this thanks to his mentality."

Sunday's game was the first the 50-year-old Mihajlovic has missed despite his condition. A quick-fire Alfredo Donnarumma double saw Brescia — playing their first home match in eight years — lead after 19 minutes.

Mattia Bani headed Bologna back into the game on 36 minutes, with the visitors trailing 3-1 before Brescia were hit by Daniele Dessena's sending off for a second yellow card just after the break.

Bologna came back with goals from Palacio on 56 minutes, Stefano Denswil four minutes later and a Riccardo Orsolini winner 10 minutes from time. Mihajlovic's side, who finished 10th last season, are now two points behind Inter Milan and ahead of champions Juventus on goal difference after three games. Torino, who have maximum points after two games, can move ahead on Monday when they host promoted Lecce. Cagliari meanwhile won 3-1 at Parma in a game where there were 12 minutes of extra time following a lengthy VAR review. — AFP



ROME: Sassuolo's Romanian defender Vlad Chiriches (bottom) tackles AS Roma's Bosnian forward Edin Dzeko during the Italian Serie A football match AS Roma vs Sassuolo at the Olympic stadium in Rome. — AFP

David de Gea signs new deal at Man Utd

LONDON: David de Gea has signed a new long-term contract with Manchester United, the Premier League club announced yesterday, ending months of speculation over his future. The 28-year-old, who had been linked with a return to Spain with Real Madrid for several seasons, has put pen to paper on a new four-year deal. "David de Gea has signed a new long-term contract with Manchester United, keeping him at the club until at least June 2023," United said on their official website. "There is an option to extend for a further year."

Former manager Alex Ferguson brought De Gea to the club from Atletico Madrid in 2011 in an £18.9 million (\$23 million) deal and he has since made 367 appearances for the club. "It has been a privilege to spend eight years at this great club and the opportunity to continue my career at Manchester United is a genuine honour," said the goalkeeper.

"Since I arrived here, I could never have imagined I would play over 350 games for this club. Now my future is fixed, all I want is to help this team achieve what I believe we can and win trophies again, together." De Gea joined in the year that United reached their third Champions League final in four years. The club's fortunes have since dipped under a succession of different managers but the Spaniard has won the Premier League, the FA Cup, the League Cup and the Europa League since arriving at Old Trafford.

"There's no place like home," he tweeted, accompanied by a video of himself the club's stadium. Manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said he was delighted the Spaniard had committed his long-term future to the club. "Over recent years, David has proved himself to be the best in the world and a vital part of our plans as we look to take Manchester United back to where it



MANCHESTER: File photo shows Manchester United's Spanish goalkeeper David de Gea throws the ball out during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Leicester City at Old Trafford in Manchester. — AFP

belongs. David is a fantastic person and his outstanding quality provides the perfect base to our defence"

De Gea, capped 40 times by Spain, came close to joining Real Madrid in 2015 only for a paperwork delay to stop the deal going through before the transfer deadline.

He would have been free to speak to any European clubs from January 1 and leave next summer on a free transfer. Protracted negotiations over De Gea's future

also struck his first goal for the club at Molineux, while 20-year-old Mason Mount continued the form that earned him an England call-up with his third goal in four Premier League games. Former Chelsea midfielder Lampard, who won the Champions League with the club as a player, will be making his debut in the competition as a manager. "I will be proud to do it," he said. "I had multiple incredible nights in the Champions League — and some bad ones — but it is the ultimate for me."

The Chelsea boss was cautious in his expectations for last season's Europa League winners. "Our target is to qualify from a tough group," he said. "I have belief in the players. I'm confident but very aware of the dangers." Lampard will be facing a new manager in Albert Celades, who was appointed last week after the shock sacking of Marcelino. Valencia's players are understood to be unhappy with the decision but Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga warned they would still be dangerous. Chelsea defender Antonio Rudiger will miss the match after tweaking a groin while Lampard revealed N'Golo Kante and Callum Hudson-Odoi were not match fit. — AFP

Japan skateboard sensation, 13, cools Olympic talk after world title

TOKYO: Japanese schoolgirl Misugu Okamoto is refusing to entertain thoughts of Tokyo Olympic gold despite becoming skateboarding's youngest world champion at the weekend. The 13-year-old captured the skateboarding park world championships title in Sao Paulo, beating out countrywoman Sakura Yosozumi with Britain's Sky Brown third in a preview of Tokyo 2020 when the sport

were offered as a reason for his poor form towards the end of last season, with the club finishing a lowly sixth in the Premier League.

He was also at fault for Patrick van Aanholt's late winner as Crystal Palace won 2-1 at Old Trafford last month. He recently lost his place in the Spain team to Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga, although he was recalled for this month's Euro qualifying win over minnows the Faroe Islands. — AFP

Live		Matches on TV
		(Local Timings)
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE		
Internazionale Milano v SK Slavia Prague	19:55	
beIN SPORTS HD 1		
Olympique Lyonnais v Zenit St. Petersburg	19:55	
beIN SPORTS HD 6		
BV Borussia Dortmund v FC Barcelona	22:00	
beIN SPORTS HD 3		
SSC Napoli v Liverpool	22:00	
beIN SPORTS HD 1		
Red Bull Salzburg v KRC Genk	22:00	
beIN SPORTS HD 7		
Ajax Amsterdam v LOSC Lille	22:00	
beIN SPORTS HD 6		
Chelsea FC v Valencia C.F.	22:00	
beIN SPORTS HD 4		
SL Benfica v RB Leipzig	22:00	
beIN SPORTS HD 5		

makes its Olympics debut.

But tiny Okamoto, who has won the last five competitions she has entered in a sizzling run of form, including gold on her first appearance at the prestigious X Games last month, is keeping her feet firmly on the ground.

"I didn't think about the win streak, or being the youngest world champion," Okamoto told AFP. "I don't feel like I'm the best in the world," added the bashful teen, who scored 61.17 points to beat Yosozumi (60.00) and 11-year-old Brown (58.13), who is bidding to become the youngest female to compete at the Summer Olympics in 50 years.

"I have no idea about the Olympics yet, but I will work with my coaches to keep pushing to learn new tricks and to go bigger," Okamoto insisted she wants to be recognised by her peers in the skateboarding scene, regarding it as much as a lifestyle as a sport, in much the same way as surfing which will also make its Olympic debut in Tokyo. — AFP

Lampard trusts young guns for Chelsea Champions League bid

LONDON: Frank Lampard said he "believed and trusted" in striker Tammy Abraham as he prepared to unleash his young players against Valencia in Chelsea's Champions League opener today.

Abraham, 21, scored a hat-trick in a 5-2 win at Wolves on Saturday but his form has come as no surprise to Lampard. "I never had clear expectations for him apart from the fact that I believed in him and trusted him," he said at a press conference on Monday at Chelsea's training base. "I know a lot was made of the (transfer) ban giving opportunities for young players. But I thought now was his time." As for the possibility of England missing out on Abraham should he opt to play for Nigeria, Lampard said: "That's not a question for me. "He has put himself in a bracket by being a top-scorer in England. It is one for (England boss) Gareth (Southgate) but it is clear Tammy will be wanted." Abraham who is the Premier League's joint leading scorer alongside Manchester City's Sergio Aguero with seven goals, has two senior England caps won in friendlies.

Nigeria have been hoping Abraham can be persuaded to switch allegiance to them. And when asked about the Nigeria interest, he was quoted by the Telegraph newspaper as saying: "I have heard the talks and I've not really been focused on that yet."

"I think when the time comes, the time comes. We never know," Lampard has put his faith in youth during a transfer embargo for the club and has been rewarded with some impressive performances.

As well as Abraham's three goals, Fikayo Tomori, 21,

Klopp expects daunting ride as Liverpool eye Istanbul return

LONDON: Jurgen Klopp has warned Liverpool that retaining the Champions League will be even harder than their incredible march to victory in Madrid last season. Klopp's side start their bid to win a seventh European Cup with a trip to Napoli for their Group E opener today. The Reds have reached the last two Champions League finals, beating Tottenham in the Spanish capital in June after losing to Real Madrid 12 months earlier.

But Klopp believes Liverpool face a daunting task to make it to the final in Istanbul's Ataturk Stadium — a venue which carries extra resonance for the club after they won the 2005 Champions League with an astonishing comeback against AC Milan in the same stadium. Before Liverpool can dream of emulating Steven Gerrard and company's triumph by the banks of the Bosphorus, Klopp knows they will have to run the gauntlet in what he expects to be a fiercely contested tournament.

Napoli are expected to pose the sternest test to Liverpool in a group which also includes unfancied Salzburg and Genk. Carlo Ancelotti's team came within a whisker of ending Liverpool's European campaign in the group stage last season when Alisson Becker's superb late save denied Arkadiusz Milik to preserve a 1-0 win at Anfield that sent the Reds into the last 16 at the expense of Napoli.

Even if Liverpool should advance to the knockout rounds without so much drama this season, Klopp is wary of the restocked superpowers certain to be lying in wait in the latter stages.

"I will have no problem with it (reaching the final) if it happens again, but at this moment I am not too sure it will," he said when the draw was made in August. "We have the same chance like everyone else, but that is all, and I don't see us, the English teams, dominating. I really think a lot of teams have a good chance. "Look at the squad Borussia Dortmund has and tell me we are stronger than them. That is incredible. They can make five changes and you think: 'Really, they didn't play last week? Why?' There are a lot of quality teams."

"Juventus will be there, PSG will be there. Real Madrid? Do you think they gave up already? Bayern Munich now finally brought in Perisic and Coutinho which is a big boost."

While Liverpool will always have a special relationship with the Champions League after the club's dominance of the competition in the 1970s and 1980s, it is not hard to believe that some die-hard Kopites would happily exchange their continental supremacy for a season of domestic bliss.

Having erased the pain of that 2018 final defeat against Real, Liverpool's main goal this term is to end the club's long wait to win the English title.

Pipped to the Premier League trophy by Manchester City on the final day of last season, Liverpool are desperate to win the title for the first time since 1990. That desire has been clear to see in a blistering five-game winning streak which has already taken them to the top of the table this season. Even an injury to Alisson has failed to interrupt their flow and the Brazilian keeper's replacement Adrian admits Liverpool's rock-solid defence — marshalled by the imperious Virgil van Dijk — has made his life much easier as the former West Ham player adapts to his new club.

"It's easy to play with them; you have some of the best players in the world, the best defenders, midfielders and attackers. From the back, I need to help on the occasions when I have to," Adrian said.

"I'm really proud to have won the last few games. We are in a good moment, we are like a rock — all together, the manager, the staff, players and fans. The club is living a great moment." — AFP

25 Bok loss won't be 'end of the world' for All Blacks: Hansen



26 Ben Stokes and Archer promise glittering Test future for England



27 David de Gea signs new deal at Man Utd



Brewers win on Braun's 9th-inning slam

Mariners edge past White Sox in wild contest



ST LOUIS: Cory Spangenberg #5 of the Milwaukee Brewers beats the throw to first base against Paul Goldschmidt #46 of the St. Louis Cardinals in the fifth inning at Busch Stadium in St Louis, Missouri. — AFP

ST LOUIS: Ryan Braun's ninth-inning grand slam rallied the visiting Milwaukee Brewers to a 7-6 victory over the St. Louis Cardinals on Sunday afternoon. Braun crushed a two-out, 3-2 pitch from Cardinals reliever Junior Fernandez to erase a 4-3 deficit in dramatic fashion. The Brewers won for the ninth time in 10 games to move within three games of the National League-Central leading Cardinals. Milwaukee is one game behind the Chicago Cubs for the second wild-card spot. Reliever Matt Albers (7-5), the fifth of six Brewers pitchers, earned the victory. Josh Hader closed out the game to earn his 33rd save, despite giving up a two-run homer to Tommy Edman. John Gant (10-1), the sixth of eight Cardinals pitchers, took the loss.

ROCKIES 10, PADRES 5

Ryan McMahon homered twice and drove in four runs and Josh Fuentes added a homer and four RBIs as Colorado beat San Diego in Denver. Garrett Hampson added three hits and scored three runs and pitcher Chi Chi Gonzalez got his first major league hit and RBIs before leaving with a lead. Wil Myers and Luis Urias homered and had two hits apiece, and Josh Naylor also went deep for the Padres, who were outscored 31-23 in the three-game sweep by Colorado.

MARINERS 11, WHITE SOX 10

Tom Murphy drew a walk with one out and the bases loaded in the bottom of the ninth inning as Seattle rallied to defeat visiting Chicago. Kyle Lewis hit a three-run homer for the Mariners, who took two of three games in the series. It was Lewis' fourth home run in six major league games. Wellington Castillo hit a grand slam and Adam Engel added a three-run shot, both in an eight-run fifth inning, for the White Sox. Mariners right-hander Austin Adams (2-2) got the victory and White Sox right-hander Jose Ruiz (1-3) took the loss.

RED SOX 6, PHILLIES 3

Christian Vazquez socked a grand slam and a solo homer for a career-high five RBIs to lead visiting Boston to past fading Philadelphia. Red Sox starter Rick Porcello (13-12) was effective in five innings, allowing five hits and two runs while striking out six

and walking one. Rhys Hoskins homered among his two hits for the Phillies, who dropped their second straight and fell four games behind the Chicago Cubs for the second wild-card berth in the National League.

TWINS 7, INDIANS 5

Roberto Perez belted a go-ahead, three-run home run in the sixth inning as host Cleveland recorded a victory over Minnesota to salvage the finale of their three-game series. Mike Freeman added a pinch-hit RBI single in the seventh inning for the Indians, who responded to Saturday's doubleheader sweep by trimming their deficit to 4 1/2 games behind first-place Minnesota in the American League Central. Eddie Rosario launched a pair of solo shots and LaMonte Wade and Miguel Sano also went deep for the Twins.

DODGERS 3, METS 2

Jedd Gyorko's RBI single with two outs in the ninth inning snapped a tie and lifted visiting Los Angeles past New York. Enrique Hernandez began the game-winning rally with a one-out double off Seth Lugo (6-4). After pinch-hitter Edwin Rios struck out, Gyorko fell behind 0-2 and took a borderline pitch for ball one before singling sharply up the middle to give the Dodgers their first lead of the night. Kenley Jansen (5-3) earned the win with a perfect eighth. Adam Kolarek got the first out of the ninth before Kenta Maeda recorded the final two outs to earn his second save.

REDS 3, DIAMONDBACKS 1

Eugenio Suarez hit two solo home runs, including a 456-foot blast, and Trevor Bauer pitched eight strong innings to help Cincinnati to a victory over Arizona in Phoenix. Suarez moved into a tie for the major league lead with 47 homers, the same as New York Mets rookie Pete Alonso. Suarez has three multi-homer games this season, two against the Diamondbacks in the past eight days. He has five homers against Arizona this season. Ketel Marte had two hits and Wilmer Flores had an RBI single for Arizona, which has lost seven of eight after breaking a six-game losing streak Saturday.

BLUE JAYS 6, YANKEES 4

Randal Grichuk hit two home runs and had four

RBIs, right-hander T.J. Zeuch earned his first major league win and Toronto defeated visiting New York. Zeuch (1-0), who entered the game in the second inning, allowed three runs (two earned), five hits and three walks while striking out five in 5 1/3 innings. It was his third career appearance.

CUBS 16, PIRATES 6

Kris Bryant went 3-for-5 with a pair of home runs and four RBIs, and the Chicago Cubs cruised to a 16-6 win over the visiting Pittsburgh Pirates to complete a three-game sweep Sunday afternoon. Bryant hit a three-run homer in the first inning and a solo shot in the third to give him 31 on the season. Ian Happ, Kyle Schwarber and Jonathan Lucroy also homered for Chicago (81-68), which maintained its hold on the second wild-card spot in the National League. Pablo Reyes went 2-for-5 with three RBIs in a losing effort for Pittsburgh (65-85), which dropped to 5-11 against the Cubs this season.

ORIOLES 8, TIGERS 2

Rio Ruiz hit a two-run homer, Jonathan Villar and Anthony Santander also drove in two runs and visiting Baltimore rolled past Detroit. Asher Wojciechowski (3-8) pitched five innings and gave up two runs on eight hits while collecting the win. He had dropped his last five decisions. Baltimore has taken two of the first three games of the series in a matchup of the majors' worst teams.

NATIONALS 7, BRAVES 0

Right-hander Anibal Sanchez slowed down the Atlanta bats with seven scoreless innings as Washington beat the visiting Braves. Sanchez (9-8) allowed only three hits and one walk, striking out three. He improved to 3-0 in five starts against Atlanta this season. Washington produced 10 hits and was led by Howie Kendrick, who went 3-for-4 with a homer, scored twice and drove in three runs. Victor Robles added two hits, including a double, and made a great catch in center field to rob pinch hitter Adeiny Hechavarria of extra bases in the ninth.

ASTROS 12, ROYALS 3

Josh Reddick had five hits and three RBIs as Houston

defeated host Kansas City. Wade Miley (14-5), who hadn't gotten out of the first inning in his past two starts, got back on the winning track. He allowed two runs on seven hits in six innings. He struck out four and walked two. Kansas City starter Jakob Junis (9-14) allowed five runs on seven hits in 2 2/3 innings. He walked two and struck out two.

A'S 6, RANGERS 1

Marcus Semien and Matt Chapman homered, and Sean Manaea pitched six shutout innings to lead Oakland to its sixth straight victory as it beat Texas in Arlington, Texas. Semien's homer was his 30th of the season, joining Matt Olson (34) and Chapman (34) in the 30-home run club and tying the team record for players with 30 homers in a season last accomplished in 2001. Chapman's solo shot in the ninth was the 244th home run of the season for the A's, breaking the franchise record also set in 1996. Shin-Soo Choo went 3-for-3 and also was hit by a pitch, and Jose Trevino doubled and scored a run for Texas, which suffered its third straight loss.

ANGELS 6, RAYS 4

Albert Pujols had a three-run homer and an RBI double to help Los Angeles end a six-game losing streak with a win against Tampa Bay in Anaheim, Calif. Kevan Smith had three hits and Andrelton Simmons had two hits and scored twice for the Angels. Rays left-hander Ryan Yarbrough (11-4) hadn't lost since June 13, going 6-0 in his past 15 outings with a 2.43 ERA. Yarbrough allowed six runs and 10 hits in five innings. He struck out three and walked two.

GIANTS 2, MARLINS 1

Johnny Cueto threw five shutout innings for the second consecutive start and Mike Yastrzemski scored the go-ahead run in the eighth on a wild pitch as San Francisco edged visiting Miami. Mauricio Dubon homered for the Giants, who won two of three in the series. Matching his effort from a week earlier when he was pitching for the first time in 13 months after Tommy John surgery, Cueto limited the Marlins to three hits in his five innings. He walked two and struck out two. —Reuters