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MP claims 16 missiles flew over Kuwait; army on alert

Riyadh blames Iran, displays debris • Trump tightens curbs • Houthis threaten UAE

By B Izzak

KUWAIT/RIYADH: Leading opposition lawmaker Shuaib Al-Muwaizri said yesterday that as many as 16 missiles flew over Kuwait's airspace on their way to hit oil installations in neighboring Saudi Arabia. The missiles, believed to be cruise missiles, flew over Kuwait without being detected by the country's air defenses and that some of them fell in the desert and the rest hit the Saudi oil facilities in Abqaiq and Khurais, knocking out more than half of the kingdom's oil production. Muwaizri, a former cabinet minister, told reporters in the Assembly.

Late yesterday, the Kuwaiti army chief of staff said yesterday the state of combat readiness of some army units has been raised as part of precautionary measures taken in such circumstances. "This announcement comes in order to preserve the security of the country and the safety of its land, water and airspace from any possible dangers in direct and permanent coordination with all military and security authorities in the country," the army chief of staff said in a press release.

It added what was seen or heard yesterday was part of those measures through the implementation of live exercises by the marine and air force from 1:30 pm to 5 pm in the afternoon. It called on the public not to pay attention to any information or rumors circulated from any source except official sources represented by the directorate of moral guidance and public relations.

Muwaizri strongly lashed out at the government, specifically the defense and foreign ministries, and held the respective ministers responsible for this serious fail-

ure. Muwaizri said the reason air defenses did not spot the missiles is because an important military balloon was destroyed two years ago as a result of colliding with an aircraft belonging to a private airline. "Kuwait is exposed. Where are the billions spent on armaments" in the previous years, the lawmaker asked.

Muwaizri said the destruction of the balloon has harmed national security, but until this moment, the justice ministry has not yet released the investigation report into the case. The lawmaker however did not say where the missiles came from, but it is clear they could have been fired either from Iran or Iraq. The United States has blamed Iran for the attacks on Saudi oil installations amid reports that blamed pro-Iran Shiite militias in south Iraq to have fired the missiles. Iran-backed Yemen Houthi rebels have claimed responsibility but Saudi Arabia did not accuse them.

Muwaizri criticized the failure of the government and wondered what would've happened if the any of the missiles had crashed over Kuwaiti residential areas, saying the defense minister should be held responsible for the incident. The government on Sunday said security officials have launched an investigation into reports that a drone was seen flying over Salmiya and Bidaa coast and over HH the Amir's residential palace in Salwa. The lawmaker said the issue should not be allowed to pass without a proper investigation and necessary actions.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia said yesterday that strikes on its oil infrastructure were "unquestionably" sponsored by Iran, adding that the strikes originated from the north

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RIYADH: Saudi defense ministry spokesman Colonel Turki bin Saleh Al-Malki displays pieces of what he said are Iranian cruise missiles and drones recovered from the attack site that targeted Saudi Aramco's facilities during a press conference yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

Trump names security advisor

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump yesterday named his pointman for hostage situations, Robert O'Brien, to replace his hawkish national security advisor sacked just as relations with Iran are entering a new crisis point. "I have worked long & hard with Robert. He will do a great job!" Trump tweeted. Last week, Trump abruptly fired John Bolton, a vigorous proponent of using US military force abroad and one of the main hawks in the administration on Iran. — AFP

Pak denies Modi airspace permission

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan refused a request from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to use its airspace on a flight to Germany, Pakistan's foreign minister said yesterday, as tensions between the two nations ran high over the disputed region of Kashmir. "Keeping in view the situation in occupied Kashmir ... we have decided that we will not allow the Indian Prime Minister," Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said in a video. — Reuters

Morocco TV show censored

RABAT: A Moroccan television show has been suspended for three weeks allowing a celebrity guest to boast on air of "beating his wife", the country media authority said yesterday. "Whoever doesn't beat his wife is not a man," popular singer Adil El Miloudi said in June on a Chada TV show, Kotbi Tonight, drawing laughter from a fellow guest, actor Samy Naceri, and host Imad Kotbi. "In Morocco, this is normal, anyone can do what he wants with his wife, hit her, kill her," he insisted after Kotbi jokingly said: "It's forbidden to hit one's wife all over the world." — AFP

Hariri suspends work at TV channel

BEIRUT: Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri announced yesterday the suspension of Future TV, his ailing mouthpiece whose employees had recently been on strike over unpaid wages. "It is with a sad heart that I announce today the decision to suspend the work at Future TV and settle the rights of the workers," Hariri's office said in a statement. He said the decision was motivated by "the same material reasons that led to the closing of Al-Mustaqbal newspaper" in January this year. — AFP

Saudi says output to be restored by end of September

JEDDAH: Saudi Arabia said Tuesday its oil output will return to normal by the end of September, seeking to soothe rattled energy markets after attacks on two installations that slashed its production by half. The weekend strikes on Abqaiq - the world's largest oil processing facility - and the Khurais oil field in eastern Saudi Arabia roiled energy markets and revived fears of a conflict in the tinderbox Gulf region.

Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, who was only appointed to the role earlier this month, said

that the world's top energy exporter had dipped into its strategic reserves to maintain supply to clients. "I have good news for you... the oil output to international markets is back to what it was before the attack," he told reporters in the western Red Sea city of Jeddah. "During the past two days the damage was contained and 50 percent of the production has been recovered," he added. "Production will be back to normal by the end of September."

Prince Abdulaziz said the kingdom would achieve 11 million barrels per day (bpd) capacity by the end of September and 12 million bpd by the end of November. "Restoring sustainable production capacity to 11 million bpd by the end of the month is an ambitious target, given the amount of repairs required" at the sites, Alex Schindelar, president of the Energy Intelligence group, told AFP.

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JEDDAH: Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman gives a press conference in this Red Sea city on Tuesday. — AFP

Liberia school fire kills dozens of children

MONROVIA: Dozens of children were killed yesterday in a fire at a Quranic school near the Liberian capital Monrovia. At least 26 children and two teachers died in the blaze overnight, the president's office said, citing information from the emergency services. President George Weah visited the site in Paynesville, on the outskirts of the capital, and said the cause was still unknown. "We are here to encourage parents of the victims to have strength,

because it is painful to lose your kids in this manner," Weah told reporters. "We extend our sympathy to the bereaved families. We don't know the cause of the fire yet, but we will encourage our investigators to find how it happened," he added.

Rescuers in white masks and surgical gloves carried the children's bodies in bags from the burnt-out building as crowds of people and relatives crushed together outside. The sheet-metal roof of the building, which housed a school and boarding school, was destroyed. "I was sleeping when I heard noise outside. My wife opened the back door and we saw smoke coming from the front. We came out and saw heavy fire at the back," said local resident Zazay.

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MONROVIA: Rescuers hold a body after a fire at a Quranic school that killed at least 26 children and two teachers yesterday. — AFP

Facebook plays to social ties with Portal screen

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook yesterday unveiled second-generation Portal smart screens, touting them as a way to stay connected to loved ones at the leading social network. Facebook also pushed down costs to make new Portal, Portal Mini, and Portal TV devices more enticing to consumers at a starting price of \$129. Portal and Portal Mini will begin shipping on Oct 15, while a notepad-sized Portal TV device that turns a television into a smart screen for video calls and more will begin shipping on Nov 5 at a price of \$149.

Facebook would not disclose how many Portal devices have been sold since they were introduced late last year, but said adoption has been strong enough to inspire second-generation models. Shipments of smart speakers in the US last year nearly doubled to 57.5 million, with Amazon accounting for about 48 percent of



SAN FRANCISCO: A suite of Facebook Portal products is seen on display during a media event on Tuesday. — AFP

the market and Google claiming nearly 39 percent, according to International Data Corp. Amazon Echo and Google Nest smart devices use their respective digital assistant software to infuse in-home speakers and screens with voice-commanded intelligence.

"We know the smart device category is packed and competitive; and those devices are great," Facebook

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India bans e-cigs; New York bans flavored vapes

NEW DELHI/NEW YORK: India announced yesterday a ban on the sale of electronic cigarettes, as a backlash gathers pace worldwide about a technology promoted as less harmful than smoking tobacco. The announcement by India came a day after New York became the second US state to ban flavored e-cigarettes following a string of vaping-linked deaths. "The decision was made keeping in mind the impact that e-cigarettes have on the youth of today," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told reporters in New Delhi.

E-cigarettes heat up a liquid - tasting of anything from bourbon to bubble gum or just tobacco, and which usually contains nicotine - into vapor which is inhaled.

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Local

Speaker: Amir will return home soon

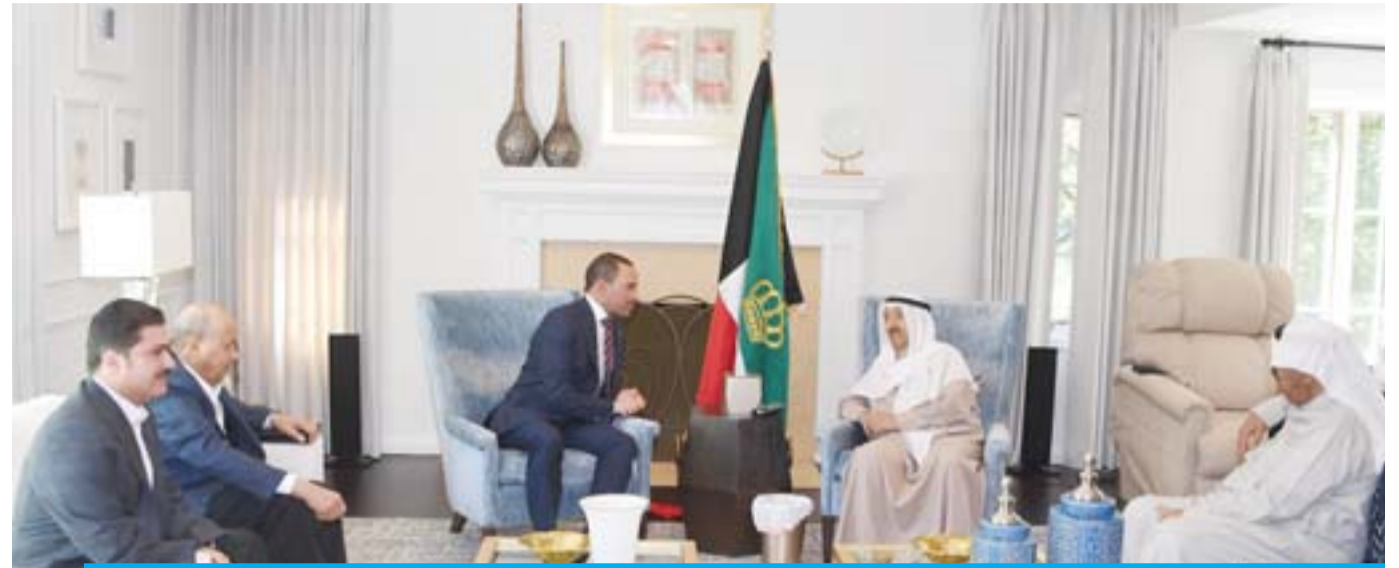
KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem at his residence in the US on Tuesday. The audience was attended by deputy head of Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. "HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will return home in near future following successful medical tests in the US", National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said Tuesday.

Al-Ghanem made the statement after visiting HH the Amir at his residence in the US. He said he conveyed greetings of the Kuwaiti people to His Highness the Amir. HH the Amir "expresses his appreciation and gratitude for sentiments of the Kuwaiti people, and His Highness assures he will return soon," said Al-Ghanem. Minister of Amiri Diwan Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah announced last Thursday that HH the Amir was discharged from a US hospital following successful checkups.

In related news, HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of

condolences yesterday to Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani over two terrorist bombings. In the cable, HH the Amir expressed his sincere condolences to the victims of the two terrorist bombings: one took place in the capital of Kabul and another in Parwan province. HH the Amir pointed out that Kuwait rejects all forms of terrorism and prayed for the victims and their families as well as for the wounded swift recovery. His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

Kuwait National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem also expressed his deepest sympathies, yesterday, after a pair of suicide bombings in the Afghan capital left scores of people dead and injured. In cables he sent to Afghan Senate chief Fazel Hadi Muslimyar and Speaker of Parliament Mir Rahman Rahmani, Kuwait's top lawmaker wished mercy upon the souls of the victims and a speedy recovery for the injured. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem at his US residence. — KUNA

Deputy Amir receives Kuwait PM, officials



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince receives His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace. — KUNA photos



HH the Deputy Amir receives State's Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Khaled Al-Saleh.



HH the Deputy Amir receives Municipal Council Chairman Osama Humoud Al-Otaibi.



HH the Deputy Amir receives Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf also received Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Khaled Al-Saleh. His Highness also received Kuwaiti Municipal Council Chairman Osama Humoud Al-Otaibi on the occasion of issuing an Amiri decree granting him the rank of minister. — KUNA

Kuwait wants action over humanitarian crisis in Syria

GENEVA: Kuwait yesterday called on the international community to do everything in its power to allow the unimpeded delivery of aid into war-torn Syria, given the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding there. The remarks by the Gulf state's permanent delegate to the United Nations Jamal Al-Ghunaim came amid UN Security Council talks over an independent inquiry into possible war crimes perpetrated in Syria.



GENEVA: Permanent delegate to the UN in Geneva Jamal Al-Ghunaim.

The culprits behind these crimes should be held accountable for their actions, added the diplomat, saying his country strongly

deplores what the UN inquiry cited as "grave human rights violations" in Syria. He spoke of Kuwait's "increasing alarm" over the deliberate and systematic targeting of civilians in Syria, which has also left the country's infrastructure in shambles.

He asked the UN Human Rights Council to take serious action over the whereabouts of thousands of people who have gone missing in Syria since the beginning of the country's civil war. On the issue of Syrian refugees, he mentioned His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's intention on finding a "new approach" to deal with the crisis, urging nations that have pledged aid for Syria not to renege on that promise. He reiterated Kuwait's support for a political solution as the only feasible way out of the eight-year old conflict, urging the UN Security Council to intervene and stop further bloodshed. — KUNA

IAEA, Kuwait sign agreement to protect marine environment

VIENNA: Kuwait yesterday signed an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the protection of the marine environment. The deal is significant since it focuses on technical and scientific knowhow across several fields, which fits into Kuwait's 2035 vision for sustainable development. Kuwait's ambassador to Austria Sadiq Marafie told KUNA after the deal was sealed.

The agreement, which was signed on behalf of the agency by its Acting Director General Cornel Feruta, is another chapter in Kuwait's storied relationship with the global body, the Kuwaiti diplomat said. A separate deal will designate a Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) facility as among

centers affiliated with the IAEA, he revealed after the signing held on the sidelines of the Vienna-based IAEA General Conference. Two days earlier, KISR signed a pair of deals with the IAEA, focusing on the development of nuclear expertise in a myriad of fields.

Cooperation with the United Nations nuclear watchdog (IAEA) has had a major role in helping Kuwait achieve sustainable development, particularly in relation to food agriculture, the environment and human development, a Kuwaiti official said on Tuesday. Through its 'technical cooperation program,' the IAEA is supporting capacity building, facilitating communication, enhancing knowledge exchange and developing partnerships with Kuwait, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research's (KISR) Executive Director for Research and Construction, Osama Al-Sayegh said. Al-Sayegh, who is Kuwait's liaison officer at the IAEA General Conference, revealed that this cooperation has been ongoing since 2003.

The technologies which are being transferred from the agency are being applied to projects involving various tasks. These include the improvement of production and water



VIENNA: Kuwait's ambassador to Austria Sadiq Marafie after signing the agreement. — KUNA

efficiency in regards to fodder crops, genetic mutation to improve barley harvest under harsh environmental conditions and subsurface groundwater assessment. Al-Sayegh added that the agency is also involved in training KISR staff as part of Kuwait's ambitious national development plans. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Ahmadi governor received Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Irani to discuss issues of mutual interests.

Parliamentarians, Luxembourg's PM discuss bolstering ties

KUWAIT: Visiting Kuwaiti parliamentarians held a meeting with Luxembourg's Prime Minister Xavier Bettel, discussing with him issues of mutual interest, and ways to bolster economic and investment ties. According to the Al-Dustour television network, the Kuwaiti delegation, headed by MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaia, also touched on the issue of exempting Kuwaitis from the Schengen visa during their meeting with

Bettel. Prime Minister Bettel expressed support to the Kuwaiti desire to exempt Kuwaiti national from the visa.

Elsewhere, the parliamentary delegation on Tuesday held talks with Fernand Etgen, president of the Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg, on ways to promote the friendly ties between both countries. The talks dealt with cooperation in the parliamentary, commercial and investment cooperation as well as regional and international issues of common concern. Al-Dostour news network of the Kuwait National Assembly reported. The delegation of the sixth parliamentary friendship group, led by MP Al-Humaidi Al-Sobei'ei, included MP Homoud Al-Khodair. They discussed with Etgen the role of visit exchanges by MPs from both sides in promoting the bilateral relations and handed him an invitation to visit Kuwait. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait's Al-Matouq underscores the Paris peace conference's significance

PARIS: Amiri Diwan Advisor and Chairman of Kuwait's International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) Dr Abdullah Al-Matouq yesterday underlined the importance of the Paris International Conference for Peace and Solidarity, about values, understanding and ties between the Abrahamic religions. Al Matouq, who is also envoy of the UN Secretary General, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the conference, which began on Tuesday under the slogan "joint commitment to humanitarian issues," reinforces dealing with humanitarian issues.

A memorandum was signed among the Abrahamic religion representatives in which they are agreeing about achieving peace based on justice, understanding and strong ties, he added. Such conferences are a practical step towards maximizing partnerships aimed at spreading dialogue, peace and tolerance, while rejecting all forms of terrorism whatever their

source may be, Al-Matouq clarified.

Participants in the conference stressed following-up disturbing worldwide events that require intervention of the monotheistic religions, responsibly achieving peacetime, he explained. It is vital to be the mediator and understand the friendship between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, where the Paris conference commits to build bridges by reconciliation and consolidate relations.

Holding such events amid difficult circumstances and current challenges facing the world contributes to consolidating the values of openness to culture, he pointed out. There is no doubt that all religions have a moral and humanitarian responsibility for leaders to intensify and strengthen efforts to establish ethics in societies, he said.

The conference, sponsored by Muslim World League's Secretary General Dr Mohammad Al Issa, was in the presence of President of the Islamic Foundation in France Dr Ghaleb



PARIS: Amiri Diwan Advisor and Chairman of Kuwait's International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) Dr Abdullah Al-Matouq at the conference. — KUNA

Bencheikh, Chief Rabbi of France Haim Korsia, French Prelate of the Catholic Church Eric de Moulin-Beaufort, Kuwaiti Ambassador to France Sami Al-Suleiman, along with many leading scholars and Islamic experts. — KUNA

Lebanese president praises KRSC's aid given to refugees

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun yesterday praised efforts by Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) in helping Syrian Refugees and Lebanese who are in need for healthcare. President Aoun appreciated the cooperation between KRCS and the Lebanese Red Cross for the benefit of the human beings.

This came during a meeting with Chairman of KRCS Dr Hilal Al Sayer and his accompanying delegation, in the presence of the Ambassador of Kuwait to Beirut, Abdel'aal Al Qina'i, the statement added. The two sides discussed KRCS's activities inside and outside Kuwait, and ways to enhance its cooperation with humanitarian societies and institutions in Lebanon.

On his part, Dr Al Sayer congratulated President Aoun on the United Nations decision to establish the Human Academy for Dialogue and Convergence in Lebanon. In the meeting, Al Sayer explained the objectives of KRCS and its contribution to the construction of Al-Minya hospital in Tripoli, north Lebanon. He praised the cooperation between both KRCS and its Lebanese counterpart



BEIRUT: Lebanese President receives Chairman of KRCS. —KUNA

the project of purchasing in a project to purchase agricultural products and distributing them to those in need.

According to the statement, Al Sayer briefed the Lebanese President on other projects that have started work, including mobile clinics in cooperation with the

Lebanese Red Cross and international partners. Secretary General Maha Al Barjas, Director of Legal and Youth Affairs Dr Musaed Al Enezi and Director of Public Relations and Media Khaled Al Zaid attended the meeting. — KUNA

Saudi FM opens 14th edition of Euromoney Conference

RIYADH: Mr Mohammed Al-Jadaan, Minister of Finance, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia opened the Euromoney Saudi Arabia Conference 2019, organised by Euromoney Conferences in partnership with the Ministry of Finance under the theme 'Growing the New Financial Ecosystem'.

In his keynote speech, Mr Mohammed Al-Jadaan, Minister of Finance said the conference took place after three years of positive progress and demonstrated Saudi Arabia's commitment to the international economy. Then he added "Saudi Arabia is committed to working with other nations towards achieving global economic prosperity and the Presidency of the G20 will consolidate the Kingdom's international standing and affirm its leadership in supporting the stability of the global economy."

"Under Vision 2030 and the Financial Sector Development Program, Saudi Arabia is keeping pace with global developments and achieving qualitative leaps in the field of financial services, in line with business and service development. The growth of talented and active youth, as well as an increase in women's participation in the labor market, are also important elements towards achieving our goals."

He welcomed the Kingdom's inclusion in the Financial Action Task Force: "Our financial sector is committed to introducing further reforms in order to expand financial services and implement legislation and measures to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. Our progress in these areas recently led to the Kingdom's inclusion in the Financial Action

Task Force (FATF), taking place alongside 37 other countries and it was the first Arab country to achieve membership."

He also outlined that the government spending in support of economic and social development had increased during last year: "The total expenditure growth, in both the operational and capital sectors, reached nearly 16.1% in 2018, while the increase in the first half of this year (2019) reached about 6.3%. At the same time, non-oil revenues increased during 2018 by approximately 15.2%. The increase continued during the first half of the year by 14.4% as a result of the economic activity improvement and continued implementation of reforms and initiatives aimed at developing revenues and diversifying their sources."

"The budget deficit during the first half of the year amounted to SR 5.7 billion compared to a deficit amounting to SR 41.7 billion in the same period in the previous year and the real GDP growth rates in Q1 2019, which reached 1.7%, compared to 1.4% in Q1 2018. Non-oil sector grew by 2.1% driven by the private sector's growth of 2.3%, compared to 1.7% in the same quarter last year, while the FDI inflows increased by 23.8% in the first quarter of the current year with increased investment opportunities for the private sector."

"The total credit facilities provided by banks and financing companies to SMEs in the first half of 2019 amounted to SR 113 billion, compared to an increase of 11.6% in the corresponding period of the previous year. The banking performance also improved. The total assets and liabilities of commercial banks during Q2 2019 amounted to SR 2.4 trillion, an increase of 3% equivalent to SR 69.1 billion, compared to an increase of 0.04% in the corresponding quarter of the previous year."

On the other hand, the demand for investment in domestic and international debt issues increased by more than three times during the first half of the year. The first issuance in Euro was more than four times subscribed. The nominal value of government Sukuk was reduced to SR1,000 in order to diversify the

investor segment and enhance trading and individual savings."

Finally, the Minister congratulated the nation and Aramco for reestablishing full capacity oil production following the recent attacks: "I seize this opportunity to congratulate the country, and Aramco in particular, for bringing production back to normal which proves our ability to deal effectively and efficiently with the unprecedented crisis." The first day highlighted the transformation of financial institutions in the Kingdom including how emerging technologies are driving the explosion of FinTech fueled by digitally-savvy millennials. It also explored the use of FinTech to enhance database infrastructure and develop customer-centric business models as an important means of enhancing e-commerce-related areas.

Speaking at the conference the Chairman of the Capital Market Authority (CMA), Mr Mohammed Elkuwaiz said the CMA was continuing to make huge advancements and highlighted the importance of new capital markets laws recently approved by the Council of Ministers: "These new laws will have two priorities, firstly to protect investors through improved mechanisms for compensation, strengthening the independence of judicial committees, increasing the scope of reporting, rewarding those who report violations and strengthening penalties to deter violators, and secondly to enhance the capital market by modifying financial organization through the introduction of a depository center and the creation of new categories including the establishment of a 'clearing house' to create a new derivatives market."

He also outlined how judicial procedures in the capital market have been strengthened: "Prosecution processing time to deal with financial disputes has been reduced from 24 to 10 months, with the aim of a further reduction to 6 months. Many other reforms have also been completed including the automation of the judicial processes with everything to do with a claim now dealt with electronically and we are also moving towards the introduction of group claims which will also help to speed up the process."



Afghanistan Ambassador Javid Hashimi hosted a reception at the Fotouh Ballroom Regency Hotel to celebrate the National Day of Afghanistan. Ministers, foreign dignitaries and media persons were invited to the celebration. — Photos Fouad Al-Shaikh



Legalese

Setting up as a startup



By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

A startup can be defined in many ways, but I like to think of them as innovative, growth-oriented, newly-created businesses. Starting a startup has become popular over the last decade thanks to the great success stories of geeks turned into self-made billionaires, both internationally and locally. Starting a startup can be difficult at the beginning, but extremely rewarding. It involves being innovative, thinking outside the box and taking risks. Starting a startup means long nights, doing more than one job and knowing how to be resourceful.

Many experts will tell you the best way to start is by taking the MVP route. What is an MVP, you may ask? A minimum viable product (MVP) is a development technique for building a basic version of a product. It envisions that early adopters can test and provide feedback to improve the product further. Building a minimum viable product can take multiple iterations to reach completion.

Although this technique is important - so is having your legal documents. I personally think what is more important is having the passion and the love to start the business. Make sure you have thought of how the business fits your personality and your belief system, how you can help people with it and be a positive impact on society.

1. Business structure: There are a number of factors to look into before figuring out the business structure - this includes the cost, your activity and location of services/products provided.

2. Constitutional documents: If you do end up obtaining a commercial license, make sure the documents of the company reflect what you and your partners want to achieve.

3. Employment agreements: Make sure everyone working in the company including the founders/partners have employment agreements with the company and are registered officially as employees.

4. Trademarks and copyright: You would want to trademark your logo and copyright any artistic or creative work.

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A seaside photo from the Arabian Gulf Street taken at sunset. —KUNA

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Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan down 18.3% in August

TOKYO: Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan plunged 18.3 percent from a year earlier to JPY 59.7 billion (USD 552 million) in August, down for the third consecutive month due to continued sluggish export performance, government data showed yesterday. But Kuwait stayed in black ink with Japan for 11 years and seven months, as exports still outpaced its imports by a big margin, according to a preliminary report by the Finance Ministry.

Kuwaiti overall exports to Japan fell 18.2 percent year-on-year to JPY 70.2 billion (USD 649 million) for the third monthly decline. Imports from Japan also slid 18.2 percent to JPY 10.5 billion (USD 97 million), down for the sixth month in a row. Middle East's trade surplus with Japan shrank 36.3 percent to JPY 543.1 billion (USD 5.0 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region decreasing 29.8 percent from a year earlier. Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 95.1 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, fell 30.9 percent. The region's overall imports from Japan edged up 0.7 percent on strong demand for automobiles and steel.

The world's third-biggest economy posted a global trade deficit of JPY 136.3 billion (USD 1.26 billion) in August for the second straight month of red ink due to weak exports amid US-China trade tensions. Exports

declined 8.2 percent from the year before on weak demand for semiconductor manufacturing equipment to China and vehicles to the US. Imports slid 12.0 percent on lower crude oil and LNG prices. China remained Japan's biggest trade partner, followed by the US. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors. Elsewhere, Bursa's Kuwait main indices dropped yesterday, affected by the current tension in the region following the attack on two oil facilities in Saudi Arabia. The all share index went down 3.3 percent to reach 5,419.9 points.

Oil makes huge leap

For the second consecutive day, the price of Kuwait oil made another huge leap by USD 3.34 to reach USD 68.47 per barrel Tuesday, after being at USD 65.13 pb last Monday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC). As for the Brent crude price, a decline was recorded of up to USD 4.47 to USD 64.55 per barrel, the same with the West Texas Intermediate, with a decline of USD 3.56 reaching USD 59.34. The instability and current hike in prices is attributed to the recent attack on oil facilities in Saudi Arabia, which led to a decrease in Saudi production.

In other news, the exchange rates of the US Dollar was stable yesterday, exchanging at KD 0.303, also the case with the Euro exchanging at KD 0.336, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). CBK bulletin added, the British Pound Sterling up to 0.379, but declined with the Swiss Franc at KD 0.305. The Japanese Yen remained unchanged at KD 0.002. Exchange rate prices from the central bank calculates price average of the currency for the day, and does not reflect on the actual buying and selling prices. —KUNA



Kuwait Stock Exchange

Local

SPDC and LinkedIn partner to support Kuwait Sustainable Development Award

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Secretariat general of the Supreme Planning and Development Council and LinkedIn yesterday signed a partnership agreement to support the Kuwait Sustainable Development Award. The agreement was signed in a special ceremony attended by secretary general Khaled Mahdi, chairman of Kuwait Public Relations Society (KPRS) Jamal Al-Nasrallah and LinkedIn MENA CEO Ali Matar.

Mahdi stressed that the agreement will help support the award in terms of training participants, human resources development and marketing the award online. Nasrallah said KPRS' participation in the initiative comes as part of its social responsibility and partnership with both the public and private sectors in achieving development. Matar thanked the

council and stressed that LinkedIn seeks to assist people worldwide to find economic opportunities through establishing a digital economic map, which matches the New Kuwait 2035 vision.

New water pumping station

Headed by Municipal Council member Ali bin Sayer, the Mubarak Al-Kabeer committee at the Municipal Council yesterday approved a request by Ministry of Energy and Water to build and maintain a water pumping station in West Funaitees to replace the old one in Mishref. The committee also approved a request by the Cabinet Secretariat General to allocate a location to build a club for firefighters next to Messila Water Village. Meanwhile, the head of the council's Jahra committee Ahmed Al-Hadban said that the committee yes-

terday approved the requests by Kuwait Oil Company to relocate the power plant to be built along Abdaly highway, build two roundabouts in Naseem and Taima and allocate a location to build a mosque in Kadd.

Shadadiya chaos continues

Chairman of Kuwait University teaching staff members society Dr Ibrahim Al-Humoud said both his colleagues and students are still suffering in reaching and leaving Sabah Al-Salem University in Shadadiya. Ibrahim added various basic services are still to be completed, such as air-conditioning, PC systems and LANs, along with enough toilets. Ibrahim said a lack of special offices for assistant language professors has forced them to spend breaks in between lectures in their vehicles.

Laborers found manipulating work permits

KUWAIT: Official sources said that the manpower authority has started checking various work permits after discovering manipulation in some work permits issued in the private sector, where some laborers registered as domestic helpers were working elsewhere. The sources added a special team has been assigned to examine work permits issued during the previous three years. Violators will have their permits cancelled and held legally accountable.

Kuwaitizing

KCCSU Chairman Meshaal Al-Sayyar stressed the union's full support to Kuwaitizing all leading positions in co-ops, adding this is in collaboration with MSAL and the manpower authority.

Sexual harassment

The court of cassation yesterday sentenced to life a man accused of sexual harassment against someone he was responsible for bringing up. Addressing the accused, who justified his crime to psychological disturbances he suffers from, the judge stressed that even insane people refrain from committing certain actions and avoid them. The court of cassation also abstained from punishing a female citizen working for MSAL for taking a KD 100 bribe.

Swindling offense

Police arrested a Bahraini wanted for a swindling offense based on a complaint by a car rental office. It was found he had entered the country illegally and decamped with a luxury car. A police source said the manager of a car leasing office complained against a Bahraini man who took a car and did not return it or pay for it. When police checked his information, there was no record of him being in Kuwait. Detectives took over the case and caught him in the rental car. He told them he entered Kuwait illegally.



Municipality field campaigns

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Municipality capital emergency team carried out field campaigns to check construction work and

encroachments on state property. Head of the team Zaid Al-Enezi said the campaigns resulted in issuing two warnings to two buildings as they closed balconies and extended areas

with light material contrary to ministerial decision 206/2009. The campaigns also resulted in arresting 21 roaming vendors, and 15 violations of work affairs were checked by manpower authorities.

MoI undersecretary

Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Essam Al-Nahham and top ministry officials yesterday attended the funeral of Special Forces corporal Fahd Awwadh Al-Hajeri. Nahham also visited in hospital a police officer from the narcotics force who was injured when he was shot on duty.

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Schools, airports closed as Indonesia fires spark fears

World at risk of pandemics that could kill millions, panel warns



MONTPREVEYRES: A high-speed 5G mobile network antenna is pictured near Montpreveyres, western Switzerland. Switzerland was among the first countries to begin deploying 5G, but health fears over radiation from the antennas that carry the next-generation mobile technology has sparked a nation-wide revolt. — AFP

Health fears prompt Swiss 5G revolt

Fears over radiation from the antennas

GENEVA: Switzerland was among the first countries to begin deploying 5G, but health fears over radiation from the antennas that carry the next-generation mobile technology have sparked a nationwide revolt. Demonstrators against the technology are due to fill the streets of Bern later this month, but already a number of cantons have been pressured to put planned constructions of 5G-compatible antennae on ice.

The technology has been swept up in the deepening trade war between China and the United States, which has tried to rein in Chinese giant Huawei - the world's leader in superfast 5G equipment - over fears it will allow Beijing to spy on communications from countries that use its products and services. But far from the clash of the titans, a growing number of Swiss are voicing alarm at possible health effects from exposure to the electromagnetic rays radiating from the new antennae, and are threatening to put the issue to a referendum in the country famous for its direct democratic system.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. In February, Switzerland took a big step towards deployment when it attributed 5G frequencies to three major operators, Swisscom, Sunrise and Salt, allowing the country to rake in revenues of nearly 380 million Swiss francs

(\$384 million, 350 million euros). High on their success, the operators raced to trumpet on television advertisements and billboards that the cutting-edge technology would be available this year in cities, in the countryside and even in mountainous regions. By early July, 334 antennae stations for 5G were operational across the country, authorities told AFP.

Referendum?

But the rollout has run into some serious hurdles. Several cantons including Geneva have buckled to pressure from online petitioners demanding a halt to construction of the 5G infrastructure. But while no new antennae are being built in parts of the country, the operators are still converting existing 4G antennae for 5G use - something they can do without authorization. National carrier Swisscom thus says it expects 90 percent of the population to have 5G access by the end of the year.

Opponents meanwhile warn that 5G poses unprecedented health and environmental risks compared to previous generations of mobile technology, and are urging authorities to place a full-fledged moratorium on the rollout. They will organize a large protest on

September 21 in front of the government buildings in Bern, and are also working towards putting the issue to a popular vote. "I think we have most citizens on our side," Coco Tache-Berther, of the organization Frequencia, told AFP, saying Switzerland's rapid roll-out of 5G was "ultra-shocking".

Olivier Pahud, who regularly demonstrates against 5G in front of the UN in Geneva, agreed, insisting the technology will have "impacts on health, on the environment, on people's capacity to think." And for people like him, who suffer from "electromagnetic hypersensitivity", the new technology will be devastating, he said. The condition is not recognized as a medical disorder in most countries, but sufferers insist that exposure to mobile phones, wifi routers, televisions and other gadgets cause them anything from mild discomfort to life-ruining disability. The powerful Swiss Federation of Doctors is also urging caution, maintaining that "as long as there is no scientific proof that raising the radiation limits will not impact health, one must refrain from raising them."

Noxious effect?

In Geneva, it is Daniel Buchs, a doctor and a regional

parliamentarian with the centrist Christian Democratic Party, who is leading the battle. "We are waiting for a serious, independent study that shows whether, yes or no, 5G has a noxious effect for the population," he told AFP. Such a study, he insisted, could help avoid a health scandal similar to the one the world has seen with asbestos, which was long touted as safe but which today is known to kill at least 107,000 people around the world each year.

There are already several studies underway, including one by the World Health Organization, which told AFP it had begun "conducting a risk assessment of health outcomes from radiofrequency fields exposure." A group of experts was also appointed by the Swiss government last year to probe the risks involved with introducing 5G, and their findings should be published by the end of the year.

That study had originally been scheduled for publication during the first half of the year. The delay, which the government said was linked to "the size of the task", has sparked outrage among 5G opponents, who suspect pressure from operators might have played a role. "You really have to ask yourself what is behind this," Tache-Berther said. — AFP

EU warns no-deal Brexit 'imminent'

STRASBOURG: The European Union's two top officials handling troublesome Brexit talks warned yesterday the risk of a no-deal exit looms large unless Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government swiftly offers concrete proposals. "The risk of a no deal remains very real. That will maybe be the choice of the United Kingdom but never the choice of the European Union," European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker told the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

If that happens, "the consequences are much more serious, much more numerous than you want to say," added EU chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier in remarks directed at pro-Brexit MEPs. "After Brexit, you will be accountable to the citizens," he told them. The warnings came two days after Juncker and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson met in Luxembourg for talks and just six weeks before Britain is set to exit the bloc.

That trip ended in humiliation for Johnson when he avoided what was meant to be a joint press conference with his Luxembourg counterpart, put-off by a small anti-Brexit protest nearby. Juncker emphasized Britain still has not offered any viable solutions to rewrite a withdrawal agreement struck by Johnson's predecessor but rejected three times by the British parliament. "I am not sure" a new deal will be reached, Juncker said. "We have very little time left. But I am sure we must try," said the Commission chief, whose mandate ends on October 31 - the deadline for Britain to leave the EU.

Blame game

The strident messages paralleled stepped-up moves by Brussels and London to hand out blame for a chaotic no-deal Brexit. Barnier said "it is certainly not a question of pretending to negotiate," adding: "It is our responsibility to pursue this process with determination, with sincerity." His words were taken as a dig at Johnson, who is seen by many in Brussels and London as running down the clock to have Britain exit the EU "with or without" a new deal.

If so, Johnson risks falling foul of a law hastily passed by the UK parliament requiring him to ask for another Brexit delay - a third - by October 19 if no new deal is worked out with the EU. Britain's parliament is currently suspended at Johnson's initiative in a move being challenged in the Supreme Court in London. Adding pressure, the European Parliament yesterday voted a resolution noting the UK parliament's law on asking for another Brexit delay, but stressing there must be "reasons and a purpose for such an extension".

The decision on whether to grant an extension, however, is really up to the leaders of the other 27 EU member countries. They are to hold a Brussels summit on October 17-18, seen as the last chance to strike a deal. London declared this week that discussions with the EU on rewriting the withdrawal agreement would "soon take place on a daily basis," up from twice-a-week currently. But an EU spokeswoman said yesterday that while Brussels was ready to meet "24/7", daily talks were not as yet happening.

Bogged down in the backstop

The thorniest issue between Britain and the EU is the "backstop" - an effort to guarantee that no hard border will spring up between EU member Ireland and



LONDON: A pro-Brexit demonstrator stands with a 'Brexit Now and Make Britain Great Again' banner outside the Supreme Court in central London. — AFP

the UK's province of Northern Ireland while ensuring that the EU's single market will be protected. Under the withdrawal deal reached last year, the UK was to stay in the EU's customs union temporarily, in case talks towards a trade deal failed.

But Johnson rejects the guarantee and is reportedly exploring ways that Northern Ireland alone could abide by EU agriculture and food standards without a full-

fledged backstop. "The new British government... has underlined the backstop aspects it doesn't like. That is not enough to reach a solution," Barnier said in Strasbourg. "We need to find a legally operational solution in the withdrawal agreement that fully answers each of the problems, addresses each of the risks," he said. Juncker said "I hold no emotional attachment to the backstop" but was "profoundly attached to the goals it serves". — AFP

International

Yemen Houthi drones, missiles defy years of Saudi air strikes

Iran helped mentor drone and missile expertise-analysts

DUBAI: At a weapons exhibition in July in Yemen's Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa, military officials whipped silken sheets off what they said were newly-developed drones and missiles. The theatrical gesture revealed the proud slogan "Made in Yemen" spray-painted onto the weapons' bodywork. The moment was a celebration of sorts for Yemen's Houthi fighters. Despite years of air strikes against them, the militia now boast drones and missiles able to reach deep into Saudi Arabia, the result of an armament campaign pursued and expanded energetically since Yemen's war began four years ago.

Whether or not the Iran-aligned group carried out Saturday's crippling raid on a Saudi oil plant—as it asserts—its capabilities mean it can feasibly claim responsibility for the strike, a humiliating blow against its top adversary. Much remains unclear about the attack: Some Western officials believe responsibility lies with Iranian-backed militias in Iraq, or Iran itself.

What is certain is that Houthi weapon capabilities have evolved rapidly in the past couple of years in accuracy and distance, analysts, UN data and Houthi media indicate. Their growing abilities also exemplify the threat Iran's other regional allies — be they in Iraq, Syria or Lebanon — pose to their foes and the global powers that seek to contain them. In one unverified Houthi video, a covert launch vehicle rises robotically out of the desert floor and fires off missiles thousands of feet into a clear blue sky, before retracting into its hiding place.

"They are getting better on accuracy," a Saudi-based security source said. "The message they're sending is: We are getting through and we are hitting the right locations."

Accuracy

"They are getting better on accuracy," a Saudi-based security source said. "The message they're sending is: We are getting through and we are hitting the right locations."



Houthi armed power has grown rapidly during war

"As these technologies — long range drones or cruise missiles — spread, it really adds to the distance of warfare. It also adds to the deniability of the perpetrator," said James Rogers, assistant professor in War Studies at University of Southern Denmark.

The Houthis' growing military clout has checked Saudi ambitions in Yemen. Riyadh leads a coalition that intervened in 2015 to restore the government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, which the Houthis ousted from power in the capital Sanaa in late 2014. The Houthis have built their arsenal using local manufacturing, foreign expertise and parts smuggled in from Iran, their ally, and elsewhere. They also took over large swathes of Yemen's conventional military, including Scud missiles, when they seized the capital in late 2014. The Saudi-led coalition said in June the Houthis had fired 226 ballistic missiles and 710,606 "projectiles" during the war. This proliferation has taken place despite a years-long air and sea blockade on Houthi-controlled parts of Yemen and years of strikes the coalition say are against weapons depots, drone manufacturing locations and military communications hubs.

The Houthis' reach has been getting longer. A new type of Houthi drone appeared in mid-2018 which the UN has said can fly up to 1,200-1,500 km — putting Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and Dubai within range. A 2018 study of Houthi's military by Michael Knights of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy said the clearest example of direct Iranian help with advanced Houthi weaponry was the Burkan 2-II medium-range ballistic missile.

He said wreckage from 10 Burkan missiles suggested they were smuggled into Yemen in pieces and welded back together by a single engineering team, whose "fingerprint non-factory welding technique" was found on all the mis-

to be kingmaker, with the reported results showing his nationalist Yisrael Beitenu with nine seats. The mainly Arab Joint List alliance was set to become the third-largest bloc in parliament with 12 seats, the reports said. That could put the Arab parties in a position to block Netanyahu from continuing as prime minister if they decide to break with precedent and endorse Gantz for the job.

Israel's Arab parties have traditionally not endorsed anyone for prime minister. "The main difference in this vote is the turnout among Arab citizens," Joint List leader Ayman Odeh told journalists outside his home in the northern city of Haifa yesterday. "There's no doubt that this is what made the difference. Without that, Netanyahu would already be prime minister." After exit polls were released on Tuesday night, Lieberman called for a unity government with his party, Likud and Blue and White, saying the country was facing an "emergency."

The election was the second in five months for Israel, and President Reuven Rivlin, who must choose someone to form the next government, said there was a "need to avoid a third". Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, suffered one of the biggest defeats of his political career after the previous elections in April. His Likud along with its right-wing and religious allies won a majority, but he failed to form a coalition and opted for a second election rather than risk having Rivlin choose someone else to try.

'Normal again'

The stakes could not be much higher for the 69-year-old Netanyahu, who many believe will seek immunity from prosecution in parliament should he survive as prime minister. He spent election day warning he was on the verge of losing if his supporters did not turn out to vote, including in appearances at Jerusalem's main market and its central bus station, wielding a megaphone to exhort the crowds. He repeatedly warned, as he has in previous elections, that left-wing and Arab voters were showing up in large numbers to vote him out, appearing on Facebook live to do so.

A campaign by Lieberman to "make Israel normal again" appeared to have resonated with voters. The staunch secularist has long campaigned against what he sees as the undue clout of ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties,

In remarks yesterday morning, Lieberman reiterated he would only be willing to join "a broad liberal government" comprising Netanyahu's Likud with Gantz's Blue and White. Born in the ex-Soviet republic of Moldova, Lieberman, 61, emigrated to Israel in 1978, and retains a heavy accent when speaking Hebrew.

Upon arrival, the social sciences graduate worked for a time as a nightclub bouncer and also completed his military service. Lieberman started his career inside Netanyahu's Likud and rose through the ranks to become the prime minister's chief of staff during his first term from 1996 to 1999. That year, he created the nationalist party Yisrael Beitenu, capturing the support of many of the more than one million Jews who emigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union, an electoral base that has expanded considerably since.

Over the years, Lieberman has held several portfolios, including foreign minister from 2009 to 2012, then again from 2013 to 2015. As Israel's top diplomat, he was the bane of the European Union, accusing it of following a pro-Palestinian policy hostile to Jews. Lieberman's image was tainted by a corruption scandal that saw him leave government in 2012, but he was cleared of the charges and a year later he returned. In November 2018, he



NOKDIM: A supporter of Israel's former defense minister Avigdor Lieberman and head of Yisrael Beitenu party hangs his campaign poster outside a polling station in the Israeli West Bank settlement of Nokdim. —AFP

resigned as defense minister over a Gaza ceasefire deal he considered a "capitulation to terror".

Controversial statements

His party won five seats in April's election, but the staunchly secular nationalist



SANAA: Armed Yemeni men gather in the capital Sanaa to show their support to the Shiite Houthi movement against the Saudi-led intervention in their country. —AFP

siles. Iran denies arming the Houthis and says it played no part in Saturday's strike, which raised already simmering tensions in the region between Tehran and its Gulf and U.S. adversaries.

Drones, missiles, rockets

President Hassan Rouhani said the attacks were carried out by "Yemeni people" in response to the Yemen war. The Houthis, who have this year also hit smaller oil targets and

airports in southern Saudi, said they carried out the Aramco strikes with unmanned aerial vehicles. The UN says the Houthis' arsenal now also includes anti-ship cruise missiles, waterborne improvised explosive devices, ballistic and cruise missiles and rockets. The group seized some of the Yemeni armed forces' arsenal when it invaded Sanaa in 2014. But none of these had the range seen today, said Jeremy Binnie, Middle East and Africa editor for Jane's Defense Weekly. —Reuters

Netanyahu, Gantz deadlocked after Israeli elections

JERUSALEM: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his main challenger Benny Gantz were deadlocked yesterday after an Israeli general election, reports said, raising the possibility of a unity government or even the end of the premier's long rule. Various Israeli media reported that Netanyahu's right-wing Likud and Gantz's Blue and White had 32 seats each of parliament's 120 with more than 90 percent of the vote counted.

The reports were citing sources with the elections committee, as that level of results had not been officially posted yet and were not expected today. The results gave no obvious path for either to form a majority coalition, raising the possibility of negotiations towards a unity government. If the results hold, it will be a major setback for Netanyahu, who hoped to form a right-wing coalition similar to his current one as he faces the possibility of corruption charges in the weeks ahead.

With a hoarse voice and appearing haggard after days of intense campaigning, Netanyahu spoke before supporters in the early hours yesterday and said he was prepared for negotiations to form a "strong Zionist government." He seemed to hint at openness to forming a national unity government, but did not specifically say so.

In his speech to supporters in Tel Aviv, Gantz called for a "broad unity government" but cautioned that he was waiting for final results. "We will act to form a broad unity government that will express the will of the people," the former armed forces chief said. "We will begin negotiations and I will speak with everyone." Yesterday morning when journalists approached him as he was on his way for a run, Gantz said "we'll wait for the final results ... and wish Israel a good unity government." Netanyahu had not spoken in public since his early morning speech.

Arab turnout

Ex-defence minister Avigdor Lieberman could prove

Israel's Lieberman: From nightclub bouncer to potential kingmaker

JERUSALEM: Avigdor Lieberman, whose campaign against Israel's religious political parties may make him a kingmaker, has turned from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's closest ally to his biggest headache. Reported results of Israel's general election on Tuesday show both Netanyahu's right-wing Likud and former military chief Benny Gantz's centrist Blue and White without an obvious path to a majority coalition.

That raised the possibility of a unity government — exactly what Lieberman has been calling for. While it might be logical to expect right-winger Lieberman to back Netanyahu, he failed to do so after similar results in April — with the standoff leading to Tuesday's unprecedented second vote. He is fiercely opposed to what he sees as the growing influence of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties, which have backed Netanyahu, and his campaign focused on the need to "make Israel normal again."

Israel's Bedouins vote, but without much hope

NEGEV: A pick-up truck speeds down a road in Israel's dusty, desert south, bringing Sheikh Sayeh Al-Turi and his wife back from the polling station. "Every vote can make a difference," said Turi, a 70-year-old father of 15. Turi was among those voting in Israel's second election in five months on Tuesday, called after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu failed to form a coalition after April polls.

Like some 250,000 Bedouins in Israel's Negev desert, he belongs to the country's Arab minority, descendants of Palestinians who remained on their land after the creation of the country in 1948. Altogether, they represent around 20 percent of Israel's nearly nine million citizens and denounce what they say is discrimination by the Jewish majority.

Wearing a traditional white Bedouin scarf and sporting a large white moustache, Turi sits on a plastic chair near a collection of shrubs in the Negev. He is the head of an unauthorized village in this desert that is home to most of the country's Bedouins living on the margins of Israeli society, often in poverty. Like 34 other villages in the region, Al-Araqeeb-made up of makeshift shelters and lacking access to public water, schools or transport—is not recognized by the Israeli government.

Israeli authorities have been seeking to relocate such villages to authorized towns, but in many cases, residents say they will not be forced to leave their homes. Israel has carried out demolitions of structures it deems illegal, and Turi says his village, where he was born, has been destroyed 161 times. In his village's case, 22 families are refusing to move. Beyond the demolitions, they allege land theft.

'It's my right'

Israeli authorities say they cannot allow illegal construction and want to regularize the Bedouins' living situations, including by improving their conditions. "The current government is extremist and criminal," said Turi, who calls it a "state of occupation" and voted against Netanyahu. "I don't expect anything good from this country," he said. "I only believe God can change things."

His cousin Hakma voted too. "I have hope that there will be change, not only for me but for all the Bedouins of the Negev," she said. "Look where I cook!" she added, pointing to a gas stove on the ground and dishes arranged in an improvised cupboard made from an unplugged refrigerator.

In the nearby town of Shaqef as-Salam, a crowd was gathered under makeshift umbrellas to register to vote. Out of sight, men discreetly distribute ballots for the mainly Arab Joint List alliance. Saba, her face concealed by a black niqab veil like most women around her, says she votes in every election. "It's my right. I'm a citizen like the others," she said. To cast her ballot on Tuesday, she said she travelled some 90 minutes from Bir Haddaj, a Bedouin village recognized by Israel.

'I don't vote'

Some activist groups allege attempts to limit the Bedouin vote. On Sunday, the election committee ruled that Israeli organization Zazim (We Move) could not run buses to bring Arab residents to polling stations since it was not registered as an organization active in the election. Seated on the sidewalk in front of a school being used as a polling station, Bassel Zaanoun was voting "so that they stop demolishing our homes". He said his home has been torn down twice. "For now, we live in a makeshift shack," he added. —AFP

International

World at risk of pandemics that could kill millions, panel warns

'We are losing the race' on climate catastrophe, UN warns

LONDON: The world is facing a mounting threat of disease pandemics that could kill millions and wreak havoc on the global economy, a international expert panel has warned, and governments should work to prepare for and mitigate that risk. The Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB), co-convened by the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO), warned that epidemic-prone viral diseases like Ebola, flu and SARS are increasingly tough to manage in a world dominated by lengthy conflicts, fragile states and forced migration.

"The threat of a pandemic spreading around the globe is a real one," the group said in a report released yesterday. "A quick-moving pathogen has the potential to kill tens of millions of people, disrupt economies and destabilize national security." While some governments and international agencies have made efforts to be vigilant and prepare for major disease outbreaks since the devastating 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, those efforts are "grossly insufficient", the report said.

Gro Harlem Brundtland, a former WHO head who co-chaired the board, added that current approaches to disease and health emergencies are "characterized by a cycle of panic and neglect." The report cited the 1918 "Spanish flu" pandemic, which killed an estimated 50 million people. With vast numbers of people crossing the world on planes every day, an equivalent

air-borne outbreak now could spread globally in less than 36 hours and kill an estimated 50 million to 80 million people, wiping out nearly 5% of the global economy, it said.

In the case of a pandemic, many national health systems - particularly in poor countries - would collapse. "Poverty and fragility exacerbate outbreaks of infectious disease and help create the conditions for pandemics to take hold," said Axel van Trotsenburg, acting chief executive of the World Bank and a member of the panel.

Calling on governments to "heed the lessons these outbreaks are teaching us" and to "fix the roof before the rain comes", Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the WHO, said they should invest in strengthening health systems, boost funds for research into new technologies, improve coordination and rapid communication systems, and monitor progress continually. The WHO also warned earlier this year that another pandemic of flu - which is caused by airborne viruses - is inevitable, and said the world should prepare for it.



Climate catastrophe

Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the world was "losing the race" to avert climate disaster, but that greenhouse gas reduction targets were not out of reach yet. He was speaking during an interview with the Covering Climate Now coalition of media, which includes AFP, days before a UN youth climate summit that will be followed by a meeting with world leaders, where he will urge countries to raise their commitments set under the Paris agreement.

The landmark accord saw countries pledge to limit the long-term rise in the average temperature of the Earth to two degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels, and if possible to 1.5 degrees Celsius. "What I want is to have the whole of society putting pressure on governments to make governments understand they need to run faster, because we are losing the race," he said, adding: "What the science tells us today is that these targets are still reachable."

Guterres said that inaction by some key countries, including the US, could be at least partly offset by action at the sub-national level, for example in the carbon neu-

tral pledges made by the states of California and New York. "I think one of the best things of the US society is the fact that it is a federal country... that decisions are decentralized, so I will be always very strongly in favor of keeping decisions on climate change as decentralized as possible," he said. He noted that major cities, regions and businesses were taking over, and that banks and investment funds were pulling out of the coal and fossil fuel sectors.

Guterres also cited the example of the European Union, where only three countries now oppose the goal of carbon neutrality by 2050, and said that he felt a "new wind" in the push for renewable energy, especially with the growth of solar in India and China. Failure to meet the goals laid out under the Paris agreement could lead to the crossing of so-called "tipping points" such as the thawing of the Earth's permafrost that further accelerate warming, creating a situation where extreme weather events become the norm.

Guterres said he was heartened by growing societal awareness, which meant that hope was not yet lost, "but that requires profound changes in the way we produce food, in the way we power our economies, in the way we organize our cities, in the way we produce energy." "I feel that more and more people, companies, cities, and governments, are understanding that needs to be done," he said. —Agencies

Air-borne outbreak could kill 80 million

intergovernmental policy-advisory body. The majority of marine energy projects are in the demonstration phase even though many decades have passed since humanity first started using water motion for electricity generation in the late 19th century.

Entirely predictable power source

Despite being a renewable, low-polluting energy source, hydropower, which includes ocean and river dam schemes, today accounts for less than a fifth of global electricity supply, and growth in the sector is decelerating. Electricity generation from marine technologies increased by just three percent last year. The IEA estimates it would need to expand by 24 percent per year until 2030 to meet desired targets for renewable energy.

According to France's SHF hydroelectric research institute, tidal energy has the potential to provide 1,250 Terrawatt hours (TWh) of energy per year, up from just one TWh today-about 0.2 percent of France's annual consumption. It has a distinct advantage in being "entirely predictable", Neill said. As it is not dependent on weather variables such as wind or sunshine, the contribution of tidal schemes to the energy mix can be calculated far in advance.

Tidal energy is generated by installing a dam-like structure called a barrage across a bay or lagoon to create a basin which is filled on the incoming high tide and emptied through turbines as the water ebbs out again. The main challenge, observers say, is the cost of erecting these structures. "Marine technologies hold great potential, but additional policy support is needed for RD&D (research and



ALASKA: A landscape is seen near Denali, Alaska. Permafrost which is found to some extent beneath nearly 85 percent of Alaska has been melting due to earth's rising temperatures. —AFP

development) to enable the cost reductions that come with the commissioning of larger commercial plants," says the IEA.

'Enormous environmental impact'

An additional drawback are the effects on plant and animal life. The Rance barrage is 750 meters long and 33 meters wide and blocks the river mouth. "Tidal barrages can change the tidal level in the basin and increase turbidity (the amount of matter in suspension in the water)," said the IEA. The turbines may impair the natural movement of marine animals and disrupt migration patterns. At the Rance plant, "exchanges between the estuary and

the marine environment have been completely blocked, which has had an enormous environmental impact," marine ecologist Antoine Carlier of France's Ifremer institute told AFP.

One solution is to build future tidal plants outside of sensitive estuary zones. Another underused technology that has failed to take off despite its low environmental impact: tidal turbines placed on the sea floor where there is strong tidal flow. "There are problems with sealing, corrosion and maintenance on these underwater machines, which adds to the cost of the projects," explained Ifremer's Marc Le Bouluec. —AFP

Ocean power: A green option failing to make waves

BREST: The tidal power plant on the Rance river in Brittany, France, stands as a reminder of the underexploited potential of energy generation from ocean tides, waves and warmth. Inaugurated at La Richardais on the west coast by Charles de Gaulle in 1966, the plant produces about 500 Gigawatt hours of electricity per year-enough to power 250,000 out of France's 30 million-odd households.

It remains the sole power station of its type in France and one of only two large-scale tidal plants in the world-the second largest after the Sihwa scheme inaugurated in South Korea seven years ago. "Ocean renewable energy has huge global potential, but is a largely untapped resource," Simon Neill of Bangor University's School of Ocean Sciences in Wales said. More than two-thirds of the Earth's surface is covered by oceans and seas.

These offer limitless opportunity for power generation from the kinetic energy of waves and tides, the temperature differences between surface and deeper waters, and the osmosis that occurs when salt- and freshwater meet. Yet ocean power accounts for the smallest portion of renewable energy in the world, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA), an

Tree-planting offset carbon emissions: But no cure-all

PARIS: A few euros, a couple of mouse clicks and a tree is planted - as air travel is increasingly becoming a source of guilt, consumers and companies are looking for other ways to ease their conscience and reduce their carbon footprint. But as more polluting industries join efforts to offset their carbon emissions, the effectiveness of the approach is open to debate, with some critics suggesting that tree-planting schemes are nothing more than a fig leaf.

Once marginal, the offset movement has even reached the arch-enemy of environmentalists: big oil. Shell has ploughed \$300 million (270 million euros) into forest plantations to reduce its carbon footprint by 2-3 percent, Italy's ENI has set an objective of zero net emissions via its forestry investments, and France's Total plans to set up a special "business unit" next year to spend \$100 million annually on compensation efforts. Beyond the grand statements, carbon offset schemes basically follow the same,

simple mechanism. A polluting company or individual purchases a credit equivalent to a ton of carbon dioxide and the purchase price is paid directly or indirectly into an emissions reduction scheme, such as planting trees which absorb CO2 responsible for global warming or investment in renewable energy sources. This is the principle that the civil aviation industry is adopting with its initiative CORSIA (Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation) starting from 2020.

Sixty-five countries have signed up to it so far - equivalent to 87 percent of all international activity in the sector. "There will be a number of eligible carbon reduction schemes and airlines will be able to buy the equivalent tons of CO2 via these projects," says Nathalie Simmenauer, Air France's head of environment and sustainable development. The aim is to reach "neutral carbon growth" - that is to ensure future emissions are held at 2020 levels.

'A cop-out'

While trees are an important tool for regulating the climate, reforestation alone cannot whitewash a company's carbon-emitting activity, say activists. "If you don't reduce your emissions and don't stop deforestation, you're not going to solve anything by merely planting trees," says Stephane Hallaire, president and founder of Reforest'Action,

plunged by 46 percent. With 640 GW, solar now has the greatest capacity - compared with a total of 2,300 GW for all energies (green and fossil fuel) combined - exceeding both coal and gas. It could meet the needs of 80 percent of US households.

Leading the way

China, the world's biggest carbon emitter, is also the number one investor in renewables, ploughing nearly \$760 billion into the sector over the past 10 years. By comparison, the US has invested \$356 billion and Europe \$698 billion. In 2018, 29 countries each invested \$1 billion in the sector, compared to 21 countries two years earlier.

"In an increasing number of countries either wind or solar are the cheapest form of electricity generation," said BNEF's Angus McCrone, noting that natural gas remains competitively priced in the US and coal in India. "Some countries have a split personality on this: they want to retain the market for the fossil fuels that they derive income from, on the other hand they don't want to be left behind in the technological race and do nothing on renewables," he said.

4% of the world's energy

The room for improvement is certainly huge. In 2018,

News in brief

Boy shoots, kills brother

WASHINGTON: Five children were killed or wounded by gunfire in the US state of Texas over the weekend, including a four-year-old boy who was shot dead by his five-year-old brother, according to police and US media reports. The bloodshed showed once again the dangers of firearms in the United States, where 30 percent of adults say they own at least one gun. The incident involving the two brothers occurred Sunday in Fort Worth, Texas where police said the older boy found a gun in his home and fired the shot that killed his little brother. "At this time, there will be no charges filed," police spokesman Jimmy Pollozani said in an email. Several hours later, a six-year-old boy was seriously wounded in nearby Arlington, Texas, by a bullet probably fired by one of his brothers. —AFP

Piracy operation smashed

ROME: Italian authorities said yesterday they have helped smash what they called "the world's largest" pirate streaming TV network with five million customers in Italy alone. The financial police in southern city Naples said in a statement they had arrested 23 people as part of the operation against Xstream Codes, which had a turnover of around 60 million euros (\$66 million). Italian media reported that raids linked to the case had been carried out yesterday in Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece and the Netherlands in collaboration with The Hague-based Eurojust, the EU's judicial cooperation unit. The piracy operation was allegedly created by two Greek nationals, police said in a statement. Italian media reported that the network's mastermind had been arrested in Thessaloniki. The platform decrypted copyright protected television images and re-broadcast them on the Internet "on a wide scale". —AFP

Humberto gains strength

TEXAS: Hurricane Humberto gained strength and speed as it moved closer to Bermuda yesterday but the islands are likely to be spared a direct hit, forecasters said. Hurricane force winds and rains are expected to hit Bermuda in the night but the storm's eye is just shy of the archipelago's western coast, the Miami-based National Hurricane Center (NHC) said. The storm packed 115 mph (185 kph) winds and it was about 285 miles (455 km) west of Bermuda, moving at 16 mph (26 kph) at 5 am yesterday. It is a category 3 hurricane on the 5-step Saffir-Simpson hurricane scale, the NHC said. A hurricane warning is in effect for Bermuda and Humberto's hurricane force winds extend more than 60 miles from its center, with at least 6 inches of rain expected through today. —Reuters

Woman 'killed by partner'

CAEN: A young French woman was killed after being stabbed 14 times by her male partner in front of their three children, prosecutors in northern France said, amid a growing campaign to halt the deaths of women at the hands of their male companions. The man, 37, killed his 27-year-old partner during a dispute in the northern port city of Le Havre on Monday as they were in the process of separation, prosecutors said in a statement late Tuesday. Their children, aged six, four and two, looked on. "The accused confessed to what happened and said he acted out of fear that the victim would prevent him from seeing his children," the statement said. The mother died instantly and the man was arrested shortly afterward. Police sources said the stabbing happened in front of a supermarket. The accused has been placed in a detention and will appear before a judge who will decide on the charges. —AFP

The long road to clean energy

PARIS: The vital transition to a zero-carbon economy is likely to be a long and rocky road. So-called green energy is booming, but not fast enough to curb climate change, which is accelerating at an alarming pace as oil, gas and coal consumption soar.

Booming renewables

Solar, wind, biomass, geothermal, hydro: over the past decade, global production capacity of renewable energies has increased fourfold. Aside from dams of more than 50 megawatts, renewables capacity has reached 1,650 gigawatts, compared with 410 GW in 2009, according to a survey by the Frankfurt School of Management and Bloomberg New Energy Finance (BNEF) ahead of the UN Climate Summit on September 23.

The main reason is the spectacular increase in their cost competitiveness - since 2009, the price of energy generated by solar panels has plummeted by 81 percent and that of electricity generated by terrestrial wind farms has



GAMBOA: German plant physiologist Klaus Winter works at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, in Gamboa, Panama. The institute is developing a project of tropical domes, where extreme climate scenarios are simulated to see how tropical vegetation behaves. —AFP

which has planted 3.8 million trees in nine years. For just three euros, the company will plant a tree adapted to the local biodiversity and purchase part of a carbon credit for a foreign forest conservation project. —AFP



LA RICHARDAIS: Photo shows the external part of the La Rance tidal-turbine power plant in La Richardais, western France. France dreams of harnessing the energy of the oceans, from tides to currents and waves, to produce sustainable electricity. —AFP

renewables were the source of 12.9 percent of the world's electricity, according to the BNEF/Frankfurt report, which estimated that this led to two billion fewer tons of CO2 equivalents being emitted into the atmosphere last year. —AFP

International

Schools, airports closed as Indonesia fires spark fears

Air quality worsens in Singapore

KUALA LUMPUR: Toxic haze from Indonesian forest fires closed schools and airports across the country and in neighboring Malaysia yesterday, while air quality worsened in Singapore just days before the city's Formula One motor race. Illegal fires to clear land for agriculture are blazing out of control on Sumatra and Borneo islands, with Jakarta deploying thousands of security forces and water-bombing aircraft to tackle them. Indonesian blazes belch smog across Southeast Asia annually, but this year's are the worst since 2015 and have added to concerns about wildfire outbreaks worldwide exacerbating global warming.

Yesterday, air quality deteriorated to "very unhealthy" levels on an official index in many parts of peninsular Malaysia, to the east of Sumatra, with the Kuala Lumpur skyline shrouded by dense smog. Nearly 1,500 schools were closed across Malaysia due to the air pollution, with over one million pupils affected, according to the education ministry. A growing number of Malaysians were suffering health problems due to the haze, with authorities saying there had been a sharp increase in outpatients at government hospitals—many suffering dry and itchy eyes.

Indonesian authorities said hundreds of schools in hard-hit Riau province on Sumatra were shut, without providing a precise number, while about 1,300 were closed in Central Kalimantan province on Borneo. Borneo is shared between Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. Poor visibility closed seven airports in the Indonesian part of Borneo, the transport ministry in Jakarta said. Scores of flights have already been diverted and cancelled in the region in recent days due to the smog.

Singapore smog race?

Air quality in Singapore worsened to unhealthy levels and a white smog obscured the striking waterfront skyline, featuring the Marina Bay Sands casino resort with its three towers and boat-shaped top level. The worsening pollution increased fears that this weekend's



SINGAPORE: This overview shows the Marina Bay Sands hotel and resort blanketed by haze in Singapore yesterday. —AFP

Formula One race may be affected. Organizers say the possibility of haze is one of the issues in their contingency plan for Sunday's showpiece night race, but have not given further details.

The city-state's tourism board said spectators would be able to buy masks as protection from the haze if conditions did not improve and assistance would be provided for those who feel unwell, the Today news portal reported. The fires have sparked tensions between Indonesia and Malaysia. Indonesia's environment minister initially suggested the haze was from Malaysian fires despite satellite data showing hundreds of blazes in Indonesia and only a handful in its neighbor, prompting anger from her Malaysian counterpart.

Indonesia later sealed off dozens of plantations where it said fires were blazing, including some owned by Malaysia-based firms, deepening the row. But Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who has struck a diplomatic tone throughout the crisis, said Malaysia may pass legislation forcing its companies to tackle fires on



PEKANBARU: Forest fire continues to blaze in Pekanbaru in Riau province yesterday. Toxic haze from Indonesian forest fires closed schools and airports across the country and in neighboring Malaysia yesterday. —AFP

plantations abroad. Malaysia wants its firms with sites overseas to put out blazes contributing to the haze, he said, adding: "Of course, if we find they are unwilling to take action, we may have to pass a law to make them responsible."

The Indonesian government has insisted it is doing all it can to fight the blazes. But this year's fires have

been worsened by dry weather and experts believe there is little chance of them being extinguished until the onset of the rainy season in October. Indonesia's meteorology, climate and geophysics agency said yesterday that over 1,000 hotspots—areas of intense heat detected by satellite that indicate a likely fire—had been sighted, most of them on Sumatra. —AFP

Scenic Kashmir at the heart of India-Pakistani animosity

KASHMIR: The Muslim-majority Himalayan region of Kashmir has been at the heart of more than 70 years of animosity since the partition of the British colony of India into the separate countries of Muslim Pakistan and majority Hindu India. Here are some facts about the region:

Kashmir divided

India rules the populous Kashmir Valley and the Hindu-dominated region around Jammu city, Pakistan controls a wedge of territory in the west, and China holds a thinly populated high-altitude area in the north.

Dispute

India and Pakistan have been fighting over Kashmir since 1947, when they gained independence from Britain. At the time of the partition, Kashmir was expected to become part of Pakistan, like other Muslim-majority regions. However, its Hindu ruler wanted to stay independent and following an invasion

by Muslim tribesmen from Pakistan, he hastily acceded to India in return for help against the invaders, sparking war.

Wars

Since the war sparked by partition, India and Pakistan have fought two other wars. One, in 1965, was again sparked by their dispute over Kashmir. A third, in 1971, largely over what became Bangladesh.

Divisions

A UN-monitored ceasefire line agreed in 1949 and formalized into a Line of Control (LOC) in 1972 splits Kashmir into two areas - one administered by India, one by Pakistan. Their armies face off over the LOC. In 1999, the two countries fought along the LOC in what some analysts called an undeclared war. Their forces exchanged regular gunfire until a truce in late 2003, which largely held for years. Clashes have become more frequent in recent years.

The insurgency

Many Muslims in Indian Kashmir have long resented what they see as heavy-handed New Delhi rule. In 1989, an insurgency by Islamist militants began. Some fought to join Pakistan, some called for independence for Kashmir. India responded by pouring troops into the region. India also accused Pakistan of backing the separatists, in particular

by arming and training fighters in its part of Kashmir and sending them into Indian Kashmir. Pakistan denies that, saying it only offers political support to the Kashmiri people.

Indian Kashmir

New Delhi claims the whole of Jammu and Kashmir as an integral part of India because the Hindu maharaja agreed to join India in October 1947. Until very recently, India governed its part of Kashmir as the northernmost state of Jammu and Kashmir. It had special status, enshrined in the constitution, allowing it to make its own laws. But on Aug 5, India scrapped that status, splitting the state into the two directly administered territories, one formed by Jammu and Kashmir, and the other consisting of the Buddhist-dominated enclave of Ladakh.

Pakistani Kashmir

Consists of the smaller Azad Kashmir, or Free Kashmir. Regions to the north, known as the Northern Areas, or Gilgit-Baltistan, which Pakistan administers separately, also formed part of the state before independence. Pakistan says a UN-mandated referendum should take place to settle the dispute over the region, believing the majority of Kashmiris would opt to join Pakistan.

China

Controls a third section, the remote Aksai Chin plateau, historically part of

Ladakh. India fought a border war over Aksai Chin with China in 1962, after China occupied a 38,000 square km (14,000 square mile) chunk of territory.

Geography

Parts of Kashmir are strikingly beautiful with forest-clad mountains, rivers running through lush valleys and lakes ringed by willow trees. The western Himalayan region is bounded by Pakistan to the west, Afghanistan to the northwest, China to the northeast, and India to the south.

Population

Twelve and half million in India's Jammu and Kashmir and more than 3 million in Pakistani Kashmir. About 70 percent are Muslims and the rest Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists.

Area

With an area of 222,236 square km (85,783 sq miles), it is almost as big as Britain. India controls 45 percent, in the south and east, Pakistan about a third in the north and west, and China the rest.

Economy

About 80 percent agriculture-based. Crops include rice, maize, apples, saffron. The area is also known for handicrafts such as carpets, wood-carving, woollens and silk. Tourism, once flourishing, has been badly hit by the conflict. —Reuters

Prison becomes 'second home' for Turkish cartoonist

ISTANBUL: Renowned Turkish cartoonist Musa Kart says he has spent as much time in prison and courthouses as he has at work since President Recep Tayyip Erdogan came to power. His latest stint in jail started in April, after an appeals court upheld his sentence of three years and nine months for "helping terrorist organizations". Released last week pending another appeal, Kart told AFP: "For 15 years, prisons and courthouses have become a second home to me."

Kart, who was recognized last year by the Swiss Foundation Cartooning for Peace, was among 14 journalists and staff from the renowned opposition paper Cumhuriyet convicted in the case. He was initially arrested in 2016 after Erdogan launched a major crackdown on opponents in the wake of a failed coup. "I have spent almost the same amount of time in court corridors as I spent in the paper. It is very unfortunate," he said.

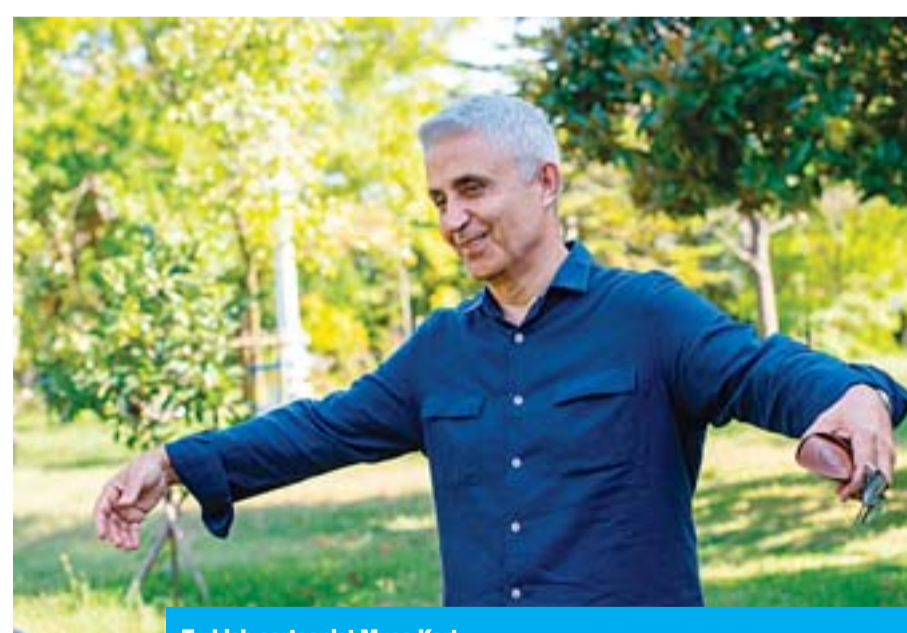
Unfailingly optimistic and modest, Kart refuses to be run down by his ordeals, and says he always made an effort to look his best for prison visitors. "I never welcomed my visitors in a hopeless state," he said. "I would shave, pick my cleanest shirt from my modest wardrobe and welcome them

with open arms. We would spend our time telling jokes." His morale was boosted by the knowledge he had done nothing wrong. "If you believe that your position is right, if you have an inner peace about your past actions, then it is not that difficult to stand prison conditions," he said.

'A political shadow'

Kart has been in and out of trouble since Erdogan took power in 2003. His first lawsuit came in 2005 over a cartoon portraying Erdogan, then prime minister, as a cat entangled in a ball of wool. "I have drawn cartoons for over 40 years... I did it in the past with other political leaders, but I was never the subject of a court case," Kart said. "The frame of tolerance has seriously narrowed today." The current case against him claims he contacted members of the Gulen movement accused of orchestrating the failed coup in 2016.

It also says the 14 Cumhuriyet staffers had conspired to change the paper's editorial policy to support the Gulenists, as well as Kurdish rebels and the ultra-left Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front. "Today the accusations of terrorism have gone well beyond a realistic point," Kart said. "When you take a look at my cartoons, you see how much I am against any kind of terrorist organization and how seriously and strongly I criticize them." Rights advocates including the Reporters Without Borders have called on



Turkish cartoonist Musa Kart

Turkey to revise its anti-terrorism and defamation laws, which they claim are abused to silence opponents.

Cumhuriyet-Turkey's oldest daily founded in 1924 - is not owned by a business tycoon but by an independent foundation, making it an easier target for authorities. The paper's former editor-in-chief Can Dundar fled to Germany after being convicted in 2016 over an article alleging that Turkey had supplied weapons to Islamist groups in Syria. It has its own internal problems, too-Kart and some of the others actually quit the paper last year over disagreements

with the new management.

But the case has added to the chilling effect that has infected the whole of the media in Turkey, which has the highest number of imprisoned journalists in the world. No date has been set for the next appeal, and Kart has no idea how the saga will end. "Everyone knows that there has been a political shadow hanging over our case," he said. Whatever happens, he said his focus would remain on drawing. "Cartoons are really a very strong language because you can find a way to express yourself under any circumstances, even under pressure." —AFP

News in brief

Open-air lessons for pupils

TAEZ: Twenty Yemeni pupils listen to their teacher with textbooks balanced in their laps as they sit under trees in their southern village, where the school building remains unfinished. In war-torn Yemen, the students of Al-Kashar began a new school term without a building, tables or chairs. But their teachers are still committed to providing them with an education. Wearing a white shirt and baseball cap, teacher Abdelsalam El-Mahmudi squints in the sunlight as he holds a large sheet of white paper for a lesson on Islamic theory. His colleague, English teacher Mogebe Ali Mohsen, writes the alphabet on a breeze block wall. Financing for the construction of classrooms was interrupted by Yemen's war, which has engulfed the country since 2015 when Saudi Arabia and its allies launched an offensive against Iran-aligned Houthi rebels. —AFP

Plane missing in Indonesia

TIMIKA: An Indonesian cargo plane with four people on board lost contact with air traffic control yesterday, an official said, the latest incident to hit the country's poor aviation record. The Twin Otter DHC6-400, set off from the city of Timika yesterday at 10:39 am and was headed to Ilaga, a mountainous region in the remote eastern province of Papua and was scheduled to arrive 50 minutes after taking off. "After 2.5 hours, there has been no information from the nearest airport on the plane's whereabouts, we decided to announce the plane has lost contact," local transportation agency head, Yan Purba told Metro TV. The aircraft was carrying three crew members and one passenger as well as 1.7 tons of rice. Search and rescue have been assembled for the missing plane which was flying in a good weather condition, Purba said. —AFP

Palestinian waving knife shot

JERUSALEM: A Palestinian woman brandishing a knife at the Qalandia checkpoint between Jerusalem and the northern West Bank was shot dead by Israeli security forces yesterday, police and medical sources said. Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said an unidentified "terrorist" had approached security forces at the vehicle passage of the checkpoint, ignoring calls to stop and pulling a knife before being shot in the leg. Medics treated her at the scene and then evacuated her for further treatment, a police statement said. Jerusalem's Hadassah hospital pronounced her dead. Police distributed a picture of a yellow-handled knife they said she had held. —AFP

Duterte warns ex-cons

MANILA: More than a thousand ex-prisoners prematurely freed under a controversial law in the Philippines will be captured "dead or alive" if they do not surrender before today deadline, President Rodrigo Duterte said. His government is scrambling to track down the former inmates - including convicted murderers and rapists - who were released early due to what he concedes was a wrong application of the law and possible corruption of prison officers. Earlier this month Duterte set a September 19 deadline for the ex-convicts to return to jail or face the consequences, and put a one million-peso (\$19,000) price on their heads. "The one million prize is available to those who can capture them dead or alive," Duterte told reporters on Tuesday night. "But maybe dead would be a better option. I will pay you smiling," added the president, known for his brutal anti-drug crackdown that has claimed thousands of lives. —AFP

Analysis

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Garments for lease: 'Rental' apparel bring wrinkles for stores

Lisa Balitto, 54, says she has virtually stopped buying clothes ever since she started renting them. The New Jersey-based museum publicist spends \$277 a month on three subscriptions, including one from New York & Company, a women's mid-price clothing chain with hundreds of US stores. This is less than what she previously spent, she said. "I still have clothes in my closet from when I was buying, but I can't tell you the last time I bought anything," she said.

From New York & Company, owned by RTW Retailwinds Inc, to Bloomingdale's and Banana Republic of Gap Inc, more retailers are offering to lend out their clothing for a monthly rental rate. Even fast-fashion stalwart H&M, with nearly 5,000 stores globally, said in August it would include a limited rental service featuring its premium-priced collection made from recycled fibers in a revamped central Stockholm store.

The services cater to a growing number of people like Balitto who want to purchase just a few items and rent the rest. But the strategy comes with risks. It costs a lot to ship items back and forth, and it remains to be seen if rental clothes will cannibalize retail sales over the longer term. Fees roughly range from \$50 to \$160 per month to rent several items, with an option to buy at a discount. While most services are online, some stores are creating space for people to drop off, browse or collect clothing available for lease.

San Francisco-based fashion rental service Le Tote bought the operations of Lord + Taylor stores from struggling Canadian department store operator Hudson's Bay Co last month. Inside the next nine months, it plans to build drop-off lockers and large display areas in 38 Lord + Taylor department stores. Competitor Rent the Runway has expanded its physical drop-off network over the past year with 25 points for customers to return garments in its own stores plus some WeWork locations and Nordstrom stores in the Los Angeles area.

Rent the Runway can turn around an item in as little as a day, a company spokeswoman said. The company opened a 300,000 square foot fulfillment center in Texas in July in addition to its New Jersey facility to deal with increased demand. The risk is rental services could take spend away from traditional sales in a sector where changing shopping habits and falling prices have nearly halved the percentage spent on apparel by the average US consumer over the past 30 years.

In addition, physical stores are struggling with online competition from players like Amazon. Year-to-date announced store closures have already exceeded the total recorded for 2018, said CoreSight Research in a recent note. The US garment rental market, excluding costumes, was worth \$1 billion in 2018, less than 1 percent of the total apparel market, according to GlobalData. But it grew 24 percent in that year compared to 5 percent for the wider clothing market, data shows.

That growth can come with a hefty price tag. At Le Tote, once subscribers drop off boxes containing up to 15 items of clothing, a chain of activity will start to ready items for their next assignment. Le Tote currently ships boxes to its online subscribers using USPS Priority. "Shipping is our biggest cost, so having these stores as touch points for customers to come in, pick up and drop off significantly reduces our shipping costs," Chief Executive Rakesh Tandon said in an interview.

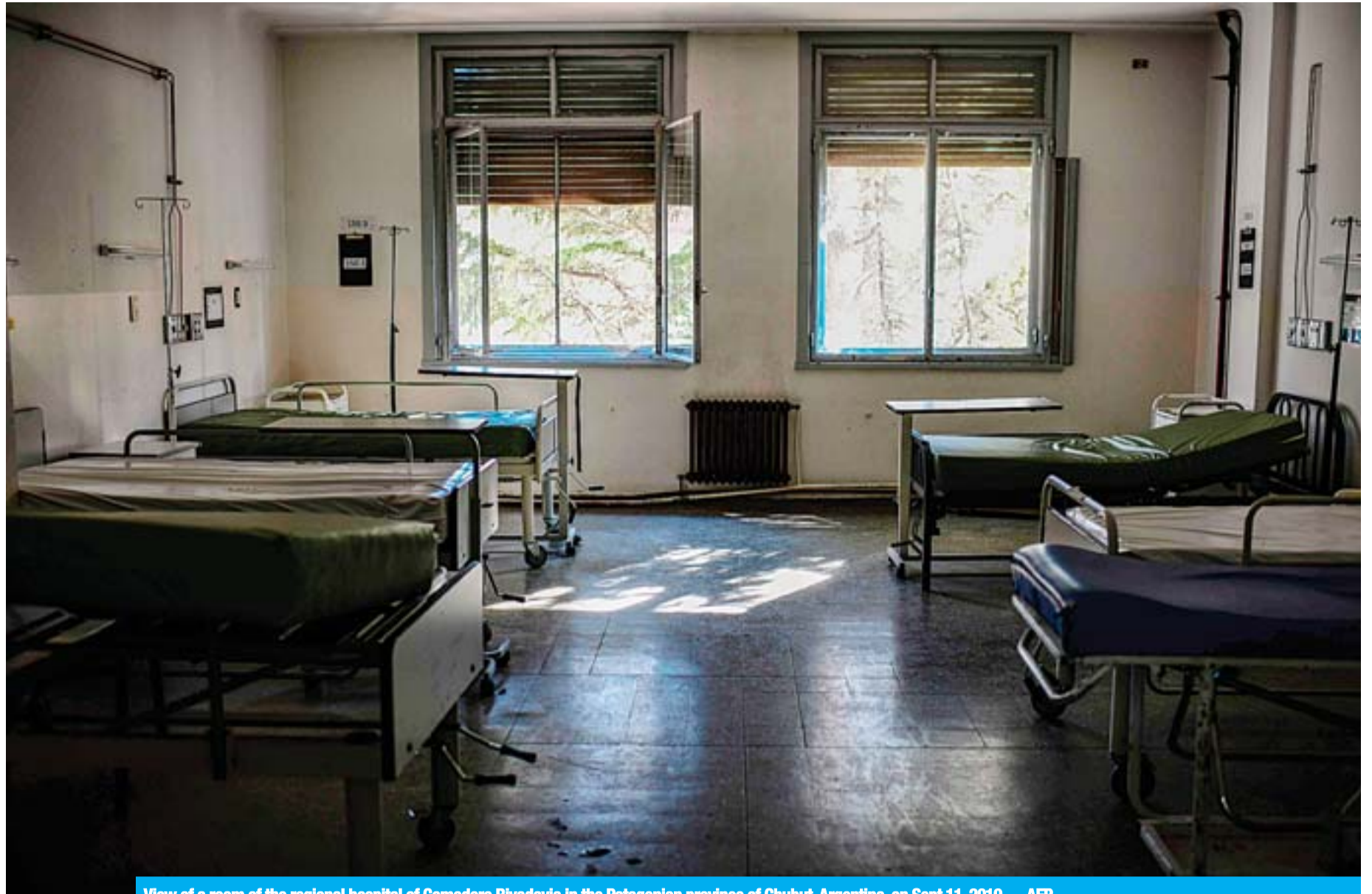
CaaStle, a New York-based company that provides technology and logistics for the New York & Company, Bloomingdale's and Banana Republic rental services amongst others, branched out from its own Gwynnie Bee women's apparel business in 2018 to set up rental services for others. Contrary to analysts' concerns that rental could cannibalize sales, offering rental captures more revenue as consumers buy clothes in addition to their subscription, said CaaStle Chief Executive Officer Christine Hunsicker in an interview.

Rental platforms buy clothing wholesale from brands, but many are introducing revenue-sharing models whereby platforms allow brands to upload items for lease and then take care of cleaning and delivery in return for a share in the revenue. This model is better for cash-flow but not as profitable, said Le Tote CEO Tandon. Le Tote raised around \$75 million over the past five years from investors including Azure Capital, Sway Ventures and Google Ventures, and has been profitable at the operating level for over three years, he said.

Jeans maker Levi Strauss & Co, which operates under a revenue-sharing model with Rent the Runway, has increased offerings on the platform from 12 items when it launched in November to 29 currently, including skinny jeans and embroidered denim jackets. "When the product comes back, they put it back to like-new," Levi's Chief Executive Chip Bergh said in an interview. Brands from Levi's to upmarket US label Rebecca Taylor - whose silk dresses retail at hundreds of dollars - are putting more stock to rent to open new revenue streams, capture new customers and harvest valuable feedback, they say.

Tiara Phillips, an 18-year-old college student from a small town in Georgia in the southern United States pays \$69.95 a month for her subscription to Express, a fashion mall brand whose rental service is also powered by CaaStle. Phillips said she has never been to one of Express's network of over 600 physical stores, but has rented items ranging from leggings to dresses. "They tell you not even to wash it, to just wear it and send it back and then you get a new box, so I don't really have to do anything; I can just sit at home," she said. —Reuters

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View of a room of the regional hospital of Comodoro Rivadavia in the Patagonian province of Chubut, Argentina, on Sept 11, 2019. —AFP

Strikes as recession squeezes oil-rich Chubut

Shuttered schools, hospital services pared back to a minimum, officials on strike - Argentina's southern oil-producing province of Chubut is a microcosm of the country's crippling economic crisis. The debt-burdened Patagonian province is suffering the same explosive cocktail of galloping inflation, a plummeting peso and colossal debt. Public servants in the country's oil hub, whether teachers, doctors, judges or police, are no longer paid on time.

"I don't know when this is going to end," said an exasperated Yael Matos, a teacher in the provincial capital Comodoro Rivadavia, 1,800 km south of Buenos Aires. Matos is one of Chubut's 60,000 civil servants who have yet to receive their salary for August. "We don't have a payment date, we were supposed to receive our salary today, but that didn't happen," she told AFP.

On a classroom blackboard, the date "August 1" is scrawled in chalk, marking the last day of classes before a teachers' strike

now stretching into its ninth week. "There is empathy from society," says Matos, who admits that the school year - which in the southern hemisphere runs from March to December - is all but lost.

Limited healthcare

Healthcare is among the frontline public services to suffer in Chubut, with skeletal staffing levels at the Comodoro Rivadavia regional hospital, where around a thousand staff are on strike. Staff complain about a lack of clean sheets for patients, and supplies of IV bags pile up in the hallways unattended. Only one elevator works; the other collapsed a few years ago and the shaft is now blocked off with wood. The cutbacks have badly affected union-assisted medical care, now only available three times a week. "You have to calculate when you get sick, it's grim," said Gladys Diaz of the hospital's mental health department. In the morgue, autopsies have been curtailed due to a shortage of supplies.

"This hospital has no income, no supplies, no infrastructure," said Diaz. "We don't get our salaries, or any increases. All we want is to be paid for the work we do," said Anita Fernandez, a warehouse clerk at the hospital.

'People can't pay'

In the city, where state oil company YPF was founded in 1922, the decline in commercial activity is palpable. "People can't pay because they are not being paid themselves," says Maria, a sales assistant in a store. Protests and pickets that form part of Argentina's daily economic life have also affected oil industry activity. "The industry has suffered a reduction of between 30 and 40 percent," said David Klappenbach of the Petrolero Jerarquico trade union.

Chubut, with a population of nearly 600,000, produces 30 percent of Argentina's oil and 50 percent of its natural gas. Some 18,000 workers are employed in 17 firms exploiting its natural resources.

Klappenbach says the region has also lost out to the giant Vaca Muerta shale gas deposit in neighboring Neuquen province, where the government has invested heavily.

In much the same way as the country's center-right President Mauricio Macri sought a \$57 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund, Chubut availed itself of a \$700 million loan it has been unable to repay. Chubut is now the province with the highest debt per capita - as 80 percent of its debt is in dollar bonds in a country whose peso currency has depreciated by more than 65 percent since the beginning of 2018.

"Revenues did not fall so much, but the expenses increased 80 percent in the first half of 2019 in relation to the same period the previous year, and a large part is due to servicing the public debt," said Facundo Ball, director of the economics faculty at the National University of Patagonia. Nearly 70 percent of its oil revenue goes towards debt repayment. —AFP

Can Saudi loss be US oil producers' gain? Not so fast...

Even though weekend attacks on Saudi oil facilities cut that country's output in half, American petroleum producers appear neither ready nor willing to fill the void and capture new market share for themselves. The so-called fracking boom - in which new technologies unlocked tremendous oil and gas deposits in shale formations - has more than doubled US output to almost 12 million barrels per day over the last decade. The United States is now the world's largest producer and regularly exports more than three million barrels per day as well.

Why not jump at the chance to make up for the sudden shortfall while Saudi Arabia recovers from the attack, which knocked an estimated five percent of global capacity offline? Not so fast, producers and analysts say. Holding on to spare capacity for just such an occasion "implies having existing oil fields that are being willfully kept offline until their production is needed by the market," Jesse Mercer of the energy

intelligence firm Enverus wrote in a blog post. "That is simply not how US tight oil production works."

This is also not something US officials can simply dictate. "US production comes from hundreds of thousands of individual wells controlled by hundreds of privately owned and publicly traded companies," said Mercer. Ramping up output would mean spending more on rigs, crews and infrastructure, he said. "None of this can be done overnight."

Mike Wirth, head of the US supermajor Chevron, drove the point home in an interview with CNBC. "You can't just flip a switch and see more oil coming into the market," he said. "There is months of lead time in setting up new rigs." While it was early to assess the market implications of the attack on Saudi facilities, "the fundamental backdrop has not changed," he said.

A 'short-term event'

Indeed, the disruption to Saudi output is mere blip on the radar, said Harold Hamm of the Oklahoma oil producer Continental Resources. "We want to meet demand. That is for sure," he also told CNBC. But "short term bites and or shortages" will not change a company's budgeting for the year. "We are going to stay where we are for the time being." RT Dukes of the research consultancy Wood Mackenzie told AFP the outlook for demand was already dimming, with mar-

ket participants fearing a week economy could create oversupply next year. "That is not removed in a short-term event," he said. A rapid increase in investment "would take sustained and much higher oil prices than where we are today."

Smaller producers are also reticent as for several months their creditors have been pushing them to cut spending and raise revenues. And, though it has slowed, US crude oil production is still growing. It is forecast to reach 13 million barrels per day in the first quarter of next year, up from an estimated 11.8 million barrels per day this year, official figures show.

With new pipelines now operational, the country has partly removed one of the main obstacles to greater production: The lack of infrastructure to deliver crude from the Permian Basin, an oil rich region covering parts of Texas and New Mexico, to the Gulf of Mexico. Still, according to Mercer, export capacity at US terminals in the gulf is for now capped at 4.5 million barrels per day. He also says US shale oil and Saudi petroleum are not of the same chemical composition.

While in the short-term producers do not expect to bump up capital spending, they will still enjoy higher prices, which shot up nearly 15 percent on Monday before paring some of these gains on Tuesday. For the moment, higher prices should help fatten margins and help hedge against future price drops. —AFP

France pledges billions in fight to halt start-up drain

How do you stop European tech firms from moving to the US once they start eyeing the big time? Part of the solution is finding them access to funding at home. French President Emmanuel Macron has made the continent's latest move to muster help for homegrown start-ups, promising five billion euros (\$5.5 billion) of tech investments over the next three years. The funds, pledged by banks, insurers and other big investors, include two billion euros earmarked for "late stage" projects requiring significant amounts usually out of reach to burgeoning EU firms.

"The battle we're fighting is one of sovereignty," Macron told tech executives and venture capitalists at an Elysee Palace dinner on Tuesday. "If we don't build our own champions in all new areas - digital, artificial intelligence - our choices... will be dictated by others," he said. Officials across Europe fear being left behind as American giants, and more recently Chinese firms, increasingly dominate the cutting-edge technologies crucial to future economic growth.

Young European start-ups generally have plenty of access to venture capital, with \$23 billion (20.8 billion euros) invested last year, according to the investment firm Atomico. The problem is that after getting an idea off the ground, firms often struggle to find the larger amounts of money needed to propel a business

into the big leagues. "There aren't any large funds with the capacity for putting up 50, 100 or 200 million euros," Olivier Novasque of Sidetrade, a business software editor, told AFP.

"But in the digital realm, you have to be thinking right away about conquering the world" and quickly scaling up operations before a rival does, said Novasque, a former vice president of the Tech in France trade body.

French 'unicorns'?

US laws also make it easier to give employees stock options, an attractive tool for young firms that are ramping up operations. "Policies that currently govern employee ownership across Europe are often archaic and highly ineffective. Some are so punishing that they put our startups at a major disadvantage to their peers in Silicon Valley and elsewhere," the Notoptional collective of tech entrepreneurs wrote in an open letter in January.

As a result, European firms often jump the Atlantic to tap into the much deeper American capital markets, where pension funds and other institutional investors are more willing to make big bets on tech. In the first quarter of this year alone, nearly \$31 billion was poured into start-ups in the US, with so-called "mega rounds" of financings larger than \$100 million making up 29 percent of the total, according to TechCrunch.

In Europe, however, pension funds are barely present in the tech sector, with Atomico estimating they have invested just \$350 million a year in aggregate since 2013. "That's less than 0.01 percent of total assets under management of European pension funds of around \$4 trillion," the firm wrote in its State of European



French President Emmanuel Macron delivers a speech during the European startup ecosystem event 'France Digitale Day 2019' conference at the Elysee Palace in Paris on Tuesday. —AFP

Tech report in December. "We can write checks of up to 45 million euros," said Jean-Marc Patouillaud of Partech Ventures, a major investor in French start-ups. "But you have to be able to raise more than that, and we wouldn't want to be on our own" for major capital-raising, he said recently on BFM television.

If firms had access to bigger investment pools, "there's no reason why we can't see tech giants emerge in Europe," said Yann du Rusquec, managing director of investment firm Eurazeo Croissance. "The competence and ambitions of European entrepreneurs are real-

ly quite strong - that wasn't so much the case 10 or 20 years ago," he added. Macron said Tuesday his ambition is to see 25 "unicorns" - firms valued at more than \$1 billion ahead of expected share offerings - by 2025.

As his digital affairs minister Cedric O regularly points out, the last time an unlisted French company was valued that high was in 1996, with software group Dassault Systemes. "The important thing is for Emmanuel Macron to send a message to the entire French financial sector, that it has to invest in tech," du Rusquec said. —AFP

Business

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JEDDAH: Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman (center) arrives for a press conference in the Red Sea coastal city of Jeddah on Tuesday. — AFP

Oil prices drop on quick Saudi recovery plan

IEA sees no need for emergency oil stock release

LONDON: Oil prices retreated yesterday, extending the previous day's decline after Saudi Arabia said it would quickly restore full production following last weekend's attacks on its facilities.

Tension in the Middle East remained elevated, however, after Saudi Arabia said it would provide evidence on Wednesday linking Iran to the attacks. The United States had already said it believed the attacks against the world's top oil exporter originated in southwestern Iran.

Iran has denied involvement in the strikes. Brent crude oil futures were down 77 cents, or 1.21 percent, at \$63.78 a barrel by 1241 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were down 92 cents, or 1.55 percent, at \$58.42.

Oil prices tumbled 6 percent on Tuesday after the Saudi energy minister said the kingdom had restored

oil supplies to customers at their level before the attacks by drawing from its inventories. Saturday's attacks effectively shut 5 percent of global oil output.

"As much as the Saudis have downplayed the extent of the latest outages, we should not be lulled into a false sense of security," said Stephen Brennock, of London-based oil brokerage PVM. "Tensions in the region are still running high and the specter of a further escalation is hanging over the oil market."

Challenging times

Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said on Tuesday that Saudi Arabia's average oil production in September and October would be 9.89 million barrels per day (bpd) and that this month's oil supply commitments to customers would be met fully. Production capacity would reach 11 million bpd by the

end of September and 12 million bpd by the end of November, the kingdom's production capacity before the attacks, he said.

Relations between the United States and Iran have deteriorated since US President Donald Trump pulled out of the Iran nuclear accord last year and reimposed sanctions on its oil exports. "The oil market is facing challenging times. Recent attacks on oil facilities in Saudi Arabia have painfully demonstrated the risks to oil supply, which is why short-term price spikes are possible at any time," said Commerzbank analyst Carsten Fritsch.

Still, fundamental supply and demand balances are deteriorating, Fritsch added, forecasting Brent oil prices of \$60 a barrel next year. "Demand growth is weakening, oil supply outside OPEC is rising significantly and OPEC+'s production discipline has faded

recently," he said. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and a number of other oil producers including Russia agreed last year to cut output by 1.2 million bpd to reduce global stocks and prop up prices.

IEA view

The International Energy Agency currently does not see a need to release emergency oil stocks following a weekend attack on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities, the agency's head said yesterday.

"Currently the markets are well supplied and at this point we do not see the need to take such action," Fatih Birol said in a webinar. IEA member countries hold about 1.55 billion barrels of emergency stocks in government-controlled agencies, which amount to 15 days of total world oil demand, Birol said. — Reuters

Zain teams up with Microsoft to drive digital transformation in Kuwait SME sector

Kuwait's leading digital service provider to fuel entrepreneurship, job creation and innovation with Microsoft cloud services, including advanced artificial intelligence solutions

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, yesterday announced a partnership with Microsoft to accelerate digital transformation among its SME customers, through the provision of trusted cloud services. The partnership will allow existing Zain customers to benefit from launch offers and special promotions while connecting Kuwait's entrepreneurial community to the advanced tools and technology platforms needed to grow and thrive in the global digital economy. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will gain access to solutions such as Office 365 and other Business Intelligence tools in order better empower their employees, engage their customers, optimize operations and transform products and services.

Eaman Al-Roudhan, Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer, commented: "Our collaboration with Microsoft comes under the umbrella of Zain's vision to expand our strategic partnerships ecosystem with global technology leaders around the world to offer the latest and most advanced business solutions to the Kuwaiti entrepreneurial community. It is of paramount importance to us that we support homegrown talents in their endeavors to create jobs and make their mark on the regional and global stages."

The SME sector in Kuwait is one of the key drivers

to steadfast economic diversification. For Kuwait, the need to push for SME's - in addition to large-sized enterprises - that are focused on the technological sector is also of paramount importance, in terms of strengthening the nation's innovation capabilities. In line to this objective, the government has also established national funds to help create jobs, increase private partnerships and upscale income diversification within small, medium, and large sized enterprises.

Recently, Kuwait has sought to expand its SME sectors to support national economic-diversification programs," said Charles Nahas, Regional General Manager, Middle East Cluster (MEC) Microsoft. "Microsoft remains committed to helping Kuwaiti SMEs achieve more through the power of digital transformation. As the result of our partnership with Zain, the trusted Microsoft Cloud will help these businesses engage customers, empower employees, optimize operations and reinvent products and services."

Zain's Microsoft Office 365 bundle will comprise of a number of subscription-based innovative solutions that include Office 365 and Microsoft Exchange Online, both which offer increased productivity, efficiency and reduced costs, both on-premise and on-cloud. Businesses of all sizes can enjoy access to their productivity applications anywhere and at any time

with all the necessary upgrades at no cost. Customers will also have access to a variety of complementary services, including 24/7 support and consultancy from Zain and Microsoft's teams. A number of additional services are also available for customers to ensure they get the best out of their service experience, such as on-boarding and migration as well as mobility bundles, including the all-new revolutionary 5G technology.

During October 2018, Zain signed a partnership agreement with Microsoft to offer various cloud-based services to large enterprises and small-medium businesses across Kuwait. The partnership was signed during the 38th edition of The Gulf Information Technology Exhibition (GITEX Technology Week 2018). The international event, hosted in the United Arab Emirates, was organized by the Dubai World Trade Centre, and featured the biggest global companies, organizations, and entities from the Telecom and IT industry. As part of this partnership, Zain packaged its own tools, products and services, and combined them with Microsoft's cloud solutions into one offering for its customers in the country, making the most out of the intelligent cloud.

The move comes at a time when Kuwait and other GCC nations are engaged in economic expansions



fuelled by transformative technologies like cloud and artificial intelligence. In a 2018 Microsoft digital transformation survey among more than 1,300 regional ICT decision makers, almost half (48 percent) said their organization had yet to move any of its IT infrastructure to the cloud. However, more than 73 percent plan to do so in 2019.

The results reflect a widespread acceleration in migration to the cloud and related technologies, such as artificial intelligence. Around two in five Middle East organizations (39 percent) have already adopted AI solutions and more than one third (37 percent) are planning to adopt in 2019. Because of these findings, and others like them, Microsoft decided to build two dedicated cloud datacenters in the neighboring United Arab Emirates, to serve Middle East customers.

Business

Airbus raises its estimate of new aircraft needed for next 20 years

Airline industry aims to freeze its carbon footprint at its 2020 level

PARIS: Airbus yesterday increased its estimate of the number of new aircraft needed over the coming two decades as airlines seek more fuel-efficient planes even as it trimmed its forecast for the increase in demand for air travel. In its latest Global Market Forecast for the next 20 years, the European aircraft maker said it expects air traffic to grow by 4.3 percent annually, a drop from the 4.4 percent annual growth it forecast last year.

Nevertheless, Airbus now expects even higher demand for new aircraft than it did last year thanks to airlines increasingly retiring older planes for new ones that offer lower operating costs as they consume less fuel. Airbus anticipates demand for new aircraft over the coming two decades at 39,210 planes, a rise of nearly 2,000 from its forecast last year, due a sharp increase in replacements. Unlike last year, it did not provide a cost estimate.

"Developments in superior fuel efficiency are further driving demand to replace existing less fuel efficient aircraft," said Airbus in a statement.

However, it scaled back the number of planes it expects airlines to acquire to meet growth in demand for air travel by more than 1,500 aircraft to 25,000. "Economies thrive on air transportation. People and goods want to connect," said Christian Scherer, Airbus Chief Commercial Officer and Head of Airbus International.

"Globally, commercial aviation stimulates GDP growth and supports 65 million livelihoods, demon-

strating the immense benefits our business brings to all societies and global trade," he added.

At a news conference in London, Scherer said air traffic had "more than doubled since 2000" and was likely to continue, fuelled by increased urbanization, growth of the middle classes, particularly in the Asia, and the liberalization of the airline sector. "Not only are the existing mature markets continuing to grow but the fundamental huge growth is coming from where the demography of the world sits: Asia, India and the People's Republic of China," he said.

Domestic air traffic is expected to increase more than three-fold in China and nearly five-fold in India, Airbus calculates. Despite geopolitical uncertainty and the current trade war between China and the United States, which is braking the global economy, "annual growth of 4 percent shows the resilient nature of the aviation sector," Scherer said.

"Yes, we are concerned by protectionism, that's obvious. But we hope and do believe it will be of short-lived nature," he said. The firm also stressed that with its latest more fuel efficient models it will help the airline industry limit its environmental impact.

"Airbus believes it will largely contribute to the progressive decarbonisation of the air transport industry and the objective of carbon neutral growth from 2020 while connecting more people globally," it said.

The airline industry aims to freeze its carbon footprint at its 2020 level thanks to more fuel efficient aircraft and through offsets like planting trees. —AFP



BEIJING: A visitor looks at an Airbus A350-1000 plane model at the Beijing International Aviation Expo in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

Australia expects fatter 2019/20 budget surplus

SYDNEY: Australia's budget surplus for the current fiscal year is likely to be bigger than initially forecast, the country's treasurer said yesterday, with stronger export receipts and tax revenues boosting government coffers. The government will publish its "Final Budget Outcome" for the 2018/19 fiscal year ended on June 30, Treasurer Josh Frydenberg told Australia's parliament. The report will also include revised estimates and outlook for the current financial year.

"It will show an improvement on what was forecast, not only in the 2018/19 budget, but also what was forecast in April this year with the 2019/20 budget," Frydenberg said.

The government in its budget handed down in April forecast a A\$4.2 billion (\$2.9 billion) deficit for 2018/19 and a A\$7.1 billion surplus for 2019/20. If delivered, it would be the first surplus since 2007/08, before the global financial crisis hit. There is also separate speculation Frydenberg could report an earlier-than-expected surplus for 2018/19, led by a surge in the price for iron ore.

A boost to Australia's budget outlook would be a fillip for Prime Minister Scott Morrison who was re-elected in May largely on his government's credentials as a prudent economic manager. However, a return to surplus might not be enough to boost confidence as activity outside of exports has hardly been encouraging. Gross domestic product (GDP) growth has slowed to decade lows, retail spending is contracting, car sales collapsing and consumer and business confidence is falling.

Australia's GDP rose just 1.4 percent in the June quarter from a year earlier, matching the worst of the global financial crisis and well short of the 2.75 percent considered "trend". Economists do not expect much improvement in the current quarter.

The remarkable slowdown prompted the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) to cut interest rates in both June and July to reach a historic low of 1 percent. Financial markets are pricing in two more rate reductions by early 2020, with some economists predicting a cut to 0.75 percent as soon as October. —Reuters

AVEVA launches new engineering software solutions

DUBAI: AVEVA, a global leader in engineering and industrial software, yesterday announced the introduction of integrated engineering software designed to help customers transform the way capital projects are engineered, executed and integrated into operations and maintenance.

The integrated portfolio comprises three software solutions. AVEVA Unified Engineering seamlessly integrates process design with front-end engineering and detailed 3D based design. AVEVA Unified Project Execution links and streamlines procurement and construction processes for capital projects. AVEVA Enterprise Learning enables the rapid skilling of operators and engineers using Extended Reality (XR) and simulation tools, to ensure efficient startups and shutdowns, normal operations, and the ability to handle abnormal situations.

"This launch builds on the recent news describing AVEVA's capabilities as the first company in the engineering and industrial software market to comprehensively address the end-to-end digital transformation imperatives with an integrated portfolio of solutions that deliver efficiency, unlock value and empower people across the lifecycle of capital assets and operational value chains," commented Craig Hayman, CEO, AVEVA. "It changes the way that owner operators engage with Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) companies in designing, building, commissioning, and operating their capital assets."

The functionality provided in these integrated solutions enables the realization of an EPC 4.0 strategy for owner operators, central to digital transformation in the capital-intensive process sectors. This allows collabora-



Craig Hayman

Amish Sabharwal



tion on a global scale, through hybrid cloud architectures and on a common platform. The entire manufacturing process can be traced, tracked, and linked - from engineering and design, through procurement and construction, to handover and to operations and maintenance, as a comprehensive Digital Twin for the capital asset.

Transforming capital projects

New AVEVA Unified Engineering enables the integration of the process model and plant model lifecycles from concept to detailed design, delivering frictionless collaboration for multi-discipline engineers to collaborate in the cloud. The net result is a minimum 50 percent improvement in engineering efficiency in FEED and up to 30 percent in detail design, which can yield a 3 percent total installed cost improvement. These savings can be re-invested to ensure engineering quality, accuracy, and maturity for downstream project execution business processes.

AVEVA Unified Project Execution solutions integrate with AVEVA Unified Engineering to further break down the silos within Procurement and Construction by combining key disciplines covering Contract Risk Management, Materials and Supply

Chain Control, and Construction Management into one cloud based digital project execution environment. AVEVA Unified Project Execution solutions deliver up to 15 percent reduction in material costs, 10 percent reduction in field labor costs and reduces unbudgeted supplier change orders by up to 50 percent, which translates to 10 percent total installed costs savings opportunities for our customers.

"Our Engineering portfolio enhancements will deliver increased agility for our customers, enabling them to reduce cost, risk, and delays, minimizing errors and driving rapid capital project execution. The cost savings are realized by mitigating capital investment risks at the process design stage, cutting engineering man-hours by up to 30 percent in plant design, reducing material costs in procurement by up to 15 percent as well as reducing field labor costs in construction by up to 10 percent," commented Amish Sabharwal, SVP, Engineering Business, AVEVA. "With these new solutions AVEVA is providing integration across all stages of the capital project, from conceptual design to handover, to optimize collaboration and break down silos between both engineering disciplines and project stages."

Mimecast offers migration services for Symantec's Email Security.cloud

DUBAI: Mimecast Limited, a leading email and data security company, yesterday announced limited edition packaging and migration services for Symantec's Email Security.cloud, also known as MessageLabs, customers. To date, more than

3800 Symantec customers have successfully migrated to Mimecast. Industry experts have made key observations related to the pending Symantec acquisition by Broadcom, expressing concern over "decaying software assets." As part of the limited edition packaging services, Mimecast is offering free email security risk assessments, so organizations can see first-hand limitations of their incumbent email security system. Mimecast customers can also benefit from a broader portfolio that is engineered to include superior threat detection, email archiving, mailbox continuity and web security all on a single cloud platform.

Email-borne threats are continuing to evolve and target organizations, not to mention that phishing attacks and ransomware are as dangerous and costly as ever. Outsmarting cybercriminals takes constant attention and innovation. Mimecast is committed to continuing to innovate across all

solutions on its platform so customers can have access to the best cyber threat protection and compliance in the market.

According to TechValidate, customers who have migrated to Mimecast have said "it is a tried and trusted service which keeps improving to protect against the latest threats. We have tested other products ... and Mimecast has always come up on top."

"Mimecast has already transitioned more than 3800 organizations from the Symantec on-premises and cloud-based email security systems," said Neil Senior, vice president of global customer success at Mimecast. "We're ready to talk to customers who are concerned about the impact of their email security provider announcing \$1B+ cuts in expenses including research and development, sales and support. Our goal is to provide our Legendary Customer Success(r) approach from initial migration to completed implementation."

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.	
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	304.550
Euro	338.660
Sterling Pound	381.750
Canadian dollar	230.720
Turkish lira	53.900
Swiss Franc	308.250
US Dollar Buying	297.250
ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.815
Indian Rupees	4.268
Pakistani Rupees	1.967
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.683
Nepali Rupees	2.660
Singapore Dollar	222.300
Hongkong Dollar	38.901
Bangladesh Taka	3.594
Philippine Peso	5.839
Thai Bhat	10.030
Malaysian ringgit	77.890
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.268
Qatari Riyal	83.702
Omani Riyal	791.553
Bahraini Dinar	809.220
UAE Dirham	82.972
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.500

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd		
Rate for Transfer		Selling Rate
US Dollar		304.190
Canadian Dollar		230.813
Sterling Pound		373.865
Euro		337.075
Swiss Frank		301.815
Bahrain Dinar		808.955
UAE Dirhams		83.220
Qatari Riyals		84.460
Saudi Riyals		82.015
Jordanian Dinar		430.328
Egyptian Pound		18.398
Sri Lankan Rupees		1.683
Indian Rupees		4.233
Pakistani Rupees		1.944
Bangladesh Taka		3.602
Philippines Peso		5.861
Cyprus pound		18.097
Japanese Yen		3.850

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL		
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.372857	0.386757
Czech Korune	0.004977	0.014277
Danish Krone	0.041018	0.046018
Euro	0.329210	0.342910
Georgian Lari	0.102306	0.102306
Hungarian 0.000917	0.001107	
Norwegian Krone	0.029965	0.035165
Romanian Leu	0.054158	0.071008
Russian ruble	0.004715	0.004715
Slovakia	0.009106	0.019106
Swedish Krona	0.027388	0.032388
Swiss Franc	0.299792	0.310792
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.200016	0.212016
New Zealand Dollar	0.186489	0.195989
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.224182	0.233182
US Dollars	0.300450	0.305750
US Dollars Mint	0.300950	0.305750

Asia	
Bangladesh Taka	0.002933
Chinese Yuan	0.041661
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036813
Indian Rupee	0.003692
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017
Japanese Yen	0.002728
Korean Won	0.000245
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069394
Nepalese Rupee	0.002679
Pakistan Rupee	0.001341
Philippine Peso	0.005748
Singapore Dollar	0.215901
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001319
Taiwan	0.009707
Thai Bhat	0.009635
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013
Arab	
Bahraini Dinar	0.801672
Egyptian Pound	0.018646
Iranian Riyal	0.000084
Iraqi Dinar	0.000211
Jordanian Dinar	0.424644
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000151
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021390
Omani Riyal	0.785908
Qatar Riyal	0.082986
Saudi Riyal	0.080127
Syrian Pound	0.001291
Tunisian Dinar	0.102558
Turkish Lira	0.046589
UAE Dirhams	0.082284
Yemeni Riyal	0.000990

Business

ABK sponsors central bank's International Banking Conference - Shaping the Future'

Finance and banking sector facing unprecedented disruption today: Al-Sumait

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced yesterday, that it is sponsoring the "International Banking Conference - Shaping the Future", held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait: Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, at the Four Seasons Hotel, on Monday 23 September 2019.

Abdullah Al-Sumait, Deputy Chief General Manager at ABK said: "The finance and banking sector is today facing unprecedented disruption as technological innovations and economic and social challenges change the rules for how banks do business. While traditional banking models are being transformed as increasingly digital-savvy customers demand ever-evolving levels of service, this also presents tremendous opportunities for those organizations prepared to grasp them. ABK is proud to support this initiative organized by the Central Bank of Kuwait, and is committed to playing its part in shaping change in our banking sector."

The conference will host a wide range of

prominent economic figures from central bank governors, heads of regulatory and supervisory bodies, high-level executives in the banking sector and international credit rating agencies, as well as a number of international organizations and standards bodies, banking experts and representatives of financial technology companies from around the world.

The agenda will address the economic and social challenges faced by the banking sector and the opportunities and risks arising from technical innovations, with a focus on the vision of developing the banking industry and supporting sustainable development. In addition, on the sideline of the conference will be the Financial Technologies Exhibition. More than 40 exhibitors from the local and international banking sectors, as well as major telecommunications companies in the region and a number of companies specialized in financial technologies will participate in the exhibition. ABK will have a booth at the exhibition to demonstrate its latest digital products and services.



Abdullah Al-Sumait

ABK appoints Yasmine Salamah as GM - Structured Finance Division

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) yesterday announced that Yasmine Salamah has been appointed as General Manager - International Corporates and Structured Finance Division. This new Division will manage the Bank's Project and Corporate Finance transactions, bond issuances, and cash management products; it will also provide client coverage for Multi-National Corporations, Non-bank Financial Institutions, and Remedial and Restructured Accounts.

Yasmine has been with ABK since 2003 in the Corporate Banking Division where she held the position of Assistant General Manager, in charge of Remedial and Restructured Accounts as well as Project Finance. Speaking on the appointment, Michel Accad - Group CEO at ABK, said: "The reinforcement of our senior management and leadership team is testament to our steadfast commitment to create a bank that is fully prepared to adapt and grow as a



Yasmine Salamah

regional banking leader. Over the past decade, we have nurtured and developed some of the best Kuwaiti talent in the banking industry and I'm confident that they will take the ABK brand to a different level in the years to come. I am delighted for Yasmine and I know that she will continue to excel in her new role."

Amazon starts hiring own drivers in German delivery push

MANHEIM, Germany: Amazon has begun hiring its own drivers in Germany and plans to open 11 more distribution centers to expand its delivery business in its second biggest market, the firm's German logistics chief said in an interview.

It is part of a global effort by the online retailer to build an air, sea and land transport network to help it offer faster deliveries and try to contain shipping costs, which have steadily increased as a percentage of sales. "If we have last-mile in our own hands we can offer more services like same-day delivery," Bernd Gschaider, Germany director for Amazon Logistics, told Reuters at a distribution center outside the southern city of Mannheim.

Gschaider said its move was designed to help it cover increased volumes but it poses a challenge to major logistics firms like Deutsche Post DHL, Hermes and DPD, which rely on the e-commerce giant for a large chunk of their parcel business. It also comes at a time when the delivery business in Germany is under fire over the practices of subcontractors. Most big delivery firms, including Amazon, employ their drivers via small and medium-sized subcontracted firms.

German police raids in February found a third of subcontractors it targeted were not paying drivers the minimum wage or making proper social security deductions.



CHICAGO: Job-seekers listen to a presentation hosted by Amazon recruiters about job opportunities at Amazon during a career fair held at Vertipoint Chicago on Tuesday in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

The German cabinet is expected to approve proposed legislation to make logistics firms liable for the behavior of their contractors, imposing fines if they are caught breaking strict labor laws. Gschaider said the legislation would not have any impact on Amazon's business as it already demands that subcontractors make sure their drivers do not work for too many hours, with its auditors performing spot checks to make sure they are complying.

Amazon launched its logistics business in Germany in 2015 and now operates four sorting centers and 13 distribution centers which prepare shipments for delivery. Along with the extra 11 distribution centers, it plans to add two sorting centers this year, helping to manage the Christmas rush as it expands its

area of deliveries beyond just the main cities.

It is starting driver recruitment in Munich, aiming for up to 200 initially in the city where logistics experts say it has become difficult to find staff for delivery jobs due to the strong economy and low unemployment. "We want to support drivers delivering Amazon shipments better. Employing drivers ourselves will help us to better understand their needs and allows us to further improve the experience of all drivers," Gschaider said.

He declined to comment on whether Amazon would extend direct recruitment to other parts of Germany. Amazon will pay its drivers 12.80 euros (\$14.16) per hour, well above the minimum wage in Germany, but still less than most DHL drivers. It will also invest in a new fleet of 50 electric vans. — Reuters

US housing starts, building permits hit 12-year high

WASHINGTON: US homebuilding surged to more than a 12-year high in August as both single- and multi-family housing construction increased, suggesting that lower mortgage rates were finally providing a boost to the struggling housing market.

The report from the Commerce Department yesterday also showed permits for future home construction rose to levels last seen in 2007. It added to upbeat data on retail sales that have pointed to an economy that is continuing to grow moderately rather than flirting with a recession as has been flagged by financial markets.

The Federal Reserve was expected to cut interest rates again yesterday to keep the longest economic expansion in history, now in its 11th year, on track. A year-long trade war between the United States and China has dimmed the economy's outlook. The US central bank lowered borrowing costs in July for the first time since 2008.

"A prolonged period of lower mortgage rates has perhaps finally encouraged prospective homebuyers to get off the sidelines," said John Pataky, executive vice president at TIAA Bank in Jacksonville, Florida. "I'd like to see a couple more months of data like this before I'm convinced the market's fortunes have really changed."

Housing starts jumped 12.3 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.364 million units last month, the highest level since June 2007, the government said. Data for July was revised up to show homebuilding falling to a pace of 1.215 million units, instead of decreasing at a rate of 1.191 million units as



NEW YORK: Housing starts jumped 12.3 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.364 million units last month, the highest level since June 2007, the government said yesterday.

previously reported. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast housing starts would advance to a pace of 1.250 million units in August. Building permits increased 7.7 percent to a rate of 1.419 million units in August, the highest level since May 2007.

Housing starts rose 6.6 percent on a year-on-year basis in August. The housing market, the most sensitive sector to interest rates, had until now shown little signs of benefiting from the Fed's monetary policy easing, which has pushed down mortgage rates from last year's multi-year highs.

Economists and builders had blamed the lackluster performance on land and labor shortages. A survey on Tuesday showed confidence among homebuilders edged up in September, with builders reporting solid demand for homes. Builders, however, said they "continue to grapple with ongoing supply-side challenges that hinder housing affordability, including a shortage of lots and labor." They also noted that the US-China trade tensions, which have undercut manufacturing, were "holding back home construction in some parts of the nation."

The 30-year fixed mortgage rate has dropped more than 130 basis points to an average of 3.56 percent, according to data from mortgage finance agency Freddie Mac.

Solid demand for loans

A separate report yesterday from the Mortgage Bankers Association showed applications for loans to purchase a home increased 6 percent last week from the prior week. That was the third straight weekly rise in purchase loan applications. US stock index futures were little changed and the dollar held gains against a basket of currencies after the release of the data, as investors awaited the Fed's decision and statement on interest rates. Prices of US Treasuries were trading higher.

Residential investment has contracted for six straight quarters, the longest such stretch since the 2007-2009 recession. The Atlanta Fed is forecasting gross domestic product to rise at a 1.8 percent annualized rate in the third quarter. The economy grew at a 2.0 percent rate in the April-June quarter, decelerating from the first quarter's 3.1 percent pace. —Reuters

New York Fed injects \$75bn into US money market

NEW YORK: The New York Federal Reserve Bank for the second consecutive day pumped money into US financial markets to keep short-term borrowing rates from breaking out of the central bank's target range. The emergency interventions on money markets came as a sudden cash crunch drove up interest rates, with banks scrambling to replenish reserves.

The shortage threatened the Fed's control over a crucial tool it uses to transmit monetary policy to the wider economy as the target range helps set all types of lending rates, including for car loans and mortgages. Unlike the so-called repo operation on Tuesday, when only \$53 billion of the \$75 billion offered amount was used, yesterday the New York Fed received \$80 billion in requests, in excess of the amount available. The aim is to keep the overnight lending rate in the Fed's target range of 2.0 to 2.25 percent.

The latest repo operation-Tuesday's

was the first in 11 years—came hours before the Fed's policy-setting Federal Open Markets Committee is expected to cut its benchmark interest rate for a second time this year in an effort to help keep the economy growing amid the trade war with China that is weighing on growth. The decision is due at 2:00 pm (1800 GMT), and Fed Chair Jerome Powell will hold a news conference after the announcement to offer comments on the rationale behind the decision. He likely will be asked about the glitches in the money market.

Banks can meet the Fed's cash reserve requirements by borrowing, using the repurchase agreements in which short-term loans are collateralized with assets such as Treasury bills or mortgage-backed securities. The financial system began to run short of cash due to a convergence of factors, including large withdrawals due to corporate tax payments and a surge in government debt issues.

Economist Jim O'Sullivan of High Frequency Economics said the cash crunch was "related to the timing of Treasury issuance and quarterly tax payments." He cautioned that the pressures "are likely to be more frequent as the amount of bank reserves keeps shrinking and Treasury borrowing keeps rising." As a result, "calls for the Fed to introduce a standing repo facility are likely to increase," O'Sullivan said in an analysis. —AFP

Saudi draws down oil stocks to maintain supply: Expert

LONDON: Saudi Arabia will try to maintain oil supplies to its major customers by drawing down crude stored at tank farms in the kingdom and in its global network while repairing and replacing installations damaged in the recent attacks. Saudi Arabia reported domestic crude stocks of 180 million barrels at the end of July, government data supplied to the Joint Organizations Data Initiative showed.

Saudi Aramco, the national oil company, also maintains a few tens of millions of barrels of forward storage near its customers in leased tank farms in the Netherlands, Japan and Egypt.

Aramco holds crude for strategic reasons to cover emergencies, and for operational purposes to ensure an uninterrupted flow of the right grades of oil to domestic refineries and overseas customers.

Domestic stocks were relatively low at the end of July, having fallen by 50 million barrels (22 percent) since July 2018 and by 150 million barrels (45 percent) from their post-slump swollen peak in October 2015.

The sustained drawdown over almost four years has left domestic stocks at

their lowest level since 2007, numbers from JODI showed. At the end of July, stocks were sufficient to cover 18 days' worth of exports, domestic refinery requirements and direct crude burning in the kingdom's power stations.

Forward cover is down from a recent peak of almost 33 days in October 2015 and is close to the lowest level for over a decade. Stocks should enable the kingdom to maintain supplies to customers in the short term until installations at Abqaiq and Khurais can be repaired/bypassed, or alternative production and processing capacity can be brought online. Saudi Arabia's energy minister said on Tuesday the kingdom had already managed to recover supply to customers to its pre-attack level - by implication using stored crude. The minister also predicted oil production would be fully restored to its previous level by the end of the month.

But stocks can only cover a limited and fairly short loss of production, which underlines the importance of repairing and replacing Abqaiq and Khurais as quickly as possible. The kingdom may also reduce its own refinery processing to prioritize crude for export and make limited crude stocks go further. Saudi Aramco's trading arm has reportedly been trying to buy diesel to offset reduced output from domestic refineries.

Saudi Arabia's crude stocks are performing their intended role to act as a cushion against an unexpected production loss but they buy only a relatively short amount of time to get production back to pre-attack levels. — Reuters

Digital inclusion - Leaving no one behind: Huawei's Ken Hu

Huawei presses ahead with TECH4ALL to help another 500 million people

KUWAIT: "Digital inclusion means using digital technology to promote inclusive development and leaving no person, home, or organization behind." During HUAWEI CONNECT 2019, Huawei's Deputy Chairman Ken Hu gave a speech at the TECH4ALL Summit. The theme of the summit was "How Inclusive Innovation Can Empower the World". In his speech, Hu elaborated on Huawei's TECH4ALL initiative and shared the initiative's current progress. He also called on more individuals and organizations to join Huawei in addressing global issues related to healthcare, education, development, and the environment. The target of TECH4ALL is to help another 500 million people benefit from digital technology in the next five years.

Making technology warmer

Technological advancements are accelerating the advent of the intelligent world. While enjoying the conveniences of science and technology, we must also look at the other side of the story. Digital gaps still exist: In many cities in China, the elderly might be unable to hail a taxi on the street, because taxis are now often booked via mobile phones. In Bangladesh, women don't have many opportunities to learn about computers. On the Comoros, until two years ago, the inhabitants were isolated from the outside world, because they had no communications network.

As the infrastructure of the intelligent world, the ICT industry has played a vital role in promoting national economic growth and boosting social welfare and happiness. It will also help achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, enabling humanity to address challenges like poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental deterioration, economic issues, and healthcare problems. The ultimate goal is to not leave anyone behind in the digital world.

Digital inclusion: making technology warmer. Huawei has never let up in its effort in this regard. Today, Huawei pressed ahead with its long-term initiative, TECH4ALL, to promote digital inclusion. Digital inclusion means every individual and organization can equally access and use information and communications technology.

Today, African children can see the outside world. Visually impaired children can experience the endless joy of reading. People can now understand the frequencies whales send out to their loved ones. The list goes on. In general, technology is considered a tool that gradually distances people from nature. However, more and more, real, touching stories about how technology brings humanity closer to nature are spreading in this rapidly developing world. "Technology shouldn't sit in

an ivory tower. Instead, it should benefit all humanity. We firmly believe that digital technology will benefit every person, home, and organization," said Hu.

Technology, applications, and skills: Where digital inclusion begins.

Huawei's vision and mission is to bring digital to every person, home and organization for a fully connected, intelligent world. "Digital inclusion" best reflects the social value that Huawei can create through its vision. Against this backdrop, TECH4ALL was born.

"Digital technology is reshaping the world. We want it to benefit everyone and we want digital inclusion for all. In this regard, technology is the foundation, applications are the key, and skills provide assurance." Hu said. "TECH4ALL will focus on three areas: technology, applications, and skills."

- Technology: Huawei will continuously reduce connection costs and remove coverage barriers through technological innovation in connectivity, AI, cloud, and mobile devices.

- Applications: Huawei will empower ecosystems and help developers create more applications for different communities and industries.

- Skills: Huawei will work with local governments, communities, and other sectors to enhance the digital skills of all of society.

"We must have a clear direction if we want to leverage what we have to create value," Hu said. While determining the direction for TECH4ALL, Huawei took into consideration its available capabilities and viable directions based on the potential impact of the ICT industry and the meaning of digital inclusion. Huawei also identified four domains in which it could comprehensively promote digital inclusion.

- Healthcare: Using digital technology to give more people easy access to better healthcare resources.

- Education: Using technology to give the disadvantaged, such as women and teenagers, equal access to education and enrich education resources.

- Development: Eliminating development gaps for various sectors, businesses, regions, and groups, ensuring equal access to digital resources and enabling technology to benefit everyone.

- Environment: Using innovative technologies to help NGOs more efficiently protect and conserve ecosystems.

As of today, Huawei has ensured smooth communications for more than three billion people around the world, and supported the stable operations of more than 1,500 networks in more than 170 countries and regions. Hu said that in the next five years, the company will help another 500 million people benefit from digi-



Huawei's Deputy Chairman Ken Hu gives a speech at the TECH4ALL Summit

tal technology. These benefits will not be limited to connectivity, also including the benefits of technologies like AI, cloud, and smart devices as well as related applications and skills.

One small step today

In the Pediatrics Department, babies cannot explain what's wrong with them, which presents a huge challenge. Congenital eye diseases among babies and young children are some of the most difficult to diagnose in the Pediatrics Department. In many cases, young children just cry when their eyes are uncomfortable, and their parents often think they are just making a fuss out of nothing. Due to a lack of related knowledge, many children with eye diseases are left undiagnosed for too long and thus miss out on the best opportunity for treatment. This then negatively impacts the rest of their lives.

In Spain, Huawei is partnering with IIS Aragon (a local medical research lab) and DIVE (a local research center) to develop a new medical device that can detect visual impairment in young children. With this device, children simply need to look at images on the screen of Huawei's Matebook E, which stimulate the

eyeballs. The DIVE system then collects gaze data and then transmits this data to a Huawei P30 phone. With the help of the HiAI and the machine learning capabilities of the P30 phone, a doctor can then analyze the data and detect the signs of eye diseases. This is an APP called Track AI on the P30 phone. With the help of digital technology, trained parents can also detect visual impairment in their children, just like skilled doctors. This approach is even faster, simpler, and more efficient, and will benefit 19 million visually impaired children around the world.

This is just a snapshot of the TECH4ALL initiative. Currently, Huawei is working with many international NGOs to address problems related to healthcare, education, development, and the environment on a much bigger scale. In Kenya, Huawei is working with organizations like UNESCO and Close the Gap, a NPO in Belgium, to convert cargo containers into mobile, digital classrooms that provide digital skills training to teachers, women, and young entrepreneurs in remote rural regions in Africa. This will give them equal access to digital education resources. Through these efforts, the futures of numerous young people will change for the better.

Celebrate special back to school offers from Nissan Al-Babtain

KUWAIT: In celebrations of the back to school season, Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Nissan in Kuwait, is pleased to announce its latest offers on its models. The much-awaited Back to School campaign, presents an opportunity for families, students and youth to enjoy incredible package deals on its vehicles.

Experience the dynamic features of Nissan's top models along with benefits that grant customers cashback, service packages and gift vouchers. The offer includes a line-up of all of its vehicles, some of its popular models include Nissan KICKS, X-Trail, Maxima and Pathfinder.

Nissan KICKS has class-leading fuel effi-



ciency thanks to its advanced 1.6-liter engine and lightweight platform. While Nissan X-TRAIL, a customer favorite gives young families and adventure-seekers more premium style options such as the choice between the five or seven-seat version. The 4-Door Sports car, Nissan Maxima thrills fans with a 300 HP engine, 3.5L V6 cylinder, and 19" aluminum-alloy wheels. The front presents the signature boomerang-shaped headlamps that feature a captivating LED signature line that stays illuminated at all times.

The 4X4 seven-seat family vehicle, Nissan Pathfinder full option comes with a 3.5-liter V6 engine adds direct injection system, horsepower increases to 271, with towing capacity of 1,500 KG and is offered with enhanced user friendliness features ranging from Motion-Activated lift gate to a new touch screen monitor; and 20 inches alloy wheels. Nissan Al-Babtain invites customers to seize the opportunity to enjoy the best deals and great performance vehicles this season.

Turkish Airlines will fly directly to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City

KUWAIT: Boasting the world's widest international flight network with 315 international destinations in 126 countries, Turkish Airlines will start its direct flights to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, which were operated as connected flights until now. Starting on September 11, 2019, the flights will be operated on Istanbul (IST) - Ho Chi Minh City (SGN) - Istanbul (IST) and Istanbul (IST) - Hanoi (HAN) - Istanbul (IST) routes.

Deciding to operate direct flights with the expectations of the passengers travelling to Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi in mind, Turkish Airlines will have daily flights to Ho Chi Minh and the flag carrier will fly to Hanoi six days a week (except Sunday). The flights to capital Hanoi will increase to seven days a week on April 2020. Surrounded by Saigon River, Ho Chi Minh City was added to the flag carrier's flight network back in December 2010. Located in the southern Vietnam, the city serves as the financial capital of the country while boasting the biggest population and



highest number of visitors. The city is a popular tourism center with its pristine skyscrapers, ornate temples and pagodas.

Turkish Airlines first started to fly to Hanoi, one of the oldest capitals of the world, on June 2016. The city offers an unparalleled

travel experience with its historical architecture affected by various societies and rich culture. As the trade, cultural and education center of North Vietnam, Hanoi is also quite close by to Ha Long Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

AUB concludes sale of its share in KMEFIC to Al-Thekeir Co



Dr Anwar Ali Al-Mudhaf and Hamad Saleh Al-Thekeir

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (K.S.C.P.) and Ahli United Bank (B.S.C.) announced that they concluded the sale of their shares in Kuwait & Middle East Financial Investment Company (KMEFIC) of 130,715,275 and 65,380,875 shares respectively at price of Kuwaiti fils 58.1 per share to Al-Thekeir General Trading & Contracting Company which is fully owned by Hamad Saleh Al-Thekeir.

The transaction was completed after receiving the approvals of all necessary regulatory authorities to conclude the sale. Commenting on the transaction, Dr Anwar Ali Al-Mudhaf, Chairman of Ahli United Bank (K.S.C.P.), said:

"Concluding the sale of AUB Kuwait's share in KMEFIC comes in line with the Bank's future strategic objectives to focus on its core banking activities," adding that this transaction will have a positive impact on operational efficiency and supporting shareholders' interests.

Dr Mudhaf expressed best wishes to the new owner and management of KMEFIC for continued success, growth and business continuity. KMEFIC is a Kuwaiti public shareholding company, listed on Kuwait stock exchange since July 1997 and operates within the investment sector with a focus on asset management.

Burgan Bank announces winner of KD 125,000 cash prize in Yawmi draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced Mohammad Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Falakawi as the new KD 125,000 cash prize winner in the Yawmi Quarterly Draw. The winner expressed his excitement for being the winner of the rewarding cash prize with Yawmi Account from Burgan Bank. The Yawmi quarterly draw offers customers chances to win higher rewards,

entitling one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 cash prize every three months.

To enter Burgan Bank's Yawmi quarterly draws, customers should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning.

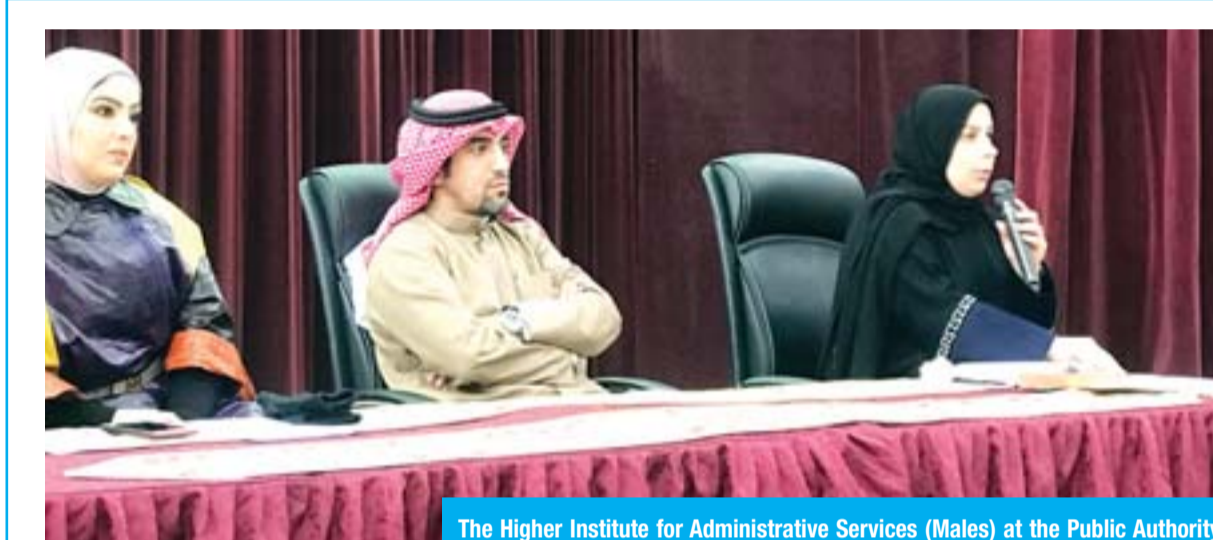
What's On

IPSCO International attend exhibition held at Dar Al-Shifa Hospital



IPSCO International, exclusive agent of Med Sled in Kuwait was present at the exhibition held at Dar Al-Shifa Hospital on the occasion of "World Patient Safety Day." The event promoted patients health and awareness of safety culture, as well as safe evacuation in case of catastrophes. The exhibition was attended by Chairman of the Board of Dar Al-Shifa Hospital Taleb Jraq, CEO Ahmad Nasrallah and other guests, who had the opportunity to see the most modern American technology, as IPSCO introduced some advanced products to evacuate vital places including hospitals.

IPSCO CEO Eng Alaa Hassan said that she is ready to provide all Kuwait hospitals with Med Sled evacuation products to guarantee safety. The company is constantly working to develop and improve its equipment using the best technological means so that it reaches the highest degrees of readiness which leads to saving lives and rescue the injured. She added that the equipment suits all ages and sizes. Medical and Safety Department official Dr Sameh Riyadh said that Med Sled equipment are available in many international hospitals and health centers, and proved efficient by winning the best title in Canada and America.



The Higher Institute for Administrative Services (Males) at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) held an orientation program for the new trainees in the presence of Assistant Director Mohammad Al-Shimmari.



Recipes

EXTRA-CRISPY VEGGIE-PACKED PIZZA



- INGREDIENTS**
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
 - 1 tablespoon canola oil
 - 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, divided
 - 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 - 1 cup shaved zucchini strips (from 1 zucchini)
 - 1 thin whole-wheat pizza crust
 - 1/4 cup refrigerated basil pesto
 - 2 1/2 ounces halloumi or feta cheese, crumbled (about 2/3 cup)
 - 2 medium tomatoes, thinly sliced
 - 1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper
 - 1 (2-oz.) pkg. baby spring mix (about 4 cups)
 - 1/2 cup thinly sliced red onion
 - 1/4 cup chopped fresh basil

- INSTRUCTIONS**
- Preheat oven to 400°F with oven rack in top position. Stir together vinegar, oil, 1/4 teaspoon salt, and black pepper in a medium bowl. Stir in zucchini; let stand at room temperature 10 minutes.
- Meanwhile, place pizza crust on a baking sheet;



spread pesto over crust. Sprinkle cheese evenly over pesto, and top with tomatoes and crushed red pepper. Bake on top rack at 400°F until slightly crispy, about 6 minutes. Turn broiler to high, and broil until cheese is bubbly, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from oven, and let cool 2 minutes.

Add baby spring mix, onion, and basil to zucchini mixture; toss to combine. Arrange salad mixture evenly over pizza. Sprinkle with remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt. Cut into 8 slices; serve immediately.

Familiarisation trip to South African provinces

In its effort to promote South Africa and the less known provinces of KwaZulu- Natal, Mpumalanga and North West in the State of Kuwait, the South African Embassy in collaboration with the Tourism Boards of these provinces will host a delegation from the State of Kuwait. The visit will be held from September 19 - 28, 2019.

The Delegation from Kuwait will consist of representatives from, the South African Embassy, KAPICO Travels and Tours, The Times of Kuwait and the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). The South African Embassy will use this platform to educate the interested Kuwaiti travellers that there are other famous cities in South Africa which can cater to the traveller's needs, whether it is a family vacation, honeymoon, adventure, hunting, safari, relaxation, shopping, etc.

The delegates will get an opportunity to discover that each province has different and unique tourist attractions to offer to Kuwaiti tourists and showcase that South Africa is more than a once-off destination. The delegates will also meet the relevant tourism officials in these provinces in order to build close and strong relations, which are needed in promoting destination South Africa in the State of Kuwait.

GLUTEN-FREE PEACH CRISP

- INGREDIENTS**
- Peach Filling**
- 2 1/4 pounds ripe peaches, peeled and thinly sliced (about 5 to 6 peaches)
 - 1/3 cup honey
 - 2 tablespoons arrowroot starch or cornstarch
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 - 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Crisp topping**
- 1 cup old-fashioned oats (certified gluten free if necessary)
 - 1/2 cup almond meal or almond flour, lightly packed
 - 1/3 cup packed coconut sugar or brown sugar
 - 1 teaspoon ground ginger
 - 1/4 teaspoon fine grain sea salt
 - 4 tablespoons butter, melted
 - 3 to 4 tablespoons plain yogurt (regular or Greek)
- Don't forget vanilla ice cream!

- INSTRUCTIONS**
- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
- To prepare the filling: In a 9 by 9-inch baking dish, mix together the sliced peaches, honey, arrowroot starch, vanilla and cinnamon.
- To prepare the topping: In a medium mixing bowl, stir together the oats, almond meal, sliced almonds, coconut sugar, ginger and salt. Mix in the melted butter and yogurt. Stir until the mixture is moistened throughout, adding up to 1 more tablespoon of yogurt if it seems dry.
- Dollop spoonfuls of the oat mixture over the filling and use your fingers to break up the mixture until it is evenly distributed (no need to pack it down). Bake for about 30 minutes, or until the filling is bubbling around the edges and the top is lightly golden.
- Let the crisp rest for 5 to 10 minutes before serving. Serve with a scoop of vanilla ice cream or plain yogurt.



CORNFLAKE CHICKEN TENDERS WITH POTATOES AND PEAS

- INGREDIENTS**
- 1/3 c. plain Greek yogurt
 - 1 tbsp. lemon pepper seasoning
 - 1 1/4 lb. chicken tenders
 - 2 c. finely crushed cornflakes
 - 1/3 c. grated Parmesan
 - 2 tbsp. olive oil
 - 1 chopped shallot
 - 2 tbsp. butter
 - 1 1/2 c. thawed frozen green peas
 - 1 package cooked microwavable baby potatoes
 - 1/4 c. torn fresh mint leaves
 - 1 tbsp. fresh lemon zest
 - Salt and black pepper
 - Lemon wedges, for serving

- DIRECTIONS**
- Preheat oven to 450°F. Stir together Greek yogurt and lemon pepper seasoning. Toss in chicken tenders until coated. Stir together crushed cornflakes, Parmesan, and olive oil. Coat each tender in crumb mixture and place on a lightly greased wire rack set in a baking sheet. Bake until cooked through, 12 to 15 minutes.
- Meanwhile, cook shallot in butter over medium heat in a saucepan until tender, 2 to 4 minutes. Stir in peas and cook 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in baby Idaho potatoes. Stir in mint leaves and lemon zest. Season with kosher salt and black pepper. Serve peas and potatoes with chicken tenders and lemon wedges alongside.

Greetings



Family and friends of Fares Mamdouh Yusri wish him a very happy 3rd birthday.

In Pakistan's warming mountains, farmers fish for a new living

Poverty, hunger worse in Pakistan's mountain regions

GHIZER, Pakistan: Two years ago, Raja Iqbal Hussain quit his job as a low-paid hotel waiter in Dubai and went back to his native village in northern Pakistan to set himself up as a fish farmer. The 36-year-old father of three has now started bringing in a small profit from his fish, and is looking forward to earning more next year once they have grown. Local farmers are increasingly choosing fish over crops, as the climate warms in mountainous Gilgit-Baltistan region.

In Dubai, Iqbal's monthly wages barely amounted to 50,000 Pakistani rupees. "I earn a much better amount from my business here," he said of the lake he built next to the river in Birgal village, Ghizer District, some 100 km (62 miles) north of Gilgit city. The lake contains about 50,000 fish, mainly trout, which Iqbal sells raw for 1,200 rupees per kg and cooked for 1,800 rupees. He charges 2,000 rupees per kg for fish caught by boat, which visitors can take out on the water.

A recent report from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization said steadily rising

temperatures had increased the frequency and intensity of disasters in the region's valleys, threatening the sustainability of traditional agriculture. One farmer reported that wheat productivity had declined by almost 50 percent from 2010-2015 with no sign of improvement, and said heavy rain had ruined his crops, it noted.

According to the report, poverty and hunger are worse in Pakistan's mountain regions, with about half of households in Gilgit-Baltistan suffering from under-nutrition. Backed by government support, fish farming is gaining popularity in Ghizer District as a sustainable source of income and nutrition amid the growing effects of climate change.

Glacial lakes

Abdul Wahid Jasra, Pakistan country head for the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), said that, as temperatures rise, melt-water from glaciers is forming lakes that can be used for cold-water fish farming. They include Attabad Lake in the Hunza valley, which appeared in 2010 following

a deadly landslide. "Mountain communities have very limited sources of income, and this sector can open multiple avenues for income generation," Jasra said.

Neighboring China could become a major export market for fish with investment in factories and transportation, he noted. "I see huge potential for the mountain farmers for climate change adaptation to increase their livelihood through fish farming," Jasra added. Crops commonly grown here - wheat, potatoes and barley - and fruits such as grapes, apples and apricots can be badly damaged by heavy rains, pests and other weather-related diseases.

Fish farming, on the other hand, generates income all year round, and faces minimal risks from climate change, Jasra said. Ghizer District is popular for trout-breeding and fishing, which can only be done with the permission of the authorities. ICIMOD and the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council have established a mountain research centre in Gilgit and are setting up a laboratory to find out more about local and exotic cold-water fish. — Reuters



KARACHI: A man prepares fishing net along a road near the port area in Karachi, Pakistan. — Reuters

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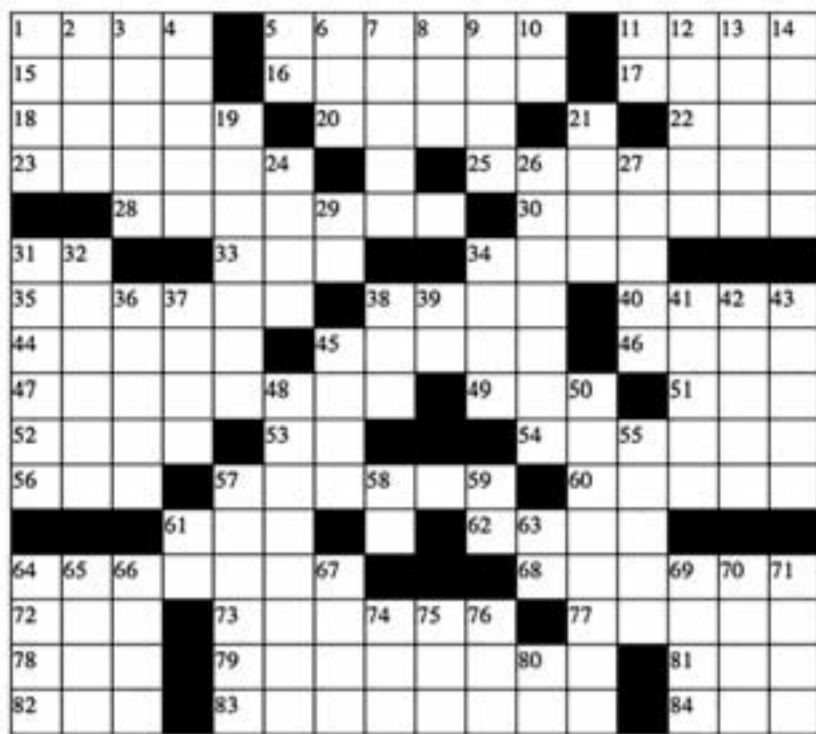
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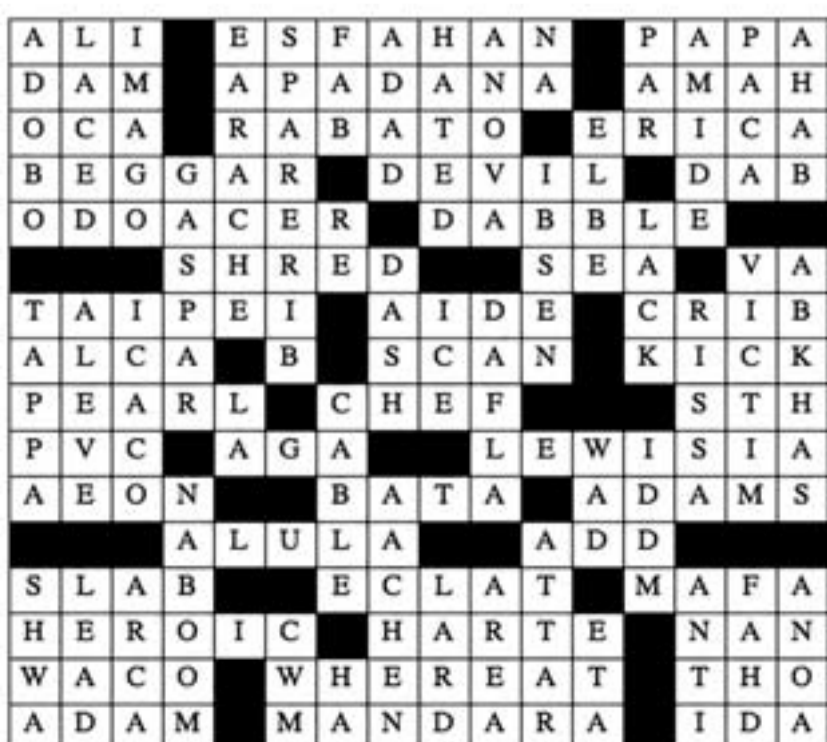
ACROSS

- The lean flesh of a fish that is often farmed.
- West Indian tree having racemes of fragrant white flowers and yielding a durable timber and resinous juice.
- (Akkadian) Father of the gods and consort of Tiamat.
- German industrialist who was the first in Germany to use an assembly line in manufacturing automobiles (1871-1948).
- Of or relating to cilia projecting from the surface of a cell.
- The first light of day.
- Tropical American tree producing cacao beans.
- Young sheep.
- The last (12th) month of the year.
- A genus of orb-weaving spiders including common garden spiders and barn spiders.
- (zoology) Lacking a tail or taillike appendage.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- Rich in decorative detail.
- Of or relating to the stomach and intestines.
- An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
- The act of escaping physically.
- A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
- An island republic on Nauru Island.
- A sock with a separation for the big toe.
- A native or inhabitant of ancient Etruria.
- The upper side of the thighs of a seated person.
- Intentionally so written (used after a printed word or phrase).
- Being one more than seven.
- A radioactive element of the actinide series.
- An esoteric or occult matter that is traditionally secret.
- The compass point midway between east and southeast.
- Submerged aquatic plant having narrow leaves and small flowers.
- Any of various edible seeds of plants of the family Leguminosae.
- A small constellation in the northern hemisphere between Cygnus and Aquila and crossed by the Milky Way.
- Filled with the emotional impact of overwhelming surprise or shock.
- A self-funded retirement plan that allows you to contribute a limited yearly sum toward your retirement.
- A place where ships can take on or discharge cargo.
- Tropical American tree grown in southern United States having a whitish pink-tinted fruit.
- A light touch or stroke.
- Highly attractive and able to arouse hope or desire.
- Used in combination to denote the middle.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- Lack of strength or vigor esp from illness.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.

DOWN

- A South American shrub whose leaves are chewed by natives of the Andes.
- South American armadillo with three bands of bony plates.
- A summary that repeats the substance of a longer discussion.
- Having a horizontal surface in which one part is higher or lower than another.
- Being ten more than one hundred ninety.
- Aromatic bulb used as seasoning.
- Wild or domesticated South American cud-chewing animal related to camels but smaller and lacking a hump.
- An anticipated outcome that is intended or that guides your planned actions.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- A public promotion of some product or service.
- A genus of Ploceidae.
- Salty fluid secreted by sweat glands.
- The brother of your father or mother.
- (Greek mythology) A tragic king of Thebes who unknowingly killed his mother Jocasta.
- One of a set of small pieces of stiff paper marked in various ways and used for playing games or for telling fortunes.
- An officer who acts as military assistant to a more senior officer.
- Of or in or belonging to the cavity of the abdomen.
- A member of the Uniat Church.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
- Old World genus of annual to perennial herbs.
- A telephone connection.
- French chemist (born in Poland) who won two Nobel Prizes.
- Wild sheep of northern Africa.
- A decree that prohibits something.
- A soft yellow malleable ductile (trivalent and univalent) metallic element.
- A river of southwestern Africa that rises in central Angola and flows east and then north (forming part of the border between Angola and Congo) and continuing northwest through Congo to empty into the Congo River on the border between Congo and Republic of the Congo.
- A promontory in northern Morocco opposite the Rock of Gibraltar.
- A rechargeable battery with a nickel cathode and a cadmium anode.
- The rate of moving (especially walking or running).
- A place where taxis park while awaiting customers.
- Low stingless nettle of Central and South America having velvety brownish-green toothed leaves and clusters of small green flowers.
- Obvious and dull.
- Any of various plants of the genus *Althaea*.
- A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
- (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- An amino acid that is found in the central nervous system.
- Showily imitative of art or artists.
- The battle in 202 BC in which Scipio decisively defeated Hannibal at the end of the second Punic War.
- An independent ruler or chieftain (especially in Africa or Arabia).
- An informal term for a father.
- A container.
- South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
- The shape of a raised edge of a more or less circular object.
- A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You appear perhaps more charming and refined than usual. Now could be the time to make a date, apply for a special job or otherwise make yourself known. A new way of thinking may take you into an understanding of any personal desires. Meeting yourself in another person is the keynote of a new cycle that begins now. Through this person, you can see how you have improved and progressed over the years, as well as some of the improvements that you may still want. This recognition helps you to come to a better understanding of yourself.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Patience is one of your biggest issues this day. Instant gratification may be an interference just now: you want things and you want them this instant—you are not alone. There are many paths to follow; one path can become mighty narrow. This can also lead to duplicity, confusion and ambitious schemes that tend to become lost along the way. Know what you want—write your goals down in a clear form. The next step is to let a plan guide you. This evening, you may want to give much thought to your inner feelings about a recent romantic attraction.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

There are decisions to be made and putting them off only makes them harder and less effective: action, not debate, is what is needed. Challenges will be handled with much energy today. Make sure this is positive energy. Insert flexibility into your day. If something is not working, change direction or styles of working. Others may disagree with what you say or think, or in some way oppose your ideas. Wait a bit... That person will soon be asking you to repeat your ideas or instructions. Do not dwell too long on a situation you cannot change and did not cause. Be prepared—this could be a learning time of day. The positive results for you will depend on your actions. This is a good day to seek any advice you may feel you need.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

There are favorable aspects pointing to success at this time. You are vulnerable to deception just now. Business presentations or meetings can open new career horizons. Your reputation grows stronger if you know how to work within the limitations you are facing. It is when you set too many boundaries that you get into trouble. If you are making investments, concentrate on short-term outcomes and look for longer-term options through next month. The feelings and emotions of those around you may be very clear. This is another good day to start a diet, or perhaps a new and positive habit.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You could make subtle changes now. It is a good day to get things done. Good eye-hand coordination and a sustained effort make almost any task run well. You may feel like exercising or getting outside today. Intuition can help you select the best health care or the best workout group. Emotions are very present but within control. Perhaps after a little exercise this afternoon, you will be good for study, research, etc. You have a real appreciation for unique ideas. You may find yourself enjoying a little time to visit with a friend or communicate through the written word. Harmonious ties to others are what you seek. The ideal partnership and the perfect balance are some of the things that quicken your pulse.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This day may become a bit challenging. Your career and life direction are putting some real pressure on your home and emotional life. Obviously you cannot live without both, so some kind of middle line or balance is indicated. There are opportunities to excel in many areas of your life just now. Your career could open up by taking the road less traveled. By daring to be the oddball and taking new approaches, you will be successful. You may receive some special attention regarding your particular skills. An old problem comes to an end today. You can take risks and dare to be a little unconventional. You will prosper through new insights, inventions and a determination to secure relationships.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Family and security are things that rattle your chain more than ever. These are areas where you make new beginnings and bold moves. You are at your most practical when it comes to dealing and working with others. You know just what to do and can act without haste and emotion. You can make whatever constructive changes are necessary at this time. Now is a good time to polish your skills. Complete any work requiring analysis, precise measurements or mathematical aptitude. New technologies and gadgets are an asset. Work, achievement and ambition mean a lot to you now. You are working hard to improve and evolve—you have a need for respect. Someone important to you may not give you the recognition you want—patience.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This is an important time, during which, depending upon your current age, you may reach new highs of accomplishment. This will bring great discipline and focus that could make or break you. You may decide to respond to old situations a bit differently from the usual. You will prosper through new insights, inventions and an independent point of view. Patience is still the guideline here but your career could open up by taking some new approaches. You do not like monotonous situations and the faster life moves along the happier you seem. Your living situation may be in flux but this is good for you; however, others may be confused and not as willing as you are to pull up roots.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

This can be your most rewarding day in many areas of your life. Be prepared emotionally for the challenging days that can bring some wonderful changes in your life. The challenging days like today can be quite rewarding. This is where your most exciting, life-filling dreams can be met. This is the time to come to an understanding of just where you are in life and where you want to go next—create a focus, achieve and appreciate. The energies that are available are hot and ready to be used; however, you must choose the direction by looking at the possible results—negative or positive.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Your sense of direction when handling a person or a problem is perhaps the key element in your personality makeup. It is important how you manage difficulties, find diplomatic solutions or come up with the right approach. Your outward charm and ability to be all things to all people is most central to your personality. This ability to solve problems, to counsel and always to put others at ease is the key to meeting and coming to know you. There is a greater than usual interest in relationships, social connections and the arts—on a more intellectual level than in the past. You and a loved one will put a closure to some disagreement this evening.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

You may want to attend a lecture or speak in a conference today. There is a yearning to broaden horizons and reach for the ultimate. Law, politics, education, travel and religion are some of the areas where an emotionally charged drama may be played. Ideas are flowing and come with ease. You may find yourself chatty. Circumstances seem to bend to your will and things have a way of working out smoothly. There are real opportunities to complete and work out difficulties and projects that require both long-term effort and a high degree of discipline.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This is a positive and fast moving day with plenty of room for accomplishments. You could see yourself moving closer to those long-term goals of yours. This will bring great discipline and a concentration or focus that could show off your talents. Emotional seriousness, a sober orientation and a practical awareness of scheduling and timing are keynotes of your deepest concern. There is a tendency to be too strict with your own self and to insist that whatever does not contribute to security and other long-term goals is trivial. Your ambition is profound. Guidance from higher-ups is advisable, easily obtainable and may currently be beneficial to your career. Someone special supports you and encourages you now.

Wordsearch Puzzle

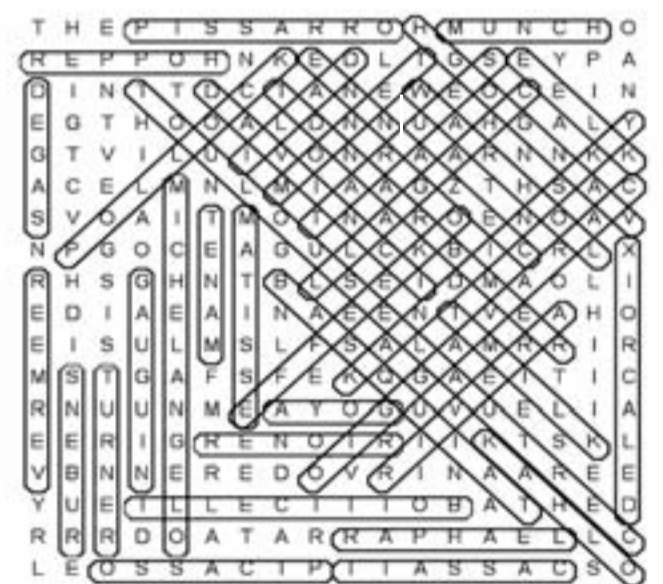
Fantasy World 1

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 17 letters spell the name of a popular fantasy book series.



- | | | | |
|------------|--------|----------|---------|
| ALE | ELVES | LANCE | QUEST |
| BATTLE | FARM | MACE | SERVANT |
| CASTLE | FOREST | MAGIC | SPEARS |
| CENTAUR | GIANTS | MINSTREL | SPRITE |
| CHALICE | GNOMES | MOAT | STEW |
| CROSSBOW | GOLD | OGRE | TOWER |
| CROWN | GUARDS | PEASANT | WARLOCK |
| DAGGER | HERO | PEDDLER | WEAPONS |
| DRAWBRIDGE | HORSE | POISON | WINE |
| DUNGEON | INN | PRINCE | WITCH |

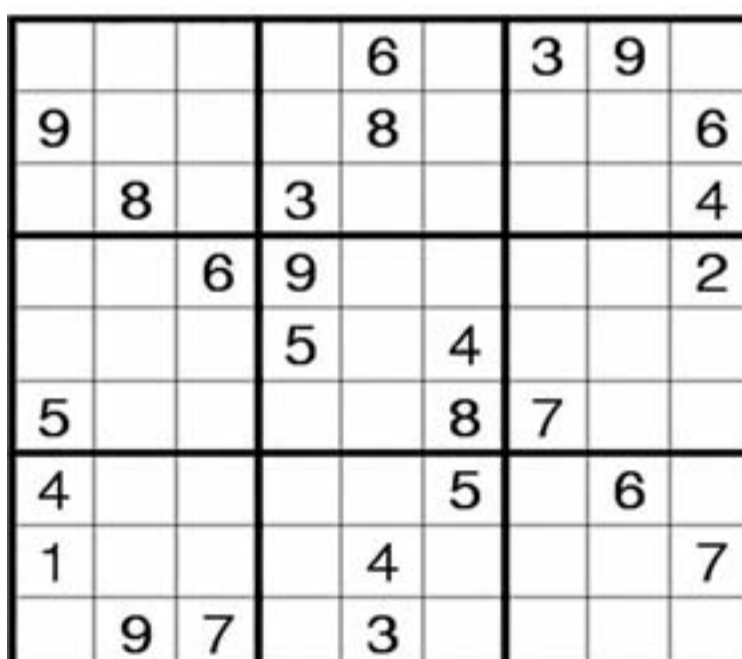
Famous Artists



- | | | | |
|------------|-----------|--------------|------------------|
| BASQUAT | GAUGUIN | MICHELANGELO | RENOIR |
| BOTTICELLI | GOYA | MONET | RIVERA |
| CARAVAGGIO | HOPFER | MUNCH | RUBENS |
| CASSATT | SHARLO | O'KEEFE | SEURAT |
| CEZANNE | KANDINSKY | PICASSO | TOULOUSE LAUTREC |
| CHAGALL | KLEE | PISSARRO | TURNER |
| DALI | KLIMT | POLLOCK | VAN GOGH |
| DA VINCI | MANET | RAFAEL | VERMEER |
| DEGAS | HATTSSE | REMBRANDT | WARHOL |
| DELACROIX | | | |

The hidden message is: THE ONLY PAINTING THAT VINCENT VAN GOGH SOLD IN HIS LIFETIME IS RED VINEYARD AT ARLES

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2019



A mural installation featuring tentacles by artists Dima Rebus, Filthy Luker and Pedro Estrellas is seen on the facade of the Urban Nation Museum for Urban Contemporary Art on the occasion of the museum's Biennale. The Biennale features installations and projects by 27 artists and art collectives, gathered under the title: 'Robots and Relics: Un-Manned'. — AFP

Let me take you down: Strawberry Field opens to public

Beatles fans can now take a trip through the childhood sanctuary of John Lennon that inspired seminal song "Strawberry Fields Forever", with the former children's home opening its doors to the public. Lennon used to climb over the fence from his aunt's house, where he grew up, and play with other children at the Strawberry Field orphanage. Its importance in shaping Lennon's personality was laid bare in the classic 1967 psychedelic hit.

the garden.. and just enjoy what many have said: there's a real sense of calm and peace." The site, in the city's Woolton neighborhood, was a Salvation Army children's home up until 2005, when it became derelict.

But it has now been turned into a center to help 18-25 year olds with learning disabilities find employment, partly funded by opening its doors to the public. "We have got the visitor exhibition which tells the story of the Salvation Army, the children's home and that connection with John Lennon," explained Versfeld, in front of the gates.

'It matters to us'

"We've got a cafe, a retail space and wonderful gardens for people to explore. All the money that is raised... stays at Strawberry Field and is used for our steps-to-work program." Lennon was brought up by his aunt, even though his mother Julia lived nearby until she died in a car accident. Strawberry Field became a place where he could not only meet other children, but contemplate, according to Versfeld. "He came to play with the children and observe what was going on," he said. "He found some sanctuary and peace and calm here.

"That song, many would look at the lyrics and wonder what was going on, but actually I think that was a space that he found and a place that was special to him." The original gates went offsite a few years ago but have now been returned. Lennon's lyric "It doesn't matter much to me" is written on the walls of the exhibition, contrasting with the cafe, where the words "It matters to us" are displayed above videos showing the work of the Salvation Army.

The show takes visitors on a historical trip through Strawberry Field, as well as displaying exhibits documenting Lennon's early life. Graceland has loaned artefacts to recognize Lennon's love for Elvis Presley and while other exhibits include a handwritten early draft of the song and a photo-mosaic of Lennon's face. The song was released in



February 1967 as a double A-side single with "Penny Lane", hitting number two in the UK charts behind Englebert Humperdinck's "Release Me".

Lennon wrote the song while filming in Spain and it was the first track recorded during the sessions for the "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" album. It is recognized as the point that the band moved away from straight pop to a more complex sound, incorporating unusual instruments including the "Mellotron" and an Indian swarmandal. — AFP



Around 60,000 fans flock each year to the site to have their photographs taken outside the famous red gates, but until now have never been allowed beyond. "The gates are open for good." Major Allister Versfeld, mission development officer of the Salvation Army charity, told AFP. "This is a unique opportunity for people to come and explore



Graffiti is pictured on the posts and the gates to Strawberry Field in Liverpool, north-west England. — AFP photos



Strawberry Field branded memorabilia is pictured in the gift shop of the newly opened visitor attraction.



Graffiti is pictured on the gates to Strawberry Field.



A chef presenting a vegetarian version of larb tord made with a meat substitute, at a restaurant in Bangkok. — AFP photos



A chef presenting a vegetarian version of pad kra phao, made with a meat substitute stir-fried with chili and basil, at a restaurant in Bangkok.



A chef preparing a vegetarian version of larb tord.

Mock meat edges onto Southeast Asian plates

A sprinkle of chili, some pinkish “pork” and a few basil leaves tossed into a sizzling wok—chef Songpol swears his vegan version of punchy Thai favorite pad kra phao is a match for the original, as plant-based protein creeps onto Southeast Asia’s meat-heavy menus. “It has the texture, the flavour. The rest is about technique,” he said in the bustling kitchen at the Bangkok You & Mee restaurant. But he concedes some diners remain to be convinced of the merits of fiddling with old recipes in a country ferociously proud of its cuisine.



Kindergarten teacher Diane Piroon trying a vegetarian version of yam woon sen, a spicy glass noodle salad made with a meat substitute.



Vegetarian versions of various Thai dishes made with meat substitutes at a restaurant in Bangkok.

“They do not expect plant-based items to be cooked with Thai dishes,” he added. Global food producers are racing to dominate the “alt-protein” sector, an industry Barclay’s bank estimates could be worth \$140 billion in a decade, as environmental, ethical and health concerns drive a plant-based boom. Shares of beef-less burger maker Beyond Meat soared from their initial pricing of \$25 to over \$65 on the first day of trading on Wall Street in May, whetting the appetites of both investors and consumers who shun animal products. Burger King already sells the beef-free “Impossible Whopper” in many US locations. KFC has trialled vegan nuggets and wings, while plant-based milk, cheese and even seafood are proliferating.

But while the trend nibbles at the US’ gargantuan meat

industry, alt-protein protagonists are also eyeing new frontiers including in Asia where millions are nourished on meat and fish-heavy diets. Pork in particular is ever-present in rice dishes and noodle bowls across the region. Chef Songpol’s pad kra phao is made with new brand Omnimeat, a pork imitation of peas, shiitake mushrooms, rice and soy from Hong Kong-based firm Green Monday. “It is designed with Asian food in mind,” said CEO David Yeung. After Singapore—where the brand launched in restaurants late last year—Buddhist-majority Thailand has become a major Southeast Asian test bed for the mock pork. But changing Asian palates and culinary habits “is extremely difficult”, concedes Yeung.

‘Thais love their meat’

In the US the plant-based sector makes up less than one percent of the conventional meat industry. Asia poses similar challenges, from ubiquitous meat use to higher prices of protein substitutes. The pad kra phao at You & Mee costs about \$8, four times more than a diner might pay on a Bangkok street. Critics also say that many new plant-based products are still processed and therefore not as healthy as advertised. But a 2018 survey from market research firm Mintel found over half of urban Thai consumers say they plan to reduce their meat intake.

In step, companies across the region are “starting to move into this area and attracting more serious investments”, according to Michelle Teodoro, a food science and nutrition analyst at Mintel. From Japan to the Philippines, firms are snapping up alt-protein producers in deals worth hundreds of millions of dollars—while Singapore’s state-owned Temasek Holdings recently invested in Perfect Day Foods, which makes cow-less ice cream.

At some restaurants in the Vietnamese capital a popular stew of snails and pork now uses soya beans to replace the animal protein, while diners can also chow down on sweet and sour “ribs”, made from potato flour and bean paste. But the jury is out on whether a critical mass of Southeast Asians will convert from meat. One evening Thai kindergarten teacher Diane Piroon tried the meatless pad kra phao in Bangkok. It “tastes like pork,” she said, before dropping in a caveat: “Thais love their meat... the challenge is getting them to change what they grew up with.” — AFP



A vegetarian version of pad kra phao, involving a meat substitute stir-fried with basil and chili, at a restaurant in Bangkok.



A chef presenting a vegetarian version of larb tord.

Overweight people more likely to have overweight dogs

Overweight people are more likely to have overweight dogs, partly because they are more likely to feed them treats, Danish researchers said yesterday. The study by the University of Copenhagen lends credence to the saying “like owner, like dog”, the scientists wrote in the journal *Preventive Veterinary Medicine*. “The prevalence of heavy or obese dogs is more than twice as large among overweight or obese owners (35 percent) than among owners who are slim or of a normal weight (14 percent),” the researchers said.

Of the 268 dogs studied, 20 percent were overweight. Average-weight owners tend to use treats for training purposes while overweight owners prefer to provide treats in convivial situations, “for example, when a person is relaxing on the couch and shares the last bites of a sandwich or a cookie with their dog,” the study’s main author, Charlotte Bjornvad, said.

In developed countries, 34 to 59 percent of dogs are overweight or obese, which can reduce their life expectancy and mobility or cause diabetes and cardiac disease just like in humans, another international team of researchers found in 2016. On average, overweight dogs live 1.3 years less than dogs on restrictive diets. The University of Copenhagen study also showed that castration tripled the risk of being heavy or obese. “Castration seems to decrease the ability to regulate the appetite in male dogs and at the same time, it might also decrease the incentive to exercise which results in an increased risk of becoming overweight,” Bjornvad said. — AFP

‘Lord of the Rings’ show to start filming in New Zealand

US-based streaming giant Amazon announced yesterday its big-budget “Lord of the Rings” series will within months start filming in New Zealand, home to Peter Jackson’s movies of the fantasy epic. Amazon is reportedly spending US\$1 billion-plus on the

series as it seeks to emulate the runaway success enjoyed by “Games of Thrones”.

Showrunners J.D. Payne and Patrick McKay said the South Pacific nation offered the “primordial beauty” of Middle Earth, the setting for J.R.R. Tolkien’s tales of elves,

dwarf and hobbits. “We needed to find somewhere majestic, with pristine coasts, forests, and mountains, that also is a home to world-class sets, studios, and highly skilled and experienced craftspeople,” they said in a statement. Amazon Studios said pre-production had already begun and shooting would start in Auckland “in the coming months”.

It has already made a multi-season commitment to the series, which will explore storylines set long before the events depicted in Jackson’s films. The Kiwi director’s Rings trilogy and the equally popular, but less critically acclaimed three-parter “The Hobbit”, sparked a tourism boom in New Zealand. Millions of visitors have flocked to locations used in the movies, helping tourism overtake dairy exports as the country’s biggest earner. The movies also transformed New Zealand’s film sector from a cottage industry into a world leader, particularly in digital special effects. “It’s great to see New Zealand’s association with Middle Earth is continuing,” Economic Development Minister Phil Twyford said.

Invest Auckland said the Amazon production would bring an “immense economic boost and job opportunities”. New Zealanders have also embraced Middle Earth as part of the country’s cultural identity, even now—five years after the last Hobbit movie’s release—giant models of dragons and wizards decorate Wellington airport. Jackson has no direct involvement in the series, although last year he wished its makers well and said he was available for consultation if needed. Amazon has previously confirmed that “Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom” director J.A. Bayona will helm the first two episodes of the series. — AFP



'FLYING' RIVER TAXI TESTS SEINE WATERS IN PARIS



An Electric boat, the Sea Bubbles, aka "flying taxi" cruises on the river Seine in background during a test in Paris.



An Electric boat, the Sea Bubbles, aka "flying taxi" cruises on the river Seine during a test in Paris.

A "flying" electric river taxi hailed by its creators as the future of clean city transport is being put through a battery of tests in Paris this week, with a view to being in service by the spring. Named the "Sea Bubble", the white aerodynamic craft skimmed over the River Seine at speeds of up to 30 km/hour (17 m/hour), hovering 50 centimeters (1.5 feet) above the water. A journey from the Eiffel Tower in the west to Notre-Dame cathedral in the bubble takes just minutes, as the craft zips past the traffic snarled along the banks of the river.

is the brainchild of French yachtsman Alain Thebault. It makes no noise and no waves and also emits no CO2, winning the approval of French transport officials looking to endow the capital with new clean transport options in the run-up to the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

The Bubble is similar to a hydrofoil, with fibreglass foils that deploy to hoist its hull into the air when it reaches a certain speed, powered by electric batteries. A first prototype, for four passengers, was first tested on the Seine in June 2017, with mayor Anne Hidalgo taking a spin.

Miami and Saint-Tropez. In Paris, it has struck up a partnership with a tour operator offering luxury tours beyond over the centuries. It had its heyday in Britain in the 1960s but its popularity continues in some places, none more so than in Glasgow. At least 14 clubs remain across Scotland's biggest city and its suburbs, more than anywhere else in Britain, according to The Bingo Association.

Back to the future

The taxi, which looks like a nautical version of the DeLorean car in the 80s sci-fi film "Back To The Future".

Cities climb onboard

The craft's operators say they have been inundated with requests for the taxis from cities including Geneva,

In Britain's bingo capital, love for the game endures



Customers play bingo at the MECCA Bingo Hall in the East End of Glasgow, Scotland. — AFP photos



Customers play bingo at the MECCA Bingo Hall in the East End of Glasgow.

Most nights of the week, Margaret Fisher can be found sitting in the same seat in the same Glasgow bingo club she has been frequenting for nearly 25 years. "All my friends have been playing forever-I've not really spoken to anybody who's never been in a bingo hall," the 70-year-old Glasgow resident told AFP, easing into a game in the bingo-loving city. "I'm not a gambler but I do like bingo... the atmosphere and the adrenalin rush when you're playing. "You meet friends, have a good time and it gets you out and about," Fisher said, shortly after paying £5 (\$6, 6 euros) entry to take her regular spot next to the lucky charm-laden table of her friend Tina.

Historically beloved by British grandmothers, the game sees players win payouts if they match sets of numbers between one and 90 announced by a caller-traditionally shouting "bingo!" when they mark off all their numbers. Fisher said that she had once scooped £2,000 in prize money. But normally players at her club can hope to win up to £1,000 at Sunday night games and up to half that mid-week. Unlike other gambling games, bingo tends to attract more women than men. Analyses show the ratio is typically 80:20 women to men, according to The Bingo Association chief executive Miles Baron, a former marketing chief for the Rank gambling company.

In British cities-Glasgow in particular-bingo has also been strongly associated with the working class, often handed down from one generation to the next. "My mum went with her gran, and then as soon as I was old enough she was like 'you're coming to bingo!'" said 22-year-old Nicole Croly, also at the gargantuan club, run by gaming brand Mecca, in the city's gritty East End. "I've just been hooked on it ever since."

'Bingo in the DNA'

Bingo is believed to have originated in Italy in the 16th century, spreading to neighboring European countries and beyond over the centuries. It had its heyday in Britain in the 1960s but its popularity continues in some places, none more so than in Glasgow. At least 14 clubs remain across Scotland's biggest city and its suburbs, more than anywhere else in Britain, according to The Bingo Association.

The number was at least twice that however in the 1980s, albeit smaller venues, Baron said. "We're quite happy to say they invented it but we own it," said Paul McGlinchey, who manages the 1,500-seat club-the country's biggest by capacity. "There's no doubt about it: Glasgow loves its bingo," he added, as around 500 players, predominantly older women, filled row after row of brightly coloured seats and tables beneath fluorescent lights.

McGlinchey said the enduring communities around the bingo clubs, despite an increasingly mobile population elsewhere in Britain, had kept bingo "in the DNA" of the city. Locals put its popularity down to the fun-loving and sociable nature of Glaswegians.

The infectiously jovial manager keeps up with everything from customers' hip operations to wedding anniversaries. "I know everything like that. That's my job to know that," he added. "It's like a soap opera every day in here-the things you hear!"

Mecca has shed some of the traditional strictures of the game, such as maintaining absolute silence when numbers are being called out by offering sections in which people can chat whilst playing. It has also embraced technology, offering digital pads to play on instead of traditional paper number books, and staging pop music-fuelled nights aimed at a younger clientele.

Attracting a new crowd

Across town at a trendy converted industrial space on the banks of the River Clyde-once famous for its mighty shipbuilding-a new iteration of the game has abandoned almost all its usual etiquettes. "Bongo's Bingo", played in a nightclub-style setting enlivened by music, alcohol and plenty of sexual innuendos from the hosts, is attracting the Friday night party crowd. "I'm going to get drunk and try win some money!" said Steven Ward, 26, who is there with friends. Launched in Liverpool in 2015 and since introduced in other British cities as well as internationally, Bongo's has proved particularly popular in Glasgow-where it now sells out weekly to 700 customers.

Rich Kelly, 33, a former drama teacher from Birmingham, was calling the numbers and DJ'ing at a recent night. Flanked by two male colleagues dressed in drag, he handed out prizes including cash, liquor and a cardboard cutout of a daytime TV personality, as the crowd danced to occasional blasts of cheesy pop hits. "We do bingo all over the country... but definitely we look forward to coming to Glasgow," he added. "You know the crowd is going to be really up for it." Lyn Lappin, at 51 one of the oldest in attendance and usually a player at a more traditional venue, had ventured down with work colleagues. "I love it... It's absolutely magic!" she said, drink in hand, joining in a raucous rendition of Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline" during a break from the numbers. — AFP

U2 announce's first ever India concert

Irish rockers U2 have announced they are to play their first ever concert in India, wrapping up the band's Joshua Tree Tour 2019 in the coastal megacity of Mumbai on December 15. India has in recent years seen an increase in big international acts touring there, with Beyonce, Shakira, Coldplay, Demi Lovato and Bryan Adams playing to packed venues. Bassist Adam Clayton said he was "looking forward to bringing a dash of

Dublin to Mumbai" while frontman Bono evoked India and Ireland's common struggles for independence from Britain.

"We have the same colors in the flag, our tiny little nation. Mahatma Gandhi commented on the struggle for Irish independence and warned against the violent struggle," Bono told Rolling Stone India. "And our prime minister, he's a physician-he's trained in Mumbai, his father's from Mumbai," Bono said, referring to Irish premier Leo Varadkar whose father is Indian. The Joshua Tree Tour 2019 kicks off in Auckland November 8 and includes Brisbane, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth, as well as Singapore, Tokyo, Seoul and Manila, U2 said Tuesday. — AFP



Lifestyle | Fashion

Pioneering black model **Coco Mitchell** still strutting stuff at 60-plus

Coco Mitchell, one of the first black models, returned to the runway this month after a decade away, keen to push boundaries again in her 60s and support young creators. As the fashion carnival swings into Milan from London before heading to Paris, Mitchell is basking in the glow of achieving new catwalk feats in New York last week. "I want to push the envelope," she told AFP, days after busting some Janet Jackson dance moves during a star turn in the Deaux New York show on September 9.

"I want to be remembered when I go up. To walk sort of vapid, with no look or expression, I can't do that. You have the wrong girl," Mitchell added at her home in Harlem. Mitchell, who doesn't reveal her exact age, also delighted audiences at shows by Mexico's Victor Barragan and American Christopher John Rogers during New York Fashion Week, which ended September 11. "The whole thing for me is I'm grateful to be there, and not because of my age. I was grateful back then."

"And people have a sense, they feel that I have no fear of anything. I'm not afraid. The designer may not like it. Whatever. I'm going to take a chance," she said. Mitchell, from the United States, first modeled more than 35 years ago. She has

paraded for Dior, Saint Laurent, Armani or Versace and clearly has nothing left to prove. In the early 2000s, however, Mitchell quit the runway after becoming disillusioned. "I decided I didn't want to do it anymore. I felt like a slave," she told AFP during a lengthy interview.

The 5-foot 10-inch model, who was spotted on the street by legendary model agency executive Eileen Ford, returned to doing the sort of catalog work that kickstarted her career. She went to model for the likes of Macy's, Old Navy and Gap, but felt the call of the runway again, so this year decided to work with young designers. "I'm one of those people that if you call me and you said we're doing this thing and we really need you to help, I would do it," explained Mitchell.

'Racism a strange animal'

Her approach chimes with many up-and-coming creators who aim to break with the formalities of traditional catwalks by permitting their models to smile and even interact with spectators and photographers. During the Barragan show, she teased the crowd by placing her hand on her blouse and then nonchalantly sweeping the air, causing spectators to cheer.

Mitchell is no stranger to breaking new ground. She was the first African American model in Sports Illustrated and one of the first on the runway, going on to model at all the world's major fashion shows. She observes with interest the winds of diversity that blow through the fashion world these days, particularly in America, be it skin color, age or the range of body shapes now gracing runways. Mitchell sees greater openness, but also a realization amongst fashion executives that there are profits to be made too.

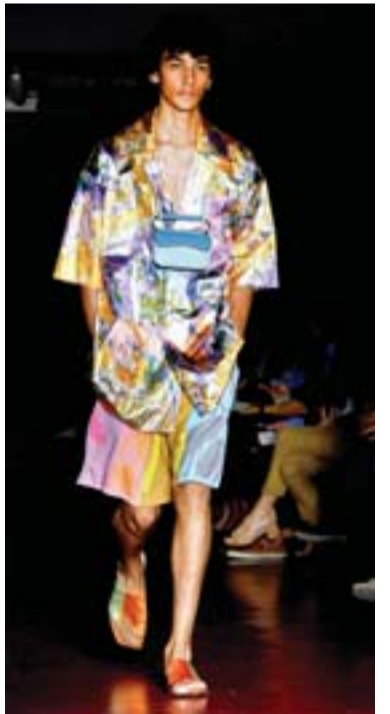
"Economically a lot of the businesses are seeing that brown people, black people—we're spending a lot of money on skin care, hair care, beauty products, clothing," she said. Mitchell doesn't have any illusions about attitudes in parts of American society, though. "Racism is a strange animal and we live in America. I don't believe it's ever going anywhere. It's part of people's DNA. It's just how they think," she said.

Mitchell's impromptu return to the runway gave her so much joy and satisfaction that she is already thinking about appearing again next year. "I started late, already 23 or 24. No one really knew how old I was so I never think about age," she said. "When I'm 99 years old, I want the quality of my



life to be like it is now. I want to be able to walk, run, with my mind intact. That's my goal." — AFP

Model Coco Mitchell poses for AFP in New York City. — AFP



Models present creations for Peter Pilotto during the Women's Spring-Summer 2020 collection fashion show in Milan.

FLYING THE GREEN FLAG AT MILAN FASHION WEEK

The world's top designers and influencers head to Milan yesterday for a week of glitzy catwalk shows from global brands that have begun swapping climate-destroying luxuries for ecologically-friendly fashion. Prada opens a tightly-packed calendar, which will see models for leading houses including Armani, Bottega Veneta, Dolce & Gabbana, Fendi, Gucci and Versace strut their stuff for buyers and celebrities alike. Benetton reached out to the burgeoning number of environmentally-aware consumers Tuesday with its new creation: a trench coat made out of paper, designed by France's Jean-Charles de Castelbajac.

"My problem with Benetton is that they never say no to me," he said with a chuckle ahead of the show. His team carried out "recycling experiments and research into paper, like the very resistant one that can contain concrete". The trench "cannot be washed in the washing machine, but it can last months or even years," Castelbajac said.

Those arriving in the Italian fashion capital early could grab a sparkling glass of Prosecco and catch the new Tommy Hilfiger collection, TommyXLewis, co-designed with five-time Formula 1 world champion Lewis Hamilton. The official line-up for the Spring Summer 2020 season boasts newcomers to Milan including DROME by Italian Marianna Rosati, Boss by German Hugo Boss, and the London brand Peter Pilotto by designers Pilotto and Christopher De Vos. Emerging talent will also be on show, including Simona Marziali-MRZ, the winner of the Who is On Next 2018 award for new talent, and Tiziano Guardini, an ecodesigner who uses only natural fabrics and sustainable materials.

'Fashion Pact'

All eyes will be on the Green Carpet Fashion Awards, an Oscars-style awards ceremony for sustainable fashion, which will be held Sunday in the city's prestigious Scala opera house. The gala will reward the greenest companies in one of the most polluting industries on the planet. The fashion sector emits 1.2 billion tons of greenhouse gases each year—more than international flights and maritime traffic combined—according to France's environmental and energy management agency.

Facing a backlash from an increasingly ecologically-aware consumer base, some 32 companies representing 150 brands in the industry signed a "Fashion Pact" at a G7 meeting in August. They committed to achieving zero net carbon dioxide emissions by 2050, and to use 100 percent renewable energy throughout their supply chains by 2030.

Gucci went on to announce two weeks later that it had achieved carbon neutrality in its supply chain. Those who fail to snag an invitation to Milan's catwalks, or who tire of snapping street photographs of fashionistas and sunglasses-wearing dogs, can take advantage of the many exhibitions open to the public during fashion week. Highlights include an exhibit dedicated to revered 20th-century opera singer Maria Callas at the Savini Milano restaurant, where the diva loved to dine after her recitals at the Scala. — AFP



Models present creations for Benetton during the Women's Spring-Summer 2020 collection fashion show in Milan. — AFP photos

Classifieds

Thursday, September 19, 2019



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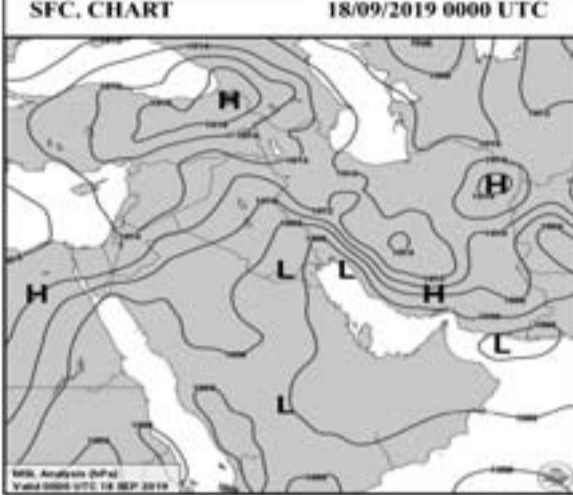
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Very hot with light to moderate north westerly wind to variable wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 18/09/2019 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	46 °C	35 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	47 °C	25 °C		
ABDALY	48 °C	30 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	48 °C	30 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	38 °C	35 °C		
AHMADI	38 °C	35 °C		
NUWAISIB	44 °C	26 °C		
WAFRA	46 °C	26 °C		
SALMY	46 °C	28 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	09/19	Hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas and some high clouds will appear	46 °C	29 °C	NW-N	15 - 42 km/h
Friday	09/20	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas causing rising dust over open areas with a chance for fog forming at night	45 °C	25 °C	NW-N	15 - 50 km/h
Saturday	09/21	Hot and Humid specially over coastal areas with a chance for fog forming at night	41 °C	22 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 28 km/h
Sunday	09/22	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas	44 °C	24 °C	NW-SE	10 - 30 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:15
Sunrise	05:34
Zuhr	11:42
Asr	15:11
Sunset	17:50
Isha	19:09

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	45 °C
MIN. Temp.	24 °C
MAX. RH	61 %
MIN. RH	08 %
MAX. Wind	S 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, RALLAPALLI NAGARAJA NAIDU, have changed my name from MADDOIPATLA NAGARAJA to RALLAPALLI NAGARAJA NAIDU, hereafter in all my dealings and documents. (C 5591)

I, Syed Darbar (new name) S/o Syed Siddiq Hussain D/N 16/517-6 Ghousse Nagar, Kadapa YSR (Dist) A.P. Siddi Darbar Vali (old name) name changed to Syed Darbar. Passport No. P9484709. (C 5592)

I, MARIA MAGDALENE holder of Indian Passport No. Z1846245 having permanent address Maharashtra, India and Pin Code - 4000053, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: MARIA MAGDALENE JESSIE and surname: VAL-LADARES. (C 5676) 19-9-2019

son of JAGDISH JEWANI holder of Indian Passport No. Z1885066, would like to change my name as Ravi (Given name) Jagdish Jewani (Given Surname) Ravi Jagdish Jewani for all my future dealings hereafter. (C 5590) 17-9-2019

I, SHREYYA KESAVAN holder of Indian Passport No. S0588075 having permanent address 250/83A, Kesavan Nilayam, Bharathi Nagar, Sirumugai, Coimbatore-641302, Tamil Nadu residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Given Name: SHREYYA and Surname: KESAVAN (C 5675)

I, RAKHI ARUNKUMAR holder of Indian Passport No. Z3826426 & Civil ID No. 280040706058 has changed my name from RAKHI ARUNKUMAR to RAKHI GOPINATH hereafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of RAKHI GOPINATH. (C 5674) 16/9/2019

This is to notify all that I, RAVI,



Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Watanlyya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787

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Arrival Flights on Thursday 19/9/2019				Departure Flights on Thursday 19/9/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
FEG	241	Alexandria	00:05	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	MSC	406	Sohag	00:15
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	MSR	615	Cairo	00:30
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	FDB	072	Dubai	00:30
KAC	102	London	00:50	FEG	342	Sohag	01:05
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10
RJA	642	Amman	01:20	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	THY	773	Istanbul	01:50
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	DLH	625	Frankfurt	01:50
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	417	Manila	02:00
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	THY	765	Istanbul	02:50
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:50
PGT	828	Istanbul	02:00	KKK	1269	Istanbul	02:55
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	PGT	829	Istanbul	02:59
KAC	156	Istanbul	02:35	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
JZR	734	Cairo	02:35	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:10
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	JZR	111	Doha	03:25
JZR	722	Alexandria	02:40	JZR	409	Delhi	03:30
JZR	254	Amman	02:40	JZR	701D	Asyut	03:30
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:50	UAE	854	Dubai	03:30
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	JZR	713	Sohag	03:50
THY	768	Istanbul	02:55	THY	769	Istanbul	03:50
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	OMA	644	Muscat	04:05
JZR	262	Beirut	03:10	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:20
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	JZR	1735	Cairo	04:40
JZR	406	Kochi	03:30	QTR	1077	Doha	05:00
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:00	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:00
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	303	Mumbai	05:15
MSR	0516	Cairo	04:25	MSR	0517	Mumbai	05:25
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	FDB	070	Dubai	06:00
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:50	THY	1465	Istanbul	06:00
THY	1414	Trabzon	05:05	JZR	771	Istanbul	06:30
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	THY	745	Sharm el-Sheikh	06:45
IGA	170	Bahrain	05:05	KAC	212	Bahrain	06:50
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	RJA	643	Amman	07:00
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	JZR	251	Amman	07:10
KAC	552	Cairo	05:50	JZR	121	Dubai	07:15
KAC	548	Alexandria	05:55	RBG	550	Alexandria	07:30
KAC	362	Colombo	06:05	BAW	156	London	07:40
BAW	157	London	06:10	KAC	413	Bangkok	07:45
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	KAC	173	Munich	07:55
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:25	JZR	211	Jeddah	08:00
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	KAC	193	Trabzon	08:10
KAC	106	London	06:40	KAC	181	Paris/NCE	08:10
RBG	559	Alexandria	06:50	IRA	606	Mashhad	08:10
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	IGO	1756	CNN	08:10
QTR	8511	Doha	06:55	KAC	163	MXP	08:35
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	KAC	505	LCA/Beirut	08:40
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	07:05	KAC	177	Vienna	08:45
JZR	112	Doha	07:05	KAC	561	Amman	08:55
IGO	1755	CNN	07:10	QTR	8512	Doha	08:55
IRA	601	Tehran	07:10	KAC	121	AGP	09:00
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:50	KAC	613	Bahrain	09:00
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	KAC	117	New York	09:05
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	KAC	791	Madinah	09:10
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	QTR	1085	Doha	09:10
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	KAC	671	Dubai	09:15
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:15
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC	157	Istanbul	09:20
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	KAC	773	Riyadh	09:40
GFA	209	Bahrain	09:05	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	JZR	731	Cairo	09:45
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	UAE	856	Dubai	09:50
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55
IRA	675	Lar	09:55	KAC	301	Istanbul	09:55
JZR	702D	Asyut	09:55	OMA	642	Muscat	10:00
KAC	512	Riyadh	10:00	KAC	101	London	10:05
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	10:00	GFA	210	Bahrain	10:05
JZR	714	Sohag	10:00	QTR	1071	Doha	10:30
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	617	Doha	10:40
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	FDB	056	Dubai	10:40
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	IRA	668	Mashhad	10:55
OMS	223	Muscat	11:00	SVA	513	Riyadh	10:55
JZR	1736	Cairo	11:05	IAW	158A	Al Najaf	11:00
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	JZR	221	Riyadh	11:20
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
AHY	119	Baku	12:05	OMS	224	Muscat	11:40
JZR	410	Delhi	12:10	JZR	309	BJV	11:45
JZR	252	Amman	12:20	MEA	405	Beirut	11:55
JZR	746	Sharm el-Sheikh	12:25	SYR	342	Damascus	12:00
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:05
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30				

Costly Saudi defenses prove no match for drones, cruise missiles

RIYADH/DUBAI: Billions of dollars spent by Saudi Arabia on cutting edge Western military hardware mainly designed to deter high altitude attacks has proved no match for low-cost drones and cruise missiles used in a strike that crippled its giant oil industry. Saturday's assault on Saudi oil facilities that halved production has exposed how ill-prepared the Gulf state is to defend itself despite repeated attacks on vital assets during its four-and-a-half year foray into the war in neighboring Yemen.

Saudi Arabia and the United States have said they believe Iran, the kingdom's arch-enemy, was probably behind the strike. On Tuesday, a US official said Washington believed the attack originated in southwestern Iran. Three US officials said it involved both cruise missiles and drones. Tehran has denied such accusations, saying that Yemenis opposing Saudi-led forces carried it out. Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi movement is alone in claiming responsibility.

Iran maintains the largest ballistic and cruise missile capabilities in the Middle East that could overwhelm virtually any Saudi missile defense system, according to think-tank CSIS, given the geographic proximity of Tehran and its regional proxy forces. But even more limited strikes have proved too much for Saudi Arabia, including recent ones by Houthis who claimed successful attacks on a civilian airport, oil pumping stations and the Shaybah oilfield. "We are open. Any real facility has no real coverage," a Saudi security source said.

The Sept 14 assault on two plants belonging to state oil giant Saudi Aramco was the worst on regional oil facilities since Saddam Hussein torched Kuwait's oil wells during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis. The company said on Tuesday that production would be back to normal quicker than initially feared, but the attack nonetheless shocked oil markets. Riyadh said preliminary results indicated the weapons used were Iranian but the launch location was still undetermined.

Authorities initially specified drones, but three US officials said the use of cruise missiles and drones indicated a higher degree of complexity and sophistication than initially thought. "The attack is like Sept 11th for Saudi Arabia, it is a game changer," said a Saudi security analyst who declined to be named. "Where are the air defense systems and the US weaponry for which we spent billions of dollars to protect the kingdom and its oil facilities? If they did this with such precision, they can

also hit the desalination plants and more targets."

The main Saudi air defense system, positioned mainly to defend major cities and installations, has long been the US-made long-range Patriot system. It has successfully intercepted high-altitude ballistic missiles fired by the Houthis at Saudi cities, including the capital Riyadh, since a Saudi-led coalition intervened in Yemen against the group in March 2015. But since drones and cruise missiles fly more slowly and at lower altitudes, they are difficult for Patriots to detect with adequate time to intercept. "Drones are a huge challenge for Saudi Arabia because they often fly under the radar and given long borders with Yemen and Iraq, the kingdom is very vulnerable," said a senior Gulf official.

Washington and Riyadh have blamed Iran and its proxies for a series of explosive blasts on tankers in Gulf waters, including two Saudi vessels in May, and attacks on Saudi oil assets. Two oil pumping stations were hit that month. A transformer station near a desalination plant in Shuqaiq in the south was struck in June. Those caused limited damage, unlike Saturday's strikes on Abqaiq and Khurais that damaged the world's biggest petroleum processing facility and knocked out 5.7 million barrels per day of production.

A Gulf source familiar with Aramco operations said the security system in place at Abqaiq is imperfect against drones. Authorities are investigating whether radar picked up the drones which struck in pre-dawn darkness, the source added. An executive at a Western defense firm dealing with Saudi Arabia said that as of a year ago there were Patriots protecting Abqaiq.

Asked why Saudi defenses did not intercept Saturday's attack, coalition spokesman Col Turki Al-Malki told reporters: "More than 230 ballistic missiles were intercepted by coalition forces...we have the operational capacity to counter all the threats and protect the national security of Saudi Arabia." The government media office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. It is unclear if US-built short-range Avengers and medium-range I-Hawks and Swiss short-range Orelions which the kingdom owns are currently operational.

The Saudi security source and two industry sources said Riyadh has been aware of the drone threat for several years and has been in discussions with consultants and vendors for possible solutions but has not installed anything new. The security source said authorities moved a Patriot battery to the Shaybah oilfield after it was hit last month. There



RIYADH: A picture taken yesterday shows displayed fragments of what the Saudi defense ministry spokesman said were Iranian cruise missiles and drones recovered from the attack site that targeted Saudi Aramco's facilities, during a press conference yesterday. — AFP

are Patriots at Aramco's Ras Tanura refinery. "Most conventional air defense radar is designed for high-altitude threats like missiles," said Dave DesRoches at the National Defense University in Washington.

"Cruise missiles and drones operate close to the earth, so they aren't seen because of the earth's curvature. Drones are too small and don't have heat signature for most radar." Intercepting drones possibly worth several hundred dollars with Patriots is also extremely expensive, with each missile costing around \$3 million.

Jorg Lamprecht, CEO and co-founder of US airspace security firm Dedrone, said there are more effective ways of dealing with drones, especially in swarms. A combination of radio frequency detectors and radar detect them, high-powered cameras verify payloads and technologies

like jamming demobilize them, he said. But the latest technology presents its own challenges: Frequency jamming could disrupt industrial activities and have negative health effects on people.

Armed drones are becoming more readily available, so the threat to vital infrastructure is rising disproportionately, according to US intelligence consultancy Soufan Group. Saudi policymakers have long dreaded a strike against a desalination plant in Jubail which serves central and eastern Saudi Arabia. A successful attack would deprive millions of people of water and could take a long time to repair, the Saudi source said. "It's a very target-rich environment," said an industry source with knowledge of Saudi Arabia. "They've kicked them right where it hurts and there's plenty more of them around." — Reuters

Facebook plays to social ties with...

Continued from Page 1

augmented and virtual reality vice president Andrew "Boz" Bosworth said while providing a look at the Portal line-up. "But, Portal is the only device that is going to connect you with people you care about; and I would contend that any smart device that doesn't do that isn't that smart at all."

Amazon Echo Show and Google Nest smart screens can be used to make video calls, but Portal is tied into connections at Facebook, Messenger, and WhatsApp, which is encrypted end-to-end. The Facebook-owned messaging apps as well as the social network itself are each used by more than a billion people monthly. "This is not about the world needs another Echo Show or the world needs another Google Nest Hub, this is a product that serves a very specific purpose and is messaged accordingly, that's the person-to-person interaction," Gartner personal technologies research director Werner Goertz said at the briefing.

Mindful that internet users have become wary of their privacy at Facebook, features built into Portal include

physical switches to turn off cameras and microphones. Covers can be slid over camera lenses, and data from cameras and microphones is processed on devices instead of on data centers in the cloud. Facebook's system knows which parties are being connected on video calls, but doesn't listen to what is said, Facebook executives said. Portal users will be able to opt out of having snippets of voice commands stored and reviewed to improve the software's grasp of spoken words, according to Bosworth.

Portal TV features include using augmented reality for funny looks and playing games such as boat-sinking classic "Battleship", along with the ability to watch Amazon Prime shows with far-away friends or family. The voice-commanded smart screens can also be used for other online television apps or for streaming music services such as Pandora and Spotify. Facebook said its advertising system would know little about Portal users, and that it had no plans at this time to weave money-making marketing into the video-calling service.

"This product is the core essence of what Facebook does: it connects you with the very people you care most about," Bosworth said. Portal digital aide software works alongside Amazon virtual assistant Alexa, which also provides software brains for Echo devices. Facebook was also expanding Portal available from just Canada and the US to include Australia, Britain, France, Italy, New Zealand, and Spain. — AFP

appeared to nix remaining hopes for a dramatic meeting between President Donald Trump and his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani at the United Nations next week. Speaking to reporters on Air Force One, Trump said he too had cooled on what had always seemed to be a diplomatic longshot. "I never rule anything out, but I prefer not meeting him," Trump said.

Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, who are locked in a prolonged conflict with a Saudi-led military coalition, claimed responsibility for Saturday's oil installation attacks, which took out six percent of global supplies. But Riyadh and Washington have both ruled that out. "Despite Iran's efforts to make it appear so" they did not originate from Yemen, Maliki said, adding the strike was beyond the capabilities of the militia - who have however mounted dozens of smaller attacks on Saudi territory. "The precision impact of the cruise missile indicated advance capability beyond (Iranian) proxy capacity," he said, adding that they also struck from a direction that ruled out its southern neighbor Yemen as a source.

The Houthis yesterday threatened to attack dozens of targets in the United Arab Emirates, including in the cities of Dubai and Abu Dhabi. "We announce... that we have dozens of targets in the UAE, among them Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and that they can be targeted at any moment," Houthi military spokesman Brigadier Yahya Saree said. The UAE is part of the Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis in Yemen in an intractable five-year conflict that has devastated the country.

"If you want peace and security for your facilities, and towers made of glass that cannot withstand one drone, then leave Yemen alone," the rebel spokesman said. The Huthis have made threats against the UAE in the past, and claimed strikes that were never confirmed by the Emirati authorities. "To the Emirati regime, we say that just one operation will cost you a lot," Saree said. "You will regret it if your leadership decides to issue instructions to its armed forces to launch any response in the coming days or weeks," Saree said.

Observers say the experience in Yemen, where despite their vast firepower, the Saudis have failed to subdue the ragtag but highly motivated militia, has made Riyadh circumspect about wading into another conflict. "I certainly hope we're not (going to have another war)," Riyadh's ambassador to London Prince Khalid bin Bandar told the BBC in an interview. "We are trying not to react too quickly because the last thing we need is more conflict in the region," he said. — With input from agencies

Liberia school fire kills dozens...

Continued from Page 1

Another resident, Ballah, whose home is near the school, said they helped in the rescue efforts. "We went for water, trying to put it out. We were putting water up

to 2.30 am. When the fire fighters came, the fire was already going down. We do not know the cause of the fire," he said.

The fire struck while the children were asleep, said Fulani community official Amadou Sheriff. In an earlier tweet, Weah offered condolences to the families of those affected. "My prayers go out to the families of the children that died last night in Paynesville City as a result of a deadly fire that engulfed their school building," he wrote. "This is a tough time for the families of the victims and all of Liberia." — AFP

India bans e-cigs; New York bans...

Continued from Page 1

The vapor is missing the estimated 7,000 chemicals in tobacco smoke but does contain a number of substances that could potentially be harmful. They have been pushed by producers, and also by some governments including in Europe as a safer alternative - and as a way to kick the habit.

However critics say that apart from being potentially harmful in themselves, the flavors of some liquids have turned millions of children into vapers - and potential future smokers. The emergency legislation in New York, the second US state to ban flavored e-cigarettes, followed a mysterious outbreak of severe pulmonary disease that has killed seven people and sickened hundreds. US President Donald Trump's administration announced last week that it would soon ban flavored e-cigarette products to stem a rising tide of youth users.

Legislation is also being tightened elsewhere, and in Singapore e-cigarettes are already outlawed. In Japan, vaping and alternatives like "heat not burn" tobacco vaporizers are allowed but e-juices with nicotine are not. China, home to almost a third of the world's smokers, indicated in July that it wants the "supervision of electronic cigarettes" to be "severely strengthened".

The Indian ban covers the production, manufacture, import, export, transport, sale, distribution, storage of e-cigarettes, as well as advertisements. The government said it would "advance tobacco control efforts" and "contribute to a reduction in tobacco usage". Although few Indians vape at present, the Indian ban also cuts off a vast potential market of 1.3 billion consumers for makers of e-cigarettes. The ban order will impose a jail term of up to one year and a fine of 100,000 rupees (\$1,404) for first-time offenders. A repeat

violation would attract a jail term of up to three years and a penalty of up to 500,000 rupees, the government said.

The ban would apply to the manufacture, import, sale, advertisement and distribution of e-cigarettes. It won't apply to the use of such devices, Vikas Sheel, a senior official at India's health ministry, told Reuters. "Over a period of time, people will not get their (vape) refills, so they will become responsible," he said. The government expects the ban order to be challenged in court, but was prepared to defend its decision, Sheel added.

"Big Tobacco" has been investing heavily in the technology to compensate for falling demand for cigarettes due to high taxes and smoking bans, particularly in the West. In 2018 Altria, the US maker of Marlboro and Chesterfield, splashed out almost \$13 billion on a stake in one of the biggest e-cigarette makers, Juul.

According to the World Health Organization, India is the world's second-largest consumer of traditional tobacco products, which are not covered by the new ban, killing nearly 900,000 people every year. Some 35 percent of adults are users, although chewing tobacco - which can also have flavors like chocolate and which also causes cancer - is more prevalent than smoking. India is also the world's third-largest producer of tobacco, the WHO says, and tobacco farmers are an important vote bank for political parties.

According to the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry, an estimated 45.7 million people depend on the tobacco sector in India for their livelihood. India also exports around a billion dollars' worth of tobacco annually, and the government holds stakes in tobacco firms including ITC, one of India's biggest companies.

"I feel it's absolutely absurd," Aronjoy, 22, a student and occasional vaper, told AFP in a shop selling e-cigarettes. "The government believes from my perspective that it's alright to smoke cigarettes... which is much more injurious for our health that vaping would be." The Association of Vapers India said the government's move "indicates it is more concerned about protecting the cigarette industry than improving public health". — Agencies

Saudi says output to be restored by...

Continued from Page 1

The extent of the damage at the plants remains unclear and Energy Intelligence has said that some of the repair work could take "several weeks".

But Saudi officials were also bullish on plans for the mega stock listing of oil giant Aramco, which was thought to be imperilled by the attack. "The IPO will continue as is, we won't stop anything," said Aramco chairman Yasir Al-Rumayyan. He said the IPO would take place "within the next 12 months" depending on market conditions. The energy giant's CEO, Amin Nasser, dismissed the suggestion it had taken a big reputational hit with the strikes, which observers have said exposed the vulnerabilities of Saudi infrastructure. "We are the most reliable company. When there is a crisis Aramco delivers," he told reporters. "Actually the rest of the world should be amazed at what

happened. In terms of no customers were interrupted, and production was put back on in a short time."

The mammoth IPO forms the cornerstone of a reform program envisaged by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to wean the Saudi economy off its reliance on oil. Saudi Arabia's energy infrastructure has been hit before, but Saturday's attack was of a different scale, abruptly halving half the OPEC kingpin's output - some six percent of the world's oil supply.

As the US points the finger of blame at Saudi Arabia's regional rival Iran, Prince Abdulaziz - half-brother to Prince Mohammed - refused to be drawn on who was responsible for the strikes. "We don't know who is behind the attack," he said, adding that the kingdom wants "proof based on professionalism and internationally recognized standards".

Washington has concluded that the attacks were launched from Iranian soil and that cruise missiles were involved, a US official told AFP on Tuesday. The official, who declined to be identified, said the United States was gathering evidence about the attack to present to the international community, notably European allies, at the UN General Assembly next week. — AFP

MP claims 16 missiles flew over Kuwait...

Continued from Page 1

but the exact launch site was yet to be pinned down. It displayed what it said were fragments of the arsenal of 18 drones and seven cruise missiles that devastated two facilities in the country's east, knocking out half the kingdom's oil production. "The attack was launched from the north and unquestionably sponsored by Iran," defense ministry spokesman Turki Al-Maliki told a press conference. "We are working to know the exact launch point."

However, he would not be drawn on whether Saudi Arabia believed that Iran would ultimately be found to be the culprit, only saying they were confident they would find where the weapons were fired from. Diplomats at the United Nations said experts were expected in the kingdom to lead an international inquiry. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who has directly blamed Iran for the strikes, was due to hold talks yesterday with Saudi leadership as he arrived in Jeddah to weigh with the US allies a response to the strike that roiled global energy markets.

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels, who have claimed Saturday's strikes, vowed meanwhile they had the means to hit "dozens of targets" in the United Arab Emirates. Saudi's de facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told Russian leader Vladimir Putin in a phone call the kingdom wants an international investigation that would be seen as highly credible, the state news agency SPA reported. President Donald Trump - who has already re-imposed sanctions that have crippled Iran's economy - yesterday promised to "substantially increase" the measures, winning quick praise from Riyadh.

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP that the administration has concluded that the attack involved cruise missiles from Iran and that evidence would be presented at the UN General Assembly next week. "As the president said, we don't want war with anybody, but the United States is prepared," Vice President Mike Pence said in a speech in Washington on Tuesday.

The apparent hardening of the US position came as Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei ruled out negotiations with Washington "at any level". That

Sports

Bag of nerves: Japan's Leitch tense before World Cup opener

'I'm so nervous I've been making all sorts of mistakes in training'

TOKYO: Japan captain Michael Leitch said yesterday that he has been "all over the place" in practice in the run-up to this week's Rugby World Cup opener against Russia. The talismanic skipper, who missed a chunk of the year with a groin injury, was named in a strong Brave Blossoms side by Japan coach Jamie Joseph for tomorrow's Pool A clash in Tokyo.

But Leitch, joined by Japan stalwarts Yu Tamura and Shota Horie in an experienced starting line-up, admitted he has been taken aback by the scale of the media attention on the hosts in the run-up to the game.

"This is no normal turnout," Leitch told a packed news conference. "I'm so nervous I've been making all sorts of mistakes in training — there's so many people and so many cameras. But I'm very proud to be part of the World Cup and to be captain of the Japan rugby team." Leitch, who orchestrated Japan's jaw-dropping 34-32 victory over South Africa in their opening game on England's south coast four years ago, predicted that the home side would make history by reaching the knockout stage for the first time.

"In 2015 everyone expected us to lose — even the Japanese public," said the Japan flanker.

"But when we beat South Africa, all eyes were on us. The next game against Scotland 30 million people watched on TV and even though we lost, it inspired Japan. "This time we've got the opportunity to inspire Japan again. We've trained well, prepared well and this will be Japan's best World Cup ever."

Joseph, who will be without flying winger Kenki Fukuoka (high strain), insisted Japan would not go into tomorrow's game as favourites, despite the weight of evidence.

'SCARY' RUSSIANS

"I never read Japanese newspapers but I've never really considered us to be the favourites," said the former All Black, pointing to a narrow 32-27 win over a hulking Russian side last November. "We have a lot of respect for Russia," he added. "We were very lucky to win last time we played. I wouldn't say we were favourites — I'd say we were even going into this Test match and if we don't play our best we're going to struggle."

Despite the absence of Fukuoka, Joseph has enough firepower in the shape of Kotaro Matsushima and Lomano Lemeki to leave Russia chasing shadows in Tokyo. "We think we have the best guys for the job," insisted Joseph, who has kept Japan among the world's top 10 rugby nations since taking over from Eddie Jones. "The team has prepared as well as ever before and we look forward to Friday night."

Leitch called on Japan to thrive on the pressure of kicking off the tournament. "There's been pressure for over four years," he said. "We've talked about it, confronted it. In terms of hyping the boys up, I don't need to do that. We don't need permission to play well — just go out and enjoy it." However, the Japan captain ended on a cautious note, warning of Russia's feisty nature. "Their mentality is quite scary," he said. "Their martial arts fighters are so tough — even their sumo wrestlers. I'm sure they're going to bring it."

Japan (15-1)

William Tupou; Kotaro Matsushima, Timothy Lafaele, Ryoto Nakamura, Lomano Lava Lemeki; Yu Tamura, Yutaka Nagare; Kazuki Himeno, Pieter Labuschagne, Michael Leitch; James Moore, Wimpie



TOKYO: Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (L) is presented jerseys of Japan's national rugby team by the team's captain Michael Leitch (2nd R) during a courtesy call by World Rugby officials as part of the Webb Ellis Trophy tour, at Abe's official residence in Tokyo, ahead of the start of the 2019 Rugby World Cup on September 20. —AFP

van der Walt; Asaeli Ai Valu, Shota Horie, Keita Inagaki. Replacements: Atsushi Sakate, Isileli Nakajima, Koo

Ji-won, Luke Thompson, Hendrik Tui, Fumiaki Tanaka, Rikiya Matsuda, Ryohei Yamanaka. — AFP

'Brewing' Ireland chomping at the bit: Farrell

YOKOHAMA: World Rugby's number one ranked team Ireland are peaking at just the right time, assistant coach Andy Farrell said yesterday ahead of their World Cup opener against Scotland on the weekend.

Such was the bite and desire at training, Farrell said, that the coaches didn't even need to be on the paddock in some sessions. "This week, there's certainly a feel of something that's brewing that's of major importance to the squad," said Farrell, who will take over from Joe Schmidt after the Kiwi stands down as Ireland head coach after the World Cup.

"The intensity, the bite that's in training is very sig-

nificant and there's a completely different feel, so I suppose that's a culmination of what's happened over the last couple of months into this week.

"The build-up, the week, the buy-in, the grabbing hold of the week by not just the senior players but everyone in the group has been very significant." Farrell, a former Wigan and Britain rugby league legend who had a brief spell in union as a player during which time he won eight caps for England and appeared at the 2007 World Cup, said experience was showing through in a squad boasting almost 1,300 caps.

"We trained unbelievably well on Monday," he said. "As coaches we didn't need to be on the field because of the ownership. "We have experienced players... and they know what it takes to build through this week."

"That's what you want, they're sorting themselves out and that's where we want to be. "We are building because we don't want to reach boiling point on Wednesday or Friday." Farrell, who was defence coach for England at the last World Cup when they became the first host nation to fail to progress from the pool

phase, likened Gregor Townsend's Scotland side to a "box of tricks", saying they liked to take calculated risks while playing at a high tempo.

"We need to expect the unexpected and try to get ahead of the game. "We need to make sure we create opportunities from our defence to combat that." Farrell confirmed that centre Robbie Henshaw, who missed the opening two games of the 2015 World Cup, was out for the weekend, but added that he was expected to be back for the second pool game, against Japan.

"The progress has been great and he's hitting all the markers as far as a return to training etc so they're happy with how he's progressing and hopefully he'll keep that upward curve," he said. Aside from hosts Japan, Pool A also includes Russia and Samoa.

Progression from the pool for the two top finishers would set up quarter-finals against the winners and runners-up from Pool B, likely to be a permutation of New Zealand and South Africa. That means Farrell might only get to pitch himself against his son, current England playmaker Owen, from the semi-finals. —AFP

Russians plot Japan shock in WCup opener

TOKYO: Russia coach Lyn Jones said yesterday he had a cunning plan to ambush hosts Japan in this week's Rugby World Cup opener, revealing only that it involves a little mayhem. The Russians, known as the Bears, will tower over their opposite numbers when they line up in Tokyo tomorrow, but few people are giving them much chance of springing an upset against the world's 10th-ranked side.

"With structured and organised sides like Japan you need to create chaos to get them to think for themselves," Jones told AFP after naming a full-strength side led by his skipper Vasily Artemyev.

"I don't know if they're educated to do that, but it's all theory anyway. "We do have a plan," added the former Wales international. "We have got a formula and we think we can take Japan on and make life as difficult as possible for them."

Russia gave Japan a fright the last times the teams met in November, the Brave Blossoms scraping a 32-27 victory in Gloucester. "We just need to enter that last 20 minutes with everything to play for," said Jones.

"Let's be realistic — there's probably a 20 percent of us winning the game," he admitted ahead of the Pool A fixture. Jones pointed to wingers Kirill Golosnitskiy and German Davydov as potential match-winners for Russia if the Japanese fail to fire.

"They're fantastic players and they know the way to the line," the former flanker, who only took charge of Russia last year, said. "But we appreciate the 10 years advantage Japan have over us and that they're entering the game as firm favourites."

"We've fit four years of preparation into one year," he added. "We don't know what to expect but we know it's going to be fast and furious." Russia's results have been a mixed bag in the build-up to their second World Cup appearance, and first since 2011, which included a record 85-15 pummeling by Italy.

"Look we're not playing a different level — we're playing a different sport," shrugged Jones, whose side face further pool games against Ireland, Scotland and Samoa. "The ball is the same shape, but it's tier-one rugby and it's something we don't play very often."

Artemyev, his country's record try scorer, called on Russia to rise to the challenge. "Through the last week we've had an unprecedented amount of attention," said the 32-year-old. "It's a bit unusual for our boys — we're quite humble players and don't get this exposure in Russia."

"But it's going to be awesome and everyone is hugely motivated. We've put in the work and now we're looking to get results."

Russia (15-1)

Vasily Artemyev; German Davydov, Vladimir Ostroshko, Dmitry Gerasimov, Kirill Golosnitskiy; Yuri Kushnarev, Vasily Dorofeev; Nikita Vavilin, Tagir Gadzhiev, Vitaly Zhivotov; Bogdan Fedotko, Andrey Ostrikov; Kirill Gotovtsev, Stanislav Selskii, Valery Morozov

Replacements: Evgeny Matveev, Andrei Polivalov, Azamat Bitiev, Andrey Garbuzov, Anton Sychev, Dmitry Perov, Ramil Gaisin, Vladislav Sozonov. — AFP

The big question: Who will win Rugby World Cup?

TOKYO: The 2019 edition of the Rugby World Cup is being hailed as the most open ever, with several teams considered serious contenders. Here are the main challengers:

NEW ZEALAND: THREE IN A ROW?

Bookmakers' favourites to win an unprecedented third straight title, the mighty All Blacks tuned up for their Cup defence with a 92-7 demolition of Tonga and with three former World Rugby Players of the Year in their ranks, they remain the team to beat in Japan.

Coach Steve Hansen has challenged his players to embrace the pressure and it will take a momentous performance to prise the trophy from the likes of Beauden Barrett, Brodie Retallick and Kieran Reid.

But some chinks in the armour have emerged. They relinquished the Rugby Championship to South Africa after being held 16-16 at home, and slumped to a record defeat to the Wallabies after Scott Barrett's controversial red card.

They also lost their long-term position as the world's number one team, first to Wales and then Ireland, and head into the World Cup second in the rankings.

The Pool B clash between the All Blacks and the Springboks promises to be the crunch match of the early stages and could have a huge bearing on who emerges victorious in Yokohama on November 2.

SPRINGBOKS: CAN HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF?

South Africa waited 12 years between their two World Cup triumphs in 1995 and 2007 and are hoping the pattern repeats itself in 2019. If Siya Kolisi, the first black player to captain the Springboks at a World Cup, lifts the Webb Ellis Cup, it would be an image to rival the famous picture of then skipper Francois Pienaar receiving the trophy from Nelson Mandela.

Coming off the back of their first southern hemisphere title in 10 years, the Springboks will fancy their chances and the advantage of having the All Blacks in their pool is that they cannot face them again until the final. Coach Rassie Erasmus has been lauded for a "miraculous" turnaround in South Africa's rugby fortunes, only two years after suffering a 57-0 humiliation at the hands of arch-rivals New Zealand — the heaviest defeat in the history of the Green and Gold.

"Rassie has taken us out of a dark space and put us in a good place," said South African rugby boss Mark Alexander. How good a place only time will tell.

IRELAND: BREAKING THE Q-F CEILING?

Desperate to overcome the jinx of never having won a World Cup knock-out match, Ireland come into the



TOKYO: Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe points at the Webb Ellis Trophy during a courtesy call by World Rugby officials as part of the Webb Ellis Trophy tour, at Abe's official residence in Tokyo. —AFP

tournament ranked top after beating Wales home and away in warm-up games. Much rests on the shoulders of current World Player of the Year Johnny Sexton, with the 34-year-old playmaker suffering a drop in form in recent months.

And the injuries that have blighted previous campaigns — an injury-ravaged squad lost 43-20 to Argentina in the 2015 quarter-final — already threaten to strike again, especially in the back line.

Star centre Robbie Henshaw has a hamstringing injury that has ruled him out of Ireland's critical first Pool A encounter with Scotland, and they are also sweating on the fitness of fullback Rob Kearney.

But Joe Schmidt's Ireland have shown they can beat the best, with two historic wins over the All Blacks — one on neutral territory in Chicago — and the will want to give the departing coach a World Cup to add to his three Six Nations titles.

ENGLAND: THE JONES EFFECT?

Never has a host team failed to make the World Cup quarter-finals. Yet that was the humiliating fate suffered by England in 2015 and they will be desperate to make amends in Japan.

Their not-so-secret weapon? Australian coach Eddie Jones, who has extensive experience in Japan after leading the Brave Blossoms, who memorably beat the Springboks 34-32 in the 2015 World Cup's "miracle

of Brighton". This time around, England boast enviable firepower up front with number eight Billy Vunipola and lock Maro Itoje capable of making significant line breaks, and pace out wide with Jonny May and Elliot Daly. They have twin playmakers in Owen Farrell and George Ford and come into the tournament with confidence high after destroying the Irish 57-15 at Twickenham.

But the canny Jones is taking nothing for granted. "Are we moving in the right direction? Yes. Are we ready to win the World Cup now? No," he said after the Ireland match.

WALES: CAN THE DRAGON ROAR?

The proud rugby nation will be hoping to send talismanic skipper Alun Wyn Jones and Kiwi coach Warren Gatland out on a high after a run of 11 home wins from 2017 that saw them briefly occupy the top of the world rankings. But while Gatland has led Wales to three Grand Slams, limited success against the southern hemisphere powerhouses — including 11 straight losses against the All Blacks — has raised doubts about their World Cup-winning pedigree. Injuries have also blighted Wales' preparation, with influential number eight Taulupe Faletau and in-form fly-half Gareth Anscombe not making the plane to Japan, while assistant coach Rob Howley was sent home over an alleged breach of betting regulations. —AFP

Sports

Judo federation bans Iran after fighter loses to avoid facing Israeli

'Iranian intelligence officials came to his home in Iran and to the judo arena and warned him'

PARIS: Iran has been suspended from international judo for ordering a judoka to lose at the world championships to avoid facing an Israeli, the International Judo Federation (IJF) said yesterday. Saied Mollaie, who entered last month's event in Tokyo as the reigning world champion in the -81kg class, said he was ordered to throw his semi-final rather than risk facing an Israeli in the final.

Mollaie lost to Belgian Matthias Casse who in turn lost to Sagi Muki of Israel in the final. "The alleged actions are serious enough to consider the application of a protective suspension," the IJF said in a statement.

It explained that it had "strong reason to believe that the Iran Judo Federation will continue or repeatedly engage in misconduct". After finishing fifth in Tokyo last month, Mollaie fled to Berlin. "I've had a German visa and I'm in Germany to stay away from the rumours," Mollaie told the London-based Persian language channel Iran International.

"God forbid something would happen to my family. But I serve my country and whatever medal I get belongs to Iran, whether it's under the Iran or IOC flag," he added. "I feel sorry that maybe I won't be able to compete for Iran again. But I didn't train this hard just

to put up this show of losing." The Times of Israel quoted the Israeli coach as saying Mollaie's family had been threatened. "From what we understand," said Moshe Fonti. "Iranian intelligence officials came both to his home in Iran and to the judo arena and warned him."

The statement said the IJF "notes that similar acts have been observed in the past." It gave as an example Arash Miresmaeili, Iran's flag bearer at the 2004 Athens Olympics and a favourite in the 66kg class. He was drawn to face Israeli Ehud Vaks in the first round but was too heavy at the weigh in and was disqualified without fighting. Miresmaeili is now the head of Iran's judo federation.

There have been examples of Iranian athletes being told to lose to avoid facing Israeli opponents in other sports, most notably wrestler Alireza Karimi at the under-23 World Championships in 2017. His coach was caught yelling "Alireza you must lose, the Israeli won" in a video that went viral in 2017.

Karimi was suspended for six months for throwing his bout, while his coach was banned for two years. The IJF specifies that the Iranian Federation may appeal this decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) within 21 days. —AFP



BAKU: File photo taken on September 23, 2018 Iran's Saied Mollaie jubilates after winning in the men under 81kg category bout of the 2018 Judo World Championships in Baku. Iran was suspended from all competitions, administrative and social activities organized by International Judo Federation and its Unions. — AFP

Hamilton hopes to shine under Singapore floodlights

SINGAPORE: Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton can return Mercedes to the top of the podium this Sunday with an unprecedented fifth win around the floodlit streets of Singapore. Winners of 10 of the season's 14 races so far, Mercedes suffered a double defeat in Belgium and Italy to Ferrari with the fast straights of Spa-Francorchamps and Monza giving the Italian team a rare edge.

The Marina Bay layout, winding through the heart of the glittering city state, has more corners (23) than any circuit, however, and should restore Mercedes' status as the team to beat after wins at similar venues like Monaco and Hungary. "For a long time, Singapore used to be one of our weakest tracks," said Mercedes boss Toto Wolff. "We've made some inroads into that and performed well last year."

"However, there are no home runs at a track like Singapore," added the Austrian. "We take absolutely nothing for granted in our approach to the weekend."

Hamilton, who leads team mate Valtteri Bottas by 63 points with seven races left, is tied with Ferrari rival Sebastian Vettel for most Singapore wins.

The only drivers of the current crop to have triumphed in the city-state have each won four times.

Two of Hamilton's wins have come in the last two years. Another victory on Sunday will see the five-time champion secure his third in a row and hand Mercedes their fourth successive Singapore success.

Ferrari, on a high after winning two races on the trot with the second of those in front of their passionate home fans in Monza, could face a reality check. Their hopes could rest on the weather or a safety car, which



MONZA: File photo shows winner Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc (L) celebrates next to third placed Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton (R) on the podium after the Italian Formula One Grand Prix at the Autodromo Nazionale circuit in Monza on September 8, 2019. — AFP

has made an appearance in every race Singapore has hosted since it joined the calendar in 2008.

Vettel who was involved in a multi-car start line crash that cost him victory in 2017, will have to stay out of trouble. The German four-times champion was sanctioned after spinning out and rejoining the track in a dangerous manner in Italy and is now only three penalty points away from a one-race ban.

"After two positive weekends in Belgium and Italy, the race in Singapore doesn't look as good on paper for us," said Monegasque Charles Leclerc, winner in Belgium and Italy. "It might be a more difficult weekend

team in the Women's T20 Challenge played alongside the Indian Premier League in May.

There she shared the dressing room with the likes of England's World Cup-winning all-rounder Danielle Wyatt, who termed Verma as the next "superstar" of Indian cricket. It also meant mixing with role model and Velocity skipper Mithali Raj, who has been the face of women's cricket in the country since her India debut two years before Verma was born.

Raj's decision to quit T20 triggered Verma's maiden call-up and many saw it as a passing of the baton. None of it would have been possible but for Sanjeev's dogged determination for his daughter to play for India, despite living in Haryana, a state notorious for its male bias and skewed sex ratio.

ADAMANT DAD

"I was lucky to have an upbringing that's so different from most girls of my age. Many scoffed at the idea of a girl playing an outdoor sport with boys, but dad was adamant," Verma said of her father, a jeweller.

"Despite the discouragement, dad gave me everything that he would give to my elder brother. "Even after I started playing, people said girls have no future in cricket. But dad shielded me from any cynicism and asked me to focus on cricket only."

It was, however, batting great Sachin Tendulkar's arrival in Rohtak for his Ranji Trophy swansong that really planted the seed of ambition in Verma. She was

part of the sea of humanity that gathered at Bansi Lal stadium in 2013 to get a glimpse of the retiring maestro.

"So many people to watch a cricketer. I was just dumbstruck. I asked dad if it could happen to me and he said 'If you work hard, nothing is impossible.' "I took it to heart and have since been working hard."

Verma, who trains at Rohtak's Ram Narain Cricket Club, has been chosen for the first three Twenty20s of the five-match series against South Africa, and the youngster is determined to nail her place in the side before flourishing across formats.

"I want to score a lot of runs and cement my place in the Twenty20 team. I also want to play in ODIs," she said. "I think I can play across formats without really overhauling my technique." — Reuters



Shafali Verma

Russian anti-doping chief attacks his own athletics federation

PARIS: Russia's anti-doping agency chief yesterday launched a scathing attack on Russian athletics bosses ahead of this month's world championships in Doha, accusing them of obstructing testing.

"I'm calling on all the federation's directors to resign," RUSADA director general Yuri Ganas told France's L'Equipe sports daily. Russia was barred from international competition in 2015 over a vast state-run doping conspiracy.

While Russia's anti-doping agency RUSADA is now under new leadership, Ganas claims that the old guard at the country's athletics federation (RUSAF) is hindering progress in cleaning up the sport. "We (RUSADA) are cooperating with the IAAF, we are conducting investigations," he told L'Equipe. "The scale of the backlog is crazy. It's the problem of the system, because there is proof of intervention from a higher body."

"There are those who are against my work, for example the Sports Minister (Pavel Kolobkov) has defended and continues to support (RUSAF) chief (Dmitry) Shlyakhtin at the head of the athletics federation." Since the initial ban, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) has rejected Russia's efforts to be reinstated no fewer than 11 times. The IAAF will consider the Russian federation's latest request when its top officials meet in Doha on Monday.

Despite the ban, athletes subsequently deemed clean have been allowed to compete as neutrals and if Russia is rejected for a 12th time then — just as at the London 2017 world championships — Russian athletes who have met the criteria will be allowed to take part as so-called Authorised Neutral Athletes.

In June RUSAF was rocked by fresh allegations, with reports that Russian coaches suspended for involvement in doping were continuing to train athletes. British newspaper The Sunday Times ran a story alleging that RUSAF officials had fabricated documents to show that Danil Lysenko, the 2017 world silver high jump medallist, was too ill to provide his whereabouts after failing to make himself available for out-of-competition drug testing. —AFP

Verma, the tomboy teen who could be India's next superstar

NEW DELHI: Shafali Verma was not exactly trying to be a rebel when she began training with the local boys in the north Indian city of Rohtak as a precocious 10-year-old. In a region where girls pursuing outdoor sports are often frowned on, it was more out of compulsion that she slugged it out with boys in her bid to play cricket for India, a dream she shared with her father Sanjeev.

Every outing meant new bruises from the bowlers but the 15-year-old, who got her maiden India call-up for this month's Twenty20 series against South Africa, reckons it was probably a blessing in disguise.

"It was a struggle initially, playing against the boys," short-haired Verma, who plays as a swashbuckling opener, told Reuters from Rohtak. "I often got hit in the helmet. On a few occasions, they even smashed my helmet grille. But there was no question of giving up."

"They never treated me with kid gloves because I'm a girl. And I always tried to give it back to them. Guess that's how I developed my hard-hitting batting style." Verma's power-hitting was her ticket to the Velocity

S Lanka optimistic about saving Pakistan tour

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's cricket board remains hopeful of going ahead with its tour of Pakistan but will await the final all-clear from the defence ministry, an official said yesterday. Sri Lanka Cricket Secretary Mohan de Silva said he was satisfied with the security arrangements of their hosts, but reports last week of a possible terror attack had been referred to the defence ministry for investigation.

The Sri Lanka team was the target of an attack during a Test match in Pakistan's Lahore in March 2009. Six Sri Lankan players were injured when gunmen attacked their bus. Six Pakistan policemen and two civilians were killed.

Since the attack, a majority of international teams have refused to tour the South Asian country. Sri Lanka played one T20 match against Pakistan at Lahore in October 2017. De Silva told AFP: "Earlier last month I visited Pakistan along with our security consultant and we were satisfied with the arrangements."

"They have promised security reserved for a head of state." The six-match tour, due to start on September 27, was put on hold last week after Sri Lanka's prime minister's office warned the board that it had unspecified information about a possible attack against its players.

Sri Lanka Cricket did not call off the tour, but instead asked the government to reassess the security situation and make a final determination about the fate of the tournament. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has said it was not aware of any information relating to the safety of the Sri Lankan team, but has reiterated its commitment to provide security.

Ten senior players have opted out of the tour citing security concerns. Sri Lanka has already announced two squads for the three One-Day Internationals and the three T20 matches starting September 27. — AFP

Canadian ice dancers Virtue and Moir announce retirement

TORONTO: Canadian ice dancers Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir have announced their retirement from the sport after an illustrious career in which the duo became the most decorated Olympic figure skaters of all time. The pair, who became household names after winning a gold medal on home ice at the 2010 Olympics, delivered the message late on Tuesday on both of their Twitter accounts through a self-recorded video showing them skating around an empty rink.

"Hello everybody, we have some news for everyone, for our fans, people who have supported us, it's a little bit emotional so bear with us," said Moir, 32.

"We didn't know how to tell you, but I guess the best way for us is just to go where we're most comfortable. "This is home for us ... we spent 22 years

coasting around the outside of the rink, hanging out together, making programs, trying to just soak up our sporting experience." Moir continued before Virtue jumped in.

"After 22 years, it feels like the right time to step away from the sport," Virtue, 30, said.

"This is so personal and emotional for both of us. We're just so grateful. How lucky are we really that we got to share all of this together and with all of you?"

When Virtue and Moir won gold in Vancouver it marked a breakthrough for North American ice dance as the Canadian pair ended a streak of European dominance that had existed since the sport became an Olympic event in 1976.

They went on to earn a pair of silver medals at the

2014 Sochi Olympics and then won gold in both events four years later in Pyeongchang.

Their career also includes three world titles, most recently in 2017 when the victory capped an undefeated season, and they went on to led Team Canada as flag-bearers for the opening ceremony at the Pyeongchang Games.

Virtue, who along with Moir, is preparing for a Canada-wide Rock the Rink Tour that runs from Oct. 5-Nov. 23, said the future of Canadian ice dancing is a bright one. "We're in such good hands in Canada. The next generation of skaters is going to blaze new trails, break all of our records and we can't wait to cheer them on," said Virtue. "And we'll be there watching," added Moir. — Reuters

Sports

Penalty drama as holders Liverpool, Chelsea lose Champions League openers

Ajax claim impressive 3-0 home win over Lille with their newest signings among the goals

PARIS: Holders Liverpool began their defence of the Champions League trophy with a defeat against Napoli on Tuesday, while one missed spot-kick condemned Chelsea to defeat against Valencia and another came to Barcelona's rescue.

Liverpool survived a 1-0 defeat in Naples in the group stage last season to go on and win their sixth European Cup, and this time a 2-0 reverse at the San Paolo made them the first reigning champions to lose their opening game in the competition since 1994.

Both sides had chances in the Group E clash before the hosts won a late penalty with barely 10 minutes remaining when Jose Callejon went down under an Andy Robertson challenge.

Dries Mertens beat Adrian from 12 yards and substitute Fernando Llorente — who played for Tottenham Hotspur against Liverpool in last season's final — then took advantage of a rare defensive lapse by Virgil van Dijk to make it 2-0 in stoppage time.

"I don't think it's a penalty. What can I say, for me, it is clear and obvious no penalty," Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp said of the spot-kick to BT Sport. "We played a lot of good football but didn't finish it off."

Liverpool must now bounce back in two weeks when they host Austrian champions Salzburg, who made a stunning return to the group stage as teenage forward Erling Braut Haaland netted a hat-trick in a 6-2 demolition of Genk. Salzburg had fallen in the qualifying rounds in the last seven campaigns but finally progressed this season to the group stage for the first time since 1994-95. Haaland, the teenage English-born Norwegian striker whose father Alf-Inge played for Manchester City, gave Salzburg a second-minute lead and netted twice more before half-time.

Aged just 19 years and 58 days, Haaland is the third-youngest player to score a Champions League hat-trick behind Wayne Rooney and Raul, according to sports

statisticians Opta. The South Korean Hwang Hee-Chan and Dominik Szoboszlai also struck before the break for Salzburg, while captain Andreas Ulmer completed the rout in the second half.

Jhon Lucumi and Tanzanian striker Mbwana Samatta scored for the Belgian champions. Last season's Europa League winners Chelsea ensured it was two defeats out of two on the night for English sides as they lost 1-0 at home to Valencia.

The Spaniards scored in the 74th minute when a Dani Parejo free-kick was converted by Rodrigo Moreno. Chelsea were given a chance to rescue a draw when Daniel Wass was penalised for handball in the box, but Ross Barkley's 87th-minute penalty hit the bar and went over.

"It's a harsh lesson of Champions League football, a game we've played pretty well in and we lose it," said Chelsea boss Frank Lampard. "The good thing is we have five more games to turn it around."

AJAX IMPRESS

Also in Group H, last season's semi-finalists Ajax claimed an impressive 3-0 home win over Lille with two of their newest signings among the goals.

Quincy Promes headed the Dutch champions in front and the Mexican Edson Alvarez doubled their lead early in the second half before Nicolas Tagliafico sealed the win. After a patchy start to the season, Barcelona will be relieved to escape from their trip to Borussia Dortmund with a 0-0 draw as Lionel Messi returned from injury as a second-half substitute.

The home side will feel they should have won, but Marco Reus had a second-half penalty saved before Julian Brandt hit the bar late on. "We played brilliantly in the second half, and it feels a bit like we have lost two points," Dortmund defender Mats Hummels told Sky.

Those two appear well placed already to progress



NAPLES: Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah (C) fails to score past Napoli's Italian goalkeeper Alex Meret (Bottom) as Napoli's Greek defender Konstantinos Manolas (L) looks on during the UEFA Champions League Group E football match Napoli vs Liverpool. —AFP

from Group F after Inter Milan needed a stoppage-time Nicolò Barella goal to rescue a 1-1 draw against rank outsiders Slavia Prague.

Nigerian forward Peter Olayinka put Slavia ahead in the 63rd minute, only for Barella to level in the second minute of stoppage time after a Stefano Sensi free-kick

hit the bar. In Group G, RB Leipzig won 2-1 at Benfica with Timo Werner bagging a brace before Haris Seferovic pulled one back. Earlier, Memphis Depay's penalty gave Lyon a 1-1 draw at home to Zenit Saint-Petersburg after Iranian striker Sardar Azmoun opened the scoring. —AFP

Ter Stegen the hero as Dortmund rue missed chances against Barca

DORTMUND: Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde said his team had goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen to thank after they escaped with a 0-0 draw at Borussia Dortmund in their Champions League opener on Tuesday.

"The team overcame a bad moment today, mainly thanks to Ter Stegen," said Valverde after watching his side survive a second-half onslaught from Dortmund.

In a game in which Lionel Messi made his return from injury, it was Ter Stegen who shone for Barcelona. The German 'keeper saved a penalty from Dortmund captain Marco Reus and repeatedly frustrated the hosts as his own side struggled.

"It was a difficult game today and I think the result is fair considering what happened," Ter Stegen told Sky, and commiserated with Germany teammate Reus. "Marco played really well today, and really hurt us," said Ter Stegen.

Dortmund and their captain, however, were left to rue several missed chances. Reus said he felt "rubbish" after his missed penalty and insisted that Dortmund should have won the game. "We had four or five chances, and if we had taken one of them, we would have won," he told Sky.

"We said after the draw that we wanted to qualify for the knockout stages. If we continued to play like we did today then there shouldn't be a problem." "We played brilliantly in the second half, and it feels a bit like we have lost two points," Dortmund defender Mats Hummels told Sky. Lucien Favre's side delivered on their pre-match promise to play fearlessly against five-time European champions Barcelona, probing the visitors from the wings and repeatedly finding gaps in the back line.

Reus was denied at point-blank range by Ter Stegen and Jadon Sancho fired the ball over the crossbar shortly before half-time. The hosts continued to turn the screw after the break, and were rewarded with a penalty when Nelson Semedo tripped Sancho in the box.

Yet Ter Stegen denied countryman Reus again from 12 yards, diving low to his left to beat away his international teammate's spot-kick. The Barcelona 'keeper has now saved four of the six penalties he has faced in the Champions League, and was called upon to stop Reus once more later in the half as Dortmund continued to dominate.

A luckless Reus also fired another good chance well over, while substitute Julian Brandt thundered a long-range effort against the crossbar. By that point, Messi, who has been out for weeks with a calf injury, had come off the bench to make his first appearance of the season.

The 32-year-old came on around the hour mark for Ansu Fati, the 16-year-old prodigy freshly crowned as Barcelona's youngest ever Champions League debutant.

Yet he remained as blunt as his teammates in a Barcelona attack stifled by the impeccable defending of Dortmund elder statesmen Hummels and Axel Witsel. The Argentine nonetheless had a chance to score the winner with the last kick of the game, but was denied by a desperate block from Thomas Delaney. The draw leaves all four teams in Group F level on one point, after Inter Milan and Slavia Prague played out a 1-1 draw earlier on Tuesday. —AFP



KASHIMA: Kashima's midfielder Leo Silva (L) fights for the ball with Guangzhou's midfielder Zheng Zhi (R) during the AFC Champions League quarter-finals second leg football match between Kashima Antlers of Japan and Guangzhou Evergrande of China at the Kashima Stadium in Kashima, Ibaraki prefecture yesterday. —AFP

Cannavaro's Guangzhou end Kashima's reign as Asian champions

KASHIMA: World Cup winner Fabio Cannavaro moved a step closer to AFC Champions League glory as his Guangzhou Evergrande side stunned Asian champions Kashima Antlers yesterday on away goals to reach the semi-finals.

The Chinese giants, who won the competition in 2013 and 2015, go through after drawing 1-1 in Japan following a goalless stalemate in Guangzhou three weeks ago. Cannavaro, who lifted the 2006 World Cup as Italy's captain, will be thanking his goalkeeper Zeng Cheng, who pulled off a string of world-class saves to keep his side in the match after they grabbed the crucial away goal before half-time. A cagey start and mostly tepid first half from the two renowned attacking sides sparked into life when Talisca put the visitors ahead in the 40th minute.

The bleach-blond Brazilian midfielder rose highest to meet Huang Bowen's corner on the right and head home unstopably from close range.

Lacklustre Kashima had won their last six home games in the knockout stages of the AFC Champions League, keeping three clean sheets, and the goal served to wake the Japanese giants. They laid siege to the Guangzhou goal after half-time and it took just six minutes of the second period to equalise. Leo Silva's speculative shot was

deflected past the unlucky Zeng off another Brazilian, Serginho, who was credited with the goal.

Kashima needed to score again to keep their title defence alive and coach Go Oiwa threw on his dual attacking threat of Yuki Soma and Ayase Ueda with 20 minutes to go as he went all out in search of the winner.

It almost paid off immediately as Oeda started a smooth passing move that culminated in Serginho rattling the crossbar with a superb 20-yard left-foot curler that had Zeng for once stranded. Kashima kept pressing and Guangzhou and Zeng desperately kept them at bay until a dramatic fourth and final minute of added time.

With just 10 seconds remaining Leo Silva danced into the box on the left flank, cut back towards the penalty spot and beat Zeng with a right-foot shot only to see it blocked on the line by a sprawling defender.

It was hacked clear as the referee blew for full-time and the Guangzhou players to man collapsed to the turf in relief and a large contingent of travelling fans from the southern Chinese city danced in the stands. They go through to a semi-final against fellow two-time champions Urawa Red Diamonds from Japan next month, with the winners meeting either Al Sadd from Qatar or Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal in November's two-legged final. —AFP

Conte's Inter shocked by 'ruthless' Slavia Prague

MILAN: Inter Milan coach Antonio Conte insisted he was to blame for misjudging opponents Slavia Prague after the Chinese-owned club rescued a disappointing 1-1 draw in their Champions League opener against the Czech outsiders on Tuesday.

Substitute Nicolò Barella scored eight minutes into stoppage time in the San Siro after Nigerian forward Peter Olayinka put the Czech club ahead in the 63rd minute.

"Slavia Prague attacked us with intensity and showed a ruthless streak," said Conte. "We didn't do well in terms of finding the right solutions and struggled too much." It was a draw that had the taste of defeat as the Italian team left

the pitch heads bowed. "A point or zero, today is the same thing, my feeling must be the feeling of the players," said Conte. "There must be no player who goes home happy. You have to go home, thinking about what to do to avoid this kind of performance." Slavia Prague are top of Group F ahead of Inter followed by heavyweights Barcelona and Borussia Dortmund who settled for a goalless draw in Germany.

"This isn't the kind of football we want to play and why we train," continued Conte. "I'm the one who's primarily responsible, for selections made and obviously I didn't make the lads understand what I wanted from them well enough." Olayinka, who has previously played in Albania and Belgium, pounced after Inter goalkeeper Samir Handanovic had saved from Jaroslav Zelény.

However, Inter equalised when a Stefano Sensi free-kick rattled off the bar and the ball came out to Barella, whose shot found the net with the aid of a deflection. Slavia goalkeeper Ondrej Kolar then made a fine reaction save from a Romelu Lukaku header in the 97th minute, and a draw was the least the visitors deserved. —AFP

Man Utd, Arsenal carry English hopes in Europa League

PARIS: Manchester United and last year's finalists Arsenal headline an English trio that also features Europa League newcomers Wolves while record five-time champions Sevilla figure to be among the primary contenders as the group stage begins today. Scottish rivals Celtic and Rangers face testing paths to the knockout rounds as bitter foes Roma and Lazio bid to end Italy's two-decade wait for the title. Porto, PSV Eindhoven and Feyenoord are the other former European Cup winners in a competition that will welcome the eight third-place finishers from the Champions League groups for the knockout phase.

United, Europa League winners in 2017, will host Astana in Group L as Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side face opponents from Kazakhstan for the first time in club history. They will expect to progress with relative ease from a group that also includes Partizan Belgrade and former finalists AZ Alkmaar of the Netherlands. Unai Emery's Arsenal return to the competition after last season's 4-1 defeat by Chelsea in the final in Baku saw the Blues pip them to Champions League qualification.

The Gunners visit Eintracht Frankfurt to kick off their campaign, with 10-time Belgian champions Standard Liege and Portugal's Vitoria Guimaraes also in Group F. Wolves, in their first European campaign since 1980, will meet Portuguese club Braga in their opening game at Molineux.

Nuno Espirito Santo's team came through three ties just to reach the group stage. They beat Torino 5-3 on aggregate in the play-offs. "I think any team in the Europa League are a good team who we will respect going up against them. We will give everything, try to play and try to beat any team," said Wolves winger Adama Traore.

"Any player wants to play in Europe, but the Europa League is exciting, it is a new thing for us and it's a good thing."

Scottish champions Celtic travel to French Cup holders Rennes in Group E, with Italian Cup holders Lazio and CFR Cluj, the Romanian side to whom they lost in Champions League qualifying, completing a tricky section. Steven Gerrard's Rangers are at home to Jaap Stam's Feyenoord on Thursday and will do well to navigate a group with Porto and Swiss champions Young Boys.

Roma will take on Istanbul Basaksehir in their first game while Moenchengladbach host Austria's Wolfsberg — not to be confused with German outfit Wolfsburg. Austria boast two representatives with LASK Linz among the six debutants — alongside Espanyol, Wolves, Wolfsburg, Olexandriya and Ferencvaros — in the tournament.

UEFA will distribute 560 million euros to clubs competing in this season's Europa League, just over a quarter of the 1.95 billion euros allocated to those participating in the Champions League.

Each of the 48 clubs in the group stage will receive a base of 2.92 million euros, with lifting the trophy worth just under 18 million euros in basic prize money. Teams will net 570,000 euros per win and 190,000 for a draw with additional revenue coming through television markets and money depending on each team's UEFA ranking.

By comparison, the Champions League winners stand to take home around 75 million euros before considerable sums are tacked based on the market pool and coefficient ranking. The final will be held in the Polish city of Gdansk on May 27, 2020. —AFP

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Twins make homer history in wild win

Brewers beat Padres for 11th win in 12 games



MINNEAPOLIS: Marwin Gonzalez #9 of the Minnesota Twins hits a two-run single against the Chicago White Sox during the twelfth inning of the game at Target Field in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Twins defeated the White Sox 9-8 in twelve innings. — AFP

MINNEAPOLIS: Ronald Torreyes was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded in the 12th inning to drive in the winning run, and Miguel Sano hit his 30th home run of the season to lead the Minnesota Twins to a record-setting 9-8 victory over the Chicago White Sox on Tuesday in Minneapolis. Torreyes was struck on his right forearm by a 1-1 pitch by Jose Ruiz (1-4), the sixth Minnesota batter to reach base in the inning. Gonzalez, who finished 3-for-6, had tied the game earlier in the inning with a two-run single. Ryan LaMarre also homered on a night when the Twins became the first team in baseball history to have five players hit 30 home runs in a season. Sano joined Nelson Cruz (37), Max Kepler (36), Eddie Rosario (31) and Mitch Garver (30) in the 30-homer club with a 482-foot drive into the third deck in left-center. Tim Anderson homered and had four hits, Eloy Jimenez had three hits, and Ryan Cordell, Zack Collins and Adam Engel also homered for Chicago, which lost its fourth straight game, three of them in walk-off fashion.

GIANTS 7, RED SOX 6 (15 INNINGS)

Pinch hitter Alex Dickerson lofted a sacrifice fly in the top of the 15th inning to send San Francisco past host Boston. Dickerson's fly ball decided a game that featured a major-league-record-tying 24 pitchers used between the two clubs. Dereck Rodriguez (6-9), the 13th pitcher for the Giants, earned the win, pitching a scoreless 14th inning and then working around a walk and a single in the 15th. The Giants tied the major league record for most pitchers used in a game, matching the number the Colorado Rockies used in a 16-inning win over the Los Angeles Dodgers on Sept. 15, 2015. That same Rockies-Dodgers game also set a record for most overall pitchers used, 24, which Boston and San Francisco matched as well.

ASTROS 4, RANGERS 1

Justin Verlander worked six shutout innings to earn his 19th win, and Alex Bregman and Yordan Alvarez hit back-to-back home runs as host Houston inched closer to securing a postseason berth with a victory over Texas. Verlander (19-6) allowed four hits and two walks while recording eight strikeouts. He improved his season strike-out total to 283, seven shy of his single-season high set last year, while bumping his career mark to 2,989 strikeouts. Verlander could soon become the 18th pitcher in history with 3,000 K's. The Astros kept pace with the New York Yankees for the best record in the majors, each with 99 wins. Houston can clinch a third consecutive postseason bid with a win Wednesday against Texas.

YANKEES 8, ANGELS 0

Luis Severino pitched four innings in his season debut, and Gleyber Torres highlighted a six-run fourth with a three-run homer as New York began its final homestand with a shutout victory over Los Angeles. The Yankees lowered their magic number to clinch their first AL East title since 2012 to one. Severino allowed two singles while facing 15 hitters after missing New York's first 151 games due to right rotator cuff inflammation. He struck out four, walked two and threw 47 of 67 pitches for strikes.

NATIONALS 6, CARDINALS 2

Howie Kendrick hit a home run among his three hits, Patrick Corbin pitched six strong innings, and visiting Washington defeated St. Louis. Kendrick also had a triple, a single and a walk, and Victor Robles added two RBI singles for the Nationals, who improved to 7-9 in September. Corbin (13-7) allowed two runs, both unearned, on five hits. He struck out 11 and walked four. After Fernando Rodney threw a shutout inning, Daniel Hudson pitched two scoreless innings for his fourth save.

BREWERS 3, PADRES 1

Mike Moustakas hit a tiebreaking homer in the seventh inning as Milwaukee beat visiting San Diego for its 11th win in 12 games. After the Cubs lost to the Cincinnati Reds later Tuesday, Milwaukee is now tied with Chicago in the race for the NL's second wild-card spot with both teams two games back of the first-place St. Louis Cardinals in the NL Central. The Padres have lost six straight. Brandon Woodruff, making his first big league appearance since he sustained a left oblique injury July 21, started for the Brewers and struck out four over two hitless innings. Matt Albers (8-5) earned the win despite allowing Hunter Renfroe's game-tying homer in the top of the seventh.

REDS 4, CUBS 2

Sonny Gray pitched 6 2/3 strong innings, and rookie Aristides Aquino smacked a two-run home run to help visiting Cincinnati snap Chicago's five-game winning streak. Gray (11-7) limited the Cubs to two runs and four hits with three walks and nine strikeouts. Raisel Iglesias struck out two in a perfect ninth inning for his 32nd save. Yu Darvish (6-7) yielded four runs on six hits in seven innings with one walk and 13 strikeouts, giving him 27 strikeouts over his past two starts covering 13 innings. Darvish struck out eight successive batters from the second through fourth innings, a single-game franchise record.

DODGERS 7, RAYS 5

Corey Seager hit a pair of two-run doubles, including the go-ahead hit in the seventh inning, as Los Angeles put together a victory over visiting Tampa Bay, whose wild-card advantage narrowed to one-half game over Cleveland. Seager hit a ground-rule double to score a pair of runs in the fifth inning and hit a ball into left-center to bring home the first two runs in a five-run seventh. He has 18 RBIs in his past 13 games. The Dodgers won while making a late change to their pitching plan. Ross Stripling was scheduled to start but came on in the fourth instead to pitch two innings as Los Angeles worked on a strategy it might use in the playoffs. Kenta Maeda (10-8) earned the victory, and Kenley Jansen got the last four outs for his 30th save.

PHILLIES 5, BRAVES 4

Journeyman Jose Pirela's first homer of the season capped a five-run fourth inning and helped Philadelphia win at Atlanta. The Phillies trailed 2-0 before erupting against Dallas Keuchel in the fourth. Rhys Hoskins started it with a two-run, opposite-field homer, his 29th. Cesar

Hernandez added an RBI groundout, and Pirela followed with a two-run shot. Leading 5-3, Philadelphia withstood a ninth-inning rally. Hector Neris gave up a leadoff homer to Adam Duvall, and Atlanta got the tying run to third base when Ronald Acuna Jr. walked, stole second and went to third on a groundout. However, Neris struck out Josh Donaldson and retired Nick Markakis on a pop fly to earn his 27th save.

METS 6, ROCKIES 1

Rookie Pete Alonso hit his majors-leading 48th home run, one of three home runs New York hit in the sixth inning in defeating Colorado in Denver. Amed Rosario and Brandon Nimmo also went deep to help the Mets end a two-game skid and pull to within four games of the second NL wild-card spot, currently shared by Chicago and Milwaukee. Marcus Stroman (9-13) tossed seven shutout innings, allowing just four hits and a walk while fanning seven. Rosario and Alonso had two hits and two RBIs apiece.

A'S 2, ROYALS 1

Matt Olson ignited a two-run seventh inning with a home run, and Seth Brown broke a tie with an RBI double two batters later as host Oakland rallied past Kansas City. Brown finished with a single and a double for the A's, who have won seven of eight and lead the race for the first

American League wild card by two games over the Rays. Rookie A.J. Puk (2-0) got the win after pitching two scoreless innings. Joakim Soria and Liam Hendriks (23rd save) retired all six Royals they faced, striking out four, to preserve the lead over the final two innings.

INDIANS 7, TIGERS 2

Rookie Oscar Mercado belted a solo homer to highlight his fourth straight multi-hit performance as host Cleveland continued its mastery of Detroit. Jordan Luplow and Roberto Perez each drove in a pair of runs, and Yasiel Puig added an RBI single for the Indians, who defeated Detroit for the 15th straight time and the 16th time in 17 meetings this season. Adam Plutko (7-4) allowed two runs on four hits in six innings. He fanned six while walking one.

BLUE JAYS 8, ORIOLES 5

Justin Smoak hit a tiebreaking homer to lead off the top of the ninth inning, and Cavan Biggio later completed his cycle with a two-run triple that helped Toronto defeat host Baltimore. Mychal Givens (2-6) came on to pitch for the Orioles in the ninth, and Smoak belted his homer to right on the second pitch. Biggio tripled with two outs to drive in two more and give the Jays a 7-4 lead. Toronto scored four overall in the ninth. Biggio became the first Toronto player to hit for the cycle since 2001, finishing 4-for-5 with four RBIs and three runs.—AFP

Kohli, bowlers star in India's T20 win over South Africa

CHANDIGARH: An unbeaten half-century from skipper Virat Kohli and disciplined bowling helped India beat South Africa by seven wickets in the second Twenty20 international yesterday. Kohli made 72 off 52 balls as India chased down their target of 150 in 19 overs in Chandigarh to lead the three-match series 1-0 after the opening game was washed out.

But it was the bowlers led by paceman Deepak Chahar, who set up the win after restricting South Africa to 149 for five in their innings. "Bowlers showed lot of character. The pitch was very good and they got off to a good start so it was an outstanding effort from the bowlers," man of the match Kohli said after the win.

"As long as they (youngsters) show character in difficult situations, they are going to present a strong case for themselves in the future." Kohli then anchored the chase, putting on crucial partnerships including a 61-run second-wicket stand with opener Shikhar Dhawan, who made 40 off 31 deliveries.

The left-handed Dhawan fell to a spectacular catch by an airborne David Miller at long-on with left arm spinner Tabraiz Shamsi getting the breakthrough. Debutant spinner Bjorn Fortuin struck soon to get wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant back in the pavilion for four as India slipped to 104 for three.

But Kohli, who went on to complete his 22nd T20 fifty in 71 games, stood firm to see the team home with Shreyas Iyer, on 16 as he hit the winning four, at the other end. Kohli moved regained his status as the highest run-getter in T20 internationals with 2,441 runs. He is locked in a battle with teammate Rohit Sharma, who was out for 12 and has 2,434 runs from 97 matches.

Earlier, South Africa skipper Quinton de Kock smashed 52 off 37 deliveries to give his team a brisk start before the Indian bowlers struck back. De Kock, a wicketkeeper-batsman, put on a crucial 57-run second-wicket stand with debutant Temba Bavuma.

The left-handed opener, who was recently appointed leader of South Africa's T20 side, smashed eight fours as he completed his third fifty in the shortest format.

Paceman Navdeep Saini got the prized wicket of De Kock with Kohli taking a sensational one-handed running catch from mid-off. Bavuma went on to make 49 off 43 deliveries before becoming Chahar's second victim as South Africa lost steam in the middle overs.—AFP