



**5** Customs seizes 40-foot container with fake goods



**24** Masses surge to Dakar for mega-mosque inauguration



**27** Chepngetich takes marathon gold as heat decimates rivals



# Kuwait among top 20 improvers in Ease of Doing Business Index

Amir congratulates PM • Saleh: Ranking due to relentless reforms



**KUWAIT:** The Doing Business Team at the World Bank Group (WBG) announced on its website that Kuwait for the first time joined the group of top 20 improvers in the Ease of Doing Business Index 2020 out of 190 economies included in the Doing Business report to be published officially by the end of October. This global index covers 10 key components that represent various dimensions of business regulatory environment for domestic enterprises.

This initial announcement ahead of the release of the report showed that Kuwait has enhanced business reforms in accordance with its 2035 national vision and goals. The announced improvement reflected reforms in six components covering: Starting a business, getting electricity, registering property, getting credit, protecting minority investors and trading across borders.

In this context, Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) announced, as head of the Permanent Committee for Streamlining Business Environment And Enhancing Competitiveness in the State of Kuwait (PCK), that the underlying significance

of improving Kuwait's position in the Ease of Doing Business Index 2020 is that it directly and indirectly contributes to making Kuwait's investment climate more attractive and supports the attainment of the national vision 2035 and its developmental goals, which will eventually boost the expansion of the economic cycle, availing the creation of more real job opportunities for the local workforce.

This improvement capped the dedicated efforts exerted by the PCK since it was established by a Council of Ministers' decision at the end of 2013, headed by KDIPA, with membership extended to include 11 competent government authorities, in addition to representatives of the private sector and the civil society organizations. The PCK was initiated with full support by HH the Prime Minister to serve as an active platform for coordinating national efforts, documenting reforms, raising awareness on reforms undertaken and following up their progress, as well as placing improving business environment and national competitiveness at the top priority of the government work program.

On this occasion, the PCK conveys the utmost appreciation and esteemed gratitude to HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and to HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the leadership's foresight and calls to mobilize national efforts to attain this improvement, that will support fostering Kuwait competitiveness in international indices, enabling it to assume its role as a leading financial and commercial center, augmented by the leadership's ongoing focus on this issue, in a way that motivated all relevant parties to endorse, with competence and efficiency, their mandated responsibilities to realize this strategic goal.

HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah yesterday sent a cable of congratulations to HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. In the cable, the Amir expressed his sincere congratulations on the classification of Kuwait among the list of the 20 most improved countries in the ease of doing business index issued by the World Bank Group, noting that this rating is a worthy government achievement on

Continued on Page 24



Wife of Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikha Rima Al-Sabah (left) is seen with US First Lady Melania Trump. — KUNA

## Sheikha Rima among DC's most powerful women

**WASHINGTON:** The wife of Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikha Rima Al-Sabah was named by a prominent US magazine as one of only two Arab women in the US capital's 2019 Most Powerful Women. Sheikha Rima Al-Sabah, Goodwill Ambassador to UNHCR, was named among the Washingtonian's 150 Most Powerful Women, being the only Arab woman to be honored along with Saudi Ambassador to the US Princess Reema bint Bandar Al-Saud.

Sheikha Rima was among 150 of "the area's most influential women in governance, business, law, education, media, nonprofits and the arts".

Continued on Page 24

## Saudi enforces 'decency' amid tourism push

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia said yesterday it would issue fines for 19 offences related to public decency, such as immodest dress and public displays of affection, as the Muslim kingdom opens up to foreign tourists. The interior ministry decision accompanies the launch of a visa regime allowing holidaymakers from 49 states to visit one of the world's most closed-off countries. Till now, most visitors have been Muslim pilgrims and businesspeople.

Violations listed on the new visa website also include littering, spitting, queue jumping, taking photographs and videos

of people without permission and playing music at prayer times. Fines range from 50 riyals (\$13) to 6,000 riyals (\$1,600). "The regulations are meant to ensure that visitors and tourists in the kingdom are aware of the law relating to public behavior so that they comply with it," a government media statement said.

It said Saudi police had the sole responsibility for monitoring offences and imposing fines, a comment that appeared to marginalize the kingdom's religious anti-vice squads whose authority to pursue suspects or make arrests was curbed in 2016. The religious force, known as the mutawa, used to ensure people prayed five times a day in line with Muslim teachings and that women covered their heads. They also enforced bans on music, alcohol, gender-mixing and women driving cars.

Continued on Page 24



DIRIYAH, Saudi Arabia: Participants attend the launch of a new tourism visa at this UNESCO-listed heritage site outside Riyadh on Friday. — AFP

## Khan warns of nuke war over Kashmir at UN; Modi silent

**UNITED NATIONS:** Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan warned the United Nations Friday that his country's dispute with India over Kashmir could escalate into an all-out nuclear war that would have consequences for the world. In a fiery speech lasting 50 minutes, Khan said India could unleash a "bloodbath" in the Muslim-majority territory, as the nuclear-armed rivals took center stage at the UN General Assembly. His heated rhetoric stood in stark contrast to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address an hour earlier, when the Hindu nationalist leader touted domestic successes but made only an oblique reference to terrorism.

Continued on Page 24



NEW YORK: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (left) and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan (right) address the 74th Session of the General Assembly at UN headquarters on Friday. — AFP



## Democrats press Trump impeachment

**WASHINGTON:** Democrats charged aggressively into an impeachment investigation of US President Donald Trump on Friday, ordering Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to turn over Ukraine-related documents and scheduling testimony for witnesses to alleged abuse of power by the US leader. Three House committees gave Pompeo one week to produce the documents, saying multiple State Department officials have direct knowledge of Trump's efforts to enlist the Ukraine government's help in his US campaign for reelection.

Continued on Page 24

## British tanker in Dubai after Iran release

**DUBAI:** The British-flagged oil tanker Stena Impero arrived in Dubai yesterday, after being detained with its crew in Iran for more than two months in an incident that inflamed tensions in the region. Iran's Revolutionary Guards seized the vessel in the Strait of Hormuz on July 19 after surrounding it with attack boats and rapping onto its deck. It was then impounded off the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas for allegedly failing to respond to distress calls and turning off its transponder after hitting a fishing boat.

But the seizure was widely seen as a

tit-for-tat move after authorities in the British overseas territory of Gibraltar detained an Iranian tanker on suspicion it was shipping oil to Syria in breach of EU sanctions. Tehran repeatedly denied the cases were related. British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said however that the tanker was "unlawfully seized by Iran" as part of attempts to "disrupt freedom of navigation".

On Friday, the Stena Impero was finally cleared to sail from Iran and into international waters of the Gulf. "Despite the vessel's clearance, its legal case is still open in Iran's courts," Hormozgan province's maritime organization in southern Iran said on its website. The tanker's captain and crew have "given a written, official statement that they have no claims", it added.

The ship docked at Port Rashid in Dubai yesterday after halting off the coast

Continued on Page 24



DUBAI: The British-flagged oil tanker Stena Impero is docked in Dubai yesterday after sailing from the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas where it was held for over two months. — AFP

## Local

# UN Secretary-General commends Kuwait's 'effective role', peacemaking efforts

## Kuwaiti FM meets UN chief, Iranian counterpart



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. — KUNA photos



Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah participates in the OIC member-states' meeting.



Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini.

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah held talks with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on the fringes of the 74th UN General Assembly session. The meeting, which took place on Friday night, focused on cooperation between the State of Kuwait and the various UN agencies, a number of regional and global challenges and the UN program of action for the coming years. The UN chief commended the 'effective and constructive' cooperation with Kuwait and applauded the leading role of Kuwait in humanitarian action and peacemaking efforts regionally and globally. He praised Kuwait's highly significant position in the international community and its relentless efforts to boost security and peace around the world. Also attending were Kuwait's Assistant Minister Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Permanent Delegate to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi and Minister Plenipotentiary and Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Nasser Al-Hain as well as other senior diplomats.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif held a meeting in New York Friday, discussing various issues including ways to bolster ties. On the sidelines of the 74th UN General Assembly, the two officials touched on the latest developments within the regional and international scenes. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also held similar meetings on Friday with his Greek counterpart Nikos Dendias, Brazil's Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo, and Algeria's Foreign Minister Sabri Boukadoum.

### OIC meeting

In the meantime, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled took part Friday in the consultative meeting for members of the Organization Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held on the sidelines of the 74th UN General Assembly in New York. In his speech to the meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled stressed the importance of expanding cooperation amongst OIC members to address issues of common interest. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled affirmed it was important to address major topics such as the Palestinian cause and ways to support Palestinians to gain their right in an independent state within the 1967 borders and Jerusalem as the capital of the future country.

Matters such as countering terrorism of all kinds, including Israeli terrorism against Palestinians, fighting

Islamophobia and hate speech, which resulted in massacres against Muslims such as the one in New Zealand's Christchurch town and elsewhere, are vital to discuss to find adequate solutions, he indicated. Back to the Palestinian cause, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said it was the most central issue for Islamic nations, adding that supporting the economic and social levels would hopefully overcome some of the injustices inflicted by Israelis against Palestinians. Israel should be stopped from attempting to annex lands in the West Bank and other areas in the region, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled indicated, saying that such responsibility falls in the hands of all OIC members.

### Syrian crisis

On the Syrian crisis, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled expressed utter condemnation of the degrading humanitarian situation in the war-torn country. He called for all parties involved in the conflict to abide by the UNSC resolution 2254 and the Geneva 1 accord of 2012, adding that the OIC supports all UN and global efforts to end the war in Syria. The current situation in Idlib,



## Kuwaiti FM partakes in OIC meeting

with the displacement of over half million human beings is alarming, said the Kuwaiti top diplomat, adding that there should be measures to halt the deaths of thousands of civilians in Syria. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled expressed sorrow over the veto against a UNSC draft resolution last week, which called for a ceasefire in Idlib, pointing out that political gains should not trump efforts to end the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria.

The Kuwaiti Foreign Minister discussed the situation in Yemen in his speech, saying that Kuwait supported the legitimate Yemeni government. Kuwait is for solving the situation in accordance with the GCC initiative, the



Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

resolutions of the national Yemeni dialogue, UNSC resolutions 2216 and 2451, and the Stockholm accord for Yemen, affirmed the Kuwaiti Minister. In regards to the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled expressed Kuwait's detest of all acts of genocide against the Muslim minority, saying that his country, alongside members from the UK and Peru, headed last a UNSC delegation to Myanmar to view first the plight of the oppressed Rohingyas.

### Meeting on Yemen

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled had also headed Kuwait's delegation to a ministerial meeting on Yemen held on the sidelines of the 74th session of the UN General Assembly in New York Thursday. In his speech at the meeting which was co-chaired by Kuwait, the UK, and Sweden, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled reaffirmed Kuwait's full support to all efforts exerted to end conflict and restore security and stability in Yemen. He also reiterated Kuwait's readiness to provide all support to Yemeni people. The Kuwaiti top diplomat urged the international community intensify efforts to restore security and stability in Yemen according to the three agreed terms of reference, implement the Stockholm Agreement, and render the UN-led political process a success. He called

for greater backing for the United Nations Secretary-General Special Envoy to Yemen efforts to achieve these goals. The meeting tackled the framework for resuming negotiations in Yemen to reach a final agreement for the crisis and help preserve the country's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

### GCC-EU meeting

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also took part in the Gulf-European meeting held on the sidelines of the 74th session of UN General Assembly in New York. Sheikh Sabah Khaled led the Kuwaiti delegation to the meeting presided over by Oman's Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi. The meeting discussed the friendly relations and cooperation as well as coordination between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states and the EU member states. It also focused on means of promoting and developing these ties in all domains, including politics, economy and investment. The gathering dealt with the developments of regional and international situations, and issues of common concern. The two sides affirmed all common goals and principles, and commitments towards building constructive cooperation and partnership between the two sides. — KUNA

## Kuwait committed to Africa's sustainable development goals

NEW YORK: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah affirmed on Kuwait's commitment to continue supporting sustainable development goals in Africa, whether through governmental or public cooperation or through institutions affiliated to it, like Kuwait Fund for Arab and Economic Development (KFAED). The remarks were made in a speech by Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled at a UN Security Council session on security and peace in Africa, under the title 'Partnership to Promote Security and Regional Peace.'

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled called for maintaining the Peacekeeping Action Initiative in order to enable peacekeeping missions to be more efficient, better equipped, more secure and more robust, which calls for strong Security Council mandates and sustainable funding, praising the AU's continued commitment to cover 25 percent of the cost of operations and supporting peace. The minister stressed that rigorous efforts to respond to challenges to peace and security through preventive diplomacy and mediation should be the first line of defense for conflict prevention, pointing out that in order to achieve lasting peace and sustainable development goals of 2030, the root causes of violence and conflicts must be addressed before they erupt.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled called for consolidating a culture of peace and tolerance through educating children and youth, as well as the concepts of good governance, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and justice, along with addressing the roots of multiple and intertwined differences. He stressed on the importance of tripartite cooperation and coordination between the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), Arab League, and the Arabian Gulf Council (GCC), on regional peace and security issues. "The participation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a guest of honor at the African Union summit held in Addis Ababa in 2012, who as the first Arab leader from outside the African Union countries," he said, adding "showed how important this continent in general and to the African Union in particular."



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah speaks during a UN Security Council session on security and peace in Africa. — KUNA

The Kuwaiti Foreign Minister pointed out that Kuwait pledged during the summit to provide soft loans worth one billion dollars in addition to the amount of one billion dollars to invest in infrastructure under the supervision of the General Authority for Investment in addition to the announcement of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah of one million US dollar annual prize to support development research in food, health and education in Africa.

Kuwait is counting on the United Nations and its affiliate organizations to enhance African countries' capabilities, and to implement the initiative to end violence and guns in Africa in 2020, which was already highlighted by the Security Council in its resolution 2457/2019 in addition to achieving the agenda of the African Union for 2063, which is consistent with the objectives of development Sustainable Development of the United Nations 2030 in collaboration with donor countries. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled concluded by saying Kuwait will continue to improve AU's ability to embody the vision of peace, progress, prosperity, and prevent and resolve conflicts, safeguard peace and security and achieve stability in the African continent. — KUNA

## FM meets Kuwait's mission to UNGA session

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Kuwait's mission to the UN General Assembly session. — KUNA

## Kuwaiti official partakes in ACD meeting

NEW YORK: A senior official at the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry took part Friday in the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) meeting held on the sidelines of the 74th UN General Assembly in New York. Assistant Minister for the Affairs of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah's office Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah stressed during his speech to the meeting the importance of boosting cooperation amongst Asian nations especially within the economic mainframe. Kuwait is very eager to contribute to Asian economic prosperity, he affirmed, adding that this was evident in the hosting of the very

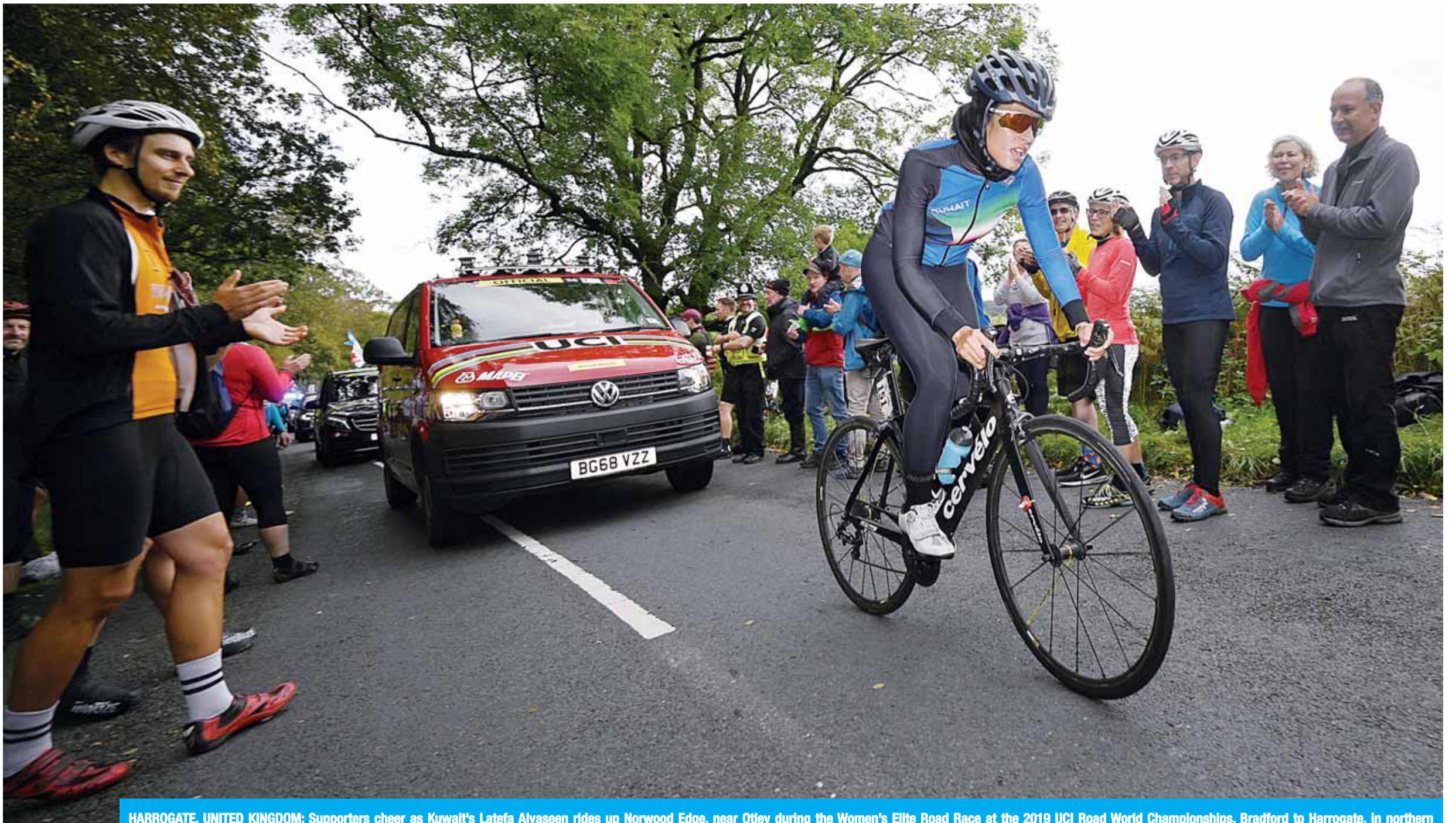


NEW YORK: Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah participates in the ACD meeting. — KUNA

first ACD meeting in Kuwait. The headquarter of the ACD's General Secretariat is also located in Kuwait, another example of the Gulf country's commitment to the cause of Asian cooperation, he affirmed. — KUNA

Local

Photo of the Day



HARROGATE, UNITED KINGDOM: Supporters cheer as Kuwait's Latefa Alyaseen rides up Norwood Edge, near Otley during the Women's Elite Road Race at the 2019 UCI Road World Championships, Bradford to Harrogate, in northern England yesterday. —AFP

### Seventh Kuwait Collegiate Programming Contest underway

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The 7th Kuwait Collegiate Programming Contest (KCPC) for 2019 was hosted yesterday by Kuwait College of Science and Technology (KCST). KCST President Prof Khalid Al-Begain told Kuwait Times the contest is a qualifying round for the Africa and Arab Collegiate Programming Championship (ACPC), adding that the college is hosting this important contest that will qualify creative young people to compete on regional and international levels.

"The contest is for young creative computer programmers. This year there

are 43 teams from nine universities in Kuwait. Only three winners will qualify for the regional competition," he said. "The two-day competition was hosted by KCST for the second time, but the Faculty of Science and Technology is the best place to organize these kinds of contests in the coming years, hopefully," Begain added.

Dr Fares Melhes, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering at KCST, said the contest is a competition at the local and global level. "The competition is about solving technological problems. We have 210 participants from all public and private universities of Kuwait participating in the contest today." He stressed that the winners will qualify for the regional competition in Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt, where last year a KCST team qualified. "We are specialized in computer science, computer engineering and electronics. The program is part of our culture - we exist based on this kind of programming, coding and computing. This is our field to shine in," Melhes added.



KUWAIT: Participants in the 7th Kuwait Collegiate Programming Contest (KCPC). —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



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## Local

# Kuwait continues humanitarian work throughout the week

## Kuwait's assistance reaches people in need in Gaza, Yemen



**GENEVA:** Kuwait's Ambassador to the UN and International Organizations in Geneva Jamal Al-Ghunaim meets with Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross Gilles Carbonnier. — KUNA photos



**Kuwait's Ambassador to the UN and International Organizations in Geneva Jamal Al-Ghunaim meets with Representative of the World Health Organization in Yemen Altaf Musani.**



**Kuwait's Ambassador to the UN and International Organizations in Geneva Jamal Al-Ghunaim meets with Director of the FAO Liaison Office with the UN at Geneva Carolyn Rodrigues Birkett.**

**KUWAIT:** The State of Kuwait continues to extend its humanitarian arm throughout the globe, helping those who are in dire need. Kuwait's humanitarian stance stemmed from the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a figure recognized as a world humanitarian leader by the UN. In the Gaza Strip, Kuwait's International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) provided \$200 million funds to help irrigation projects in several areas. Head of Gaza's Makkah charitable society Dr Hazem Al-Seraj commended the Kuwaiti assistance, which will provide adequate water resources to the people of Gaza. Meanwhile, the official revealed that Kuwait also provided \$40,000 to help provide medical assistance and equipment to a hospital in the Gaza Strip.

In Geneva, the Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross Gilles Carbonnier lauded Kuwait's contribution to the committee's humanitarian programs and projects in Yemen. This praise came due to Kuwait's \$11 million-worth donation to efforts there. Kuwait's Ambassador to the UN and International

Organizations in Geneva Jamal Al-Ghunaim said that this donation is part of Kuwait's pledge made during the Donor Conference for Yemen, held in April 2018 in Geneva. He



### Int'l bodies recognize Kuwait efforts

expressed Kuwait's keenness to back the humanitarian situation in Yemen, and that his country contributes vitally in several ICRC's activities, especially since it is an active member in the ICRC Donor Support Group.

The Kuwaiti diplomat also mentioned that ICRC is currently making clear and tangible efforts in Yemen to secure humanitarian actions in that country, particularly in the general health field. Ghunaim affirmed his country's support of these efforts and commitment to honor its pledges made at the Donor Conference for Yemen. Also in Geneva, Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Yemen Altaf Musani lauded the role played by Kuwait in supporting healthcare in Yemen. Musani's statement came after his meeting with Ghunaim. Kuwait is committed to its humanitarian role and continues to provide vital aids to Yemenis, affirmed the WHO official, indicating that the new batch of support will be directed towards supporting hospitals and health clinics in Yemen. The Kuwaiti aid will also address the shortage of medicine and the spread of contagious ailments such as Cholera, he revealed.

Ghunaim said that Kuwait, as a global center of humanitarian aid, would continue to provide much needed aid to the people of Yemen in accordance to the directives of Kuwaiti leadership. The new batch of support comes in

line with the pledge made by Kuwait in the UN donors' conference for Yemen this spring, he added. Ghunaim indicated that he was glad that the Kuwait hospital in Yemen was one of the major operational health facilities in the war torn country, hoping that the Kuwaiti-funded hospitals will attend to the needs of Yemenis.

Meanwhile, Director of the FAO Liaison Office with the UN at Geneva Carolyn Rodrigues Birkett lauded Kuwait's support to the organization. The remarks came after her meeting with Ghunaim, which discussed Kuwait's support and donations allocated to FAO's programs in Yemen, which would help in the rehabilitation of the agricultural and food services sector in Yemen, she said. Birkett expressed hope of this fruitful cooperation with Kuwait to continue. Meanwhile, Ghunaim said that cooperation between Kuwait and FAO aims at directing humanitarian support to those in need and affected in the first place. Kuwait's cooperation with FAO, whether in Yemen or Syria, is the only one of its kind in the region, he added. — KUNA

## Kuwaiti underlines interest in vital water conservation issues

**NEW DELHI:** A high level Kuwaiti official stressed yesterday Kuwait's keen interest in vital issues related to water conservation and sustainability as a delegation participated in the sixth annual India Water Week held in New Delhi. Assistant Undersecretary for Water Projects at Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity and Water Humoud Al-Roudhan said that Kuwait is continuously seeking to improve and develop water strategies and plans within the framework of the New Kuwait 2035 Vision, which is based on several important projects including water preservation. Roudhan stressed that the goal behind participating in such a forum is to exchange experiences in the field of water resources and conservation with leading specialists and experts from different countries of the world.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ambassador to India Jassim Al-Najem said that Kuwait's leadership attaches great importance to water and energy within the national development plan. Kuwait's participation in such meetings provides a great opportunity to communicate with world experts and helps improve strategic planning in raising the efficiency of the water sector and management of water facilities. The event, organized by the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation in cooperation with the European Union and Japan, brought together experts from many national and international organizations and institutions and research institutes specialized in the water resources, agriculture and energy sectors. — KUNA



**NEW DELHI:** Members of the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the sixth annual India Water Week held in New Delhi. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Envoy of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah headed yesterday to France to attend the funeral procession of late French President Jacques Chirac. — KUNA



**MONTREAL:** Kuwaiti and Nicaraguan officials pose for a group picture after signing the agreement. — KUNA photos

## Kuwait signs aviation agreement with Nicaragua

**MONTREAL:** Kuwait has signed a new agreement with Rwanda to regulate aviation services between the two countries. The agreement was signed on the sidelines of the 40th session of the General Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in Montreal, Canada. Head of Air Transport Agreements department at The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Khalid Abdullah Al-Enezi said the agreement "comes in line with the modernized policy of the DGCA to open new horizons to encourage international airlines to increase their flights to Kuwait International Airport."

"It would also facilitate the movement of passengers, air cargo, and link Kuwait International Airport with more international airports," he added. It will promote air traffic between the two countries, encourage trade exchange, and provide new and varied options to serve passengers from both countries, he said. The agreement included "the rules of operation of the national airlines of both countries, the exchange of transport rights, and the strengthening of cooperation between them in the field of security and safety of civil aviation,"



**DGCA Sheikh Salman Al-Hamoud Al-Sabah (right) during the signing ceremony of an agreement with Rwanda.**

he explained. Kuwait is represented by The General Directorate of Civil Aviation DGCA at the (ICAO) meetings, chaired by the President of the Civil Aviation Sheikh Salman Al-Hamoud Al-Sabah, who was elected First Vice President of the General Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization. Sheikh Salman also held talks with Malaysian Transport Minister Anthony Fook, and discussed joint cooperation in the field of aviation, navigation, aviation safety, and airport management.

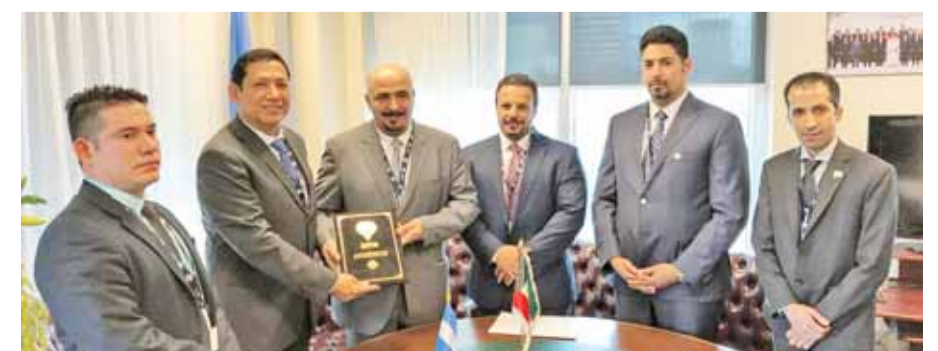
Kuwait had earlier signed an initial agreement with Nicaragua to regulate aviation services, the first of its kind between the two countries. Deputy Director General for Aviation Safety and Air Transport Affairs at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Emad Al-Juluwi said the agreement "comes in line with the modernized policy of the DGCA to open new horizons to encourage international airlines to increase their flights to Kuwait International Airport."

"It would also facilitate the movement of passengers, air cargo, and link Kuwait International Airport with more international airports", he added. It will promote air traffic between the two countries, encourage trade exchange, and provide new and varied options to serve passengers from both countries. The agreement included "the rules of operation of the national airlines of both countries, the exchange of transport rights, and the strengthening of cooperation between them in the field of security and safety of civil aviation," he explained. — KUNA

## Uzbekistan seeks closer cooperation with Kuwait

**BRUSSELS:** Uzbekistan is interested in developing its energy and economic cooperation with Kuwait, said Jurabek Mirzamukimov, First Deputy Minister of Energy in Uzbekistan and Director General of Uzatom (The Uzbek Agency for Nuclear Energy), in Brussels. "We are in close discussions with Kuwaiti companies. Our ambassador (in Kuwait) is active on this," he told a seminar on Uzbekistan in the Belgian capital. The Uzbek official was the keynote speaker at a seminar on 'The Future of Uzbekistan: Highlighting Energy

Potentials,' organized by the Brussels-based think-tank European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS). A few companies from Kuwait are also interested in renewable energy, said the Deputy Minister, adding, "We have negotiations with them. They have visited several plants." "We are looking for Kuwaiti investments not only in the energy sector, but in food processing and other areas," he noted. The Uzbek Deputy Minister, in his speech, explained the various strategies to develop the country's energy sector and encourage potential international cooperation. — KUNA



**BRUSSELS:** Uzbek First Deputy Minister of Energy Jurabek Mirzamukimov addresses the seminar. — KUNA

Local

# Amiri envoy's speech displays Kuwait's regional, international stances: FM

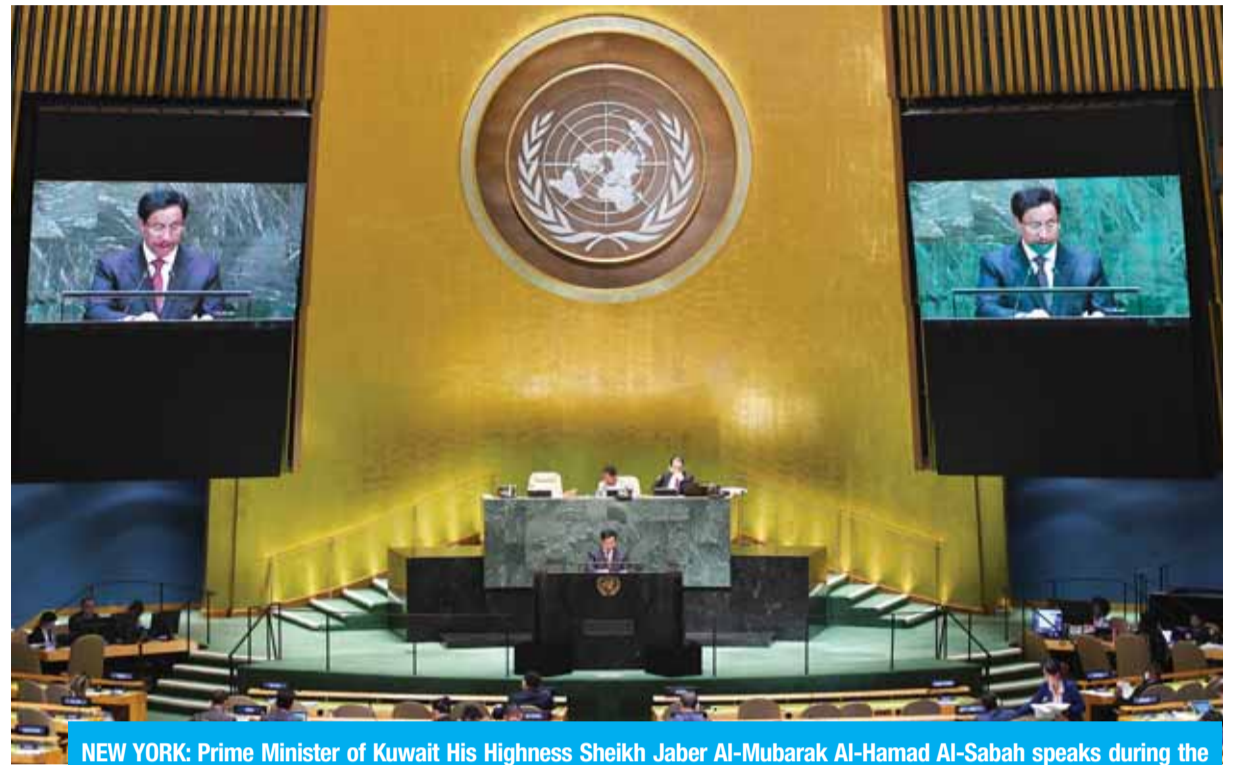
Kuwaiti delegation took part in 26 meetings and conferences on sidelines of UNGA

**NEW YORK:** Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said yesterday that the speech delivered by Kuwait's Amiri envoy to the 74th UN General Assembly had reflected his country's firm stances on regional and international issues. In a statement to KUNA and Kuwait Television, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said that the envoy of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah had reflected the exceptional partnership between Kuwait and the UN. It also touched on the New Kuwait 2035 Vision for development and the Gulf State's interest in contributing to the implementation of the 17-point UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), said Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled about the Amiri envoy's speech delivered to 91 heads of state, and 45 Prime Ministers.

The speech highlighted the terrorism acts carried out in the Gulf region's waters and the threat against regional states such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, indicated the Foreign Minister, adding that Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak also touched on the Palestinian cause and its centrality to Arab and Muslim nations. The conflicts in Yemen and Syria were also touched upon during the Amiri envoy's speech, the top Kuwaiti diplomat said, affirming that his country called for peaceful resolutions to the crises. The issue of Iraq, pointed out Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, was also highlighted in the speech,

which called for preventing terrorism from affecting the fellow Arab country, focusing on efforts to boost development there. In regards to Kuwaiti activities on the sideline of the UNGA, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled indicated that several meetings were held on the GCC, Arab, and Islamic levels.

Meetings with Asian countries on the sideline of the UNGA were also held, discussing ways to boost cooperation, he added. The UNGA this year witnessed a number of prominent events, such as the climate change summit, religious tolerance gathering called upon by the US, and others, he said, stressing that Kuwait was keen on partaking in such events. Kuwait — alongside the UK and Sweden — headed a meeting on Yemen, which was attended by the five UNSC members in addition to Germany, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled pointed out. He noted that the meeting, attended by UN Special Envoy to Yemen Martin Griffith, is a continuation to efforts started by the Stockholm accord meeting for Yemen and it came in preparation for an upcoming meeting for the war torn country scheduled in Kuwait. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also pointed to his country's efforts, shared by Saudi Arabia and the UN, in addressing the plight of the Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar, saying that the world has a responsibility to end this humanitarian crisis. The Kuwaiti FM revealed that the Kuwaiti delegation took part in 26 meetings and conferences held on the sideline of the UN General Assembly this year. — KUNA



**NEW YORK:** Prime Minister of Kuwait His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah speaks during the 74th Session of the General Assembly at the United Nations headquarters on September 25, 2019 in New York. —AFP

## Blaze guts 1,000 sq m industrial plot



**KUWAIT:** Firefighters battle the blaze.

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** A fire broke out at dawn yesterday in a 1,000 sq m industrial plot in Shuwaikh industrial area containing lumber and other flammable materials. Security sources said firemen from Shuwaikh industrial area, Shuhada, Ardiya and backup teams rushed to the scene, where they managed to control the blaze without reporting any casualties. Further investigations are in progress to determine the cause of the fire.

### Fatal fall

An Indian construction worker was killed when he fell from the second floor of a construction site in Shuwaikh, said security sources, noting that the man died instantly. A case was filed.

### Slandering remarks

Responding to a video on social media networks showing a Danish woman of Arab origin slandering Kuwait, the Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Media Department said the woman and her daughter arrived at

Kuwait International Airport holding Danish passports and requested tourist visas. The department explained that the daughter's passport validity was less than six months and that an extension was handwritten on it, which is against the visa conditions. The department added that both the woman and her daughter were sent to the airport hotel pending deportation. However, the Danish foreign ministry contacted its Kuwaiti counterpart confirming the validity of the extension, and accordingly, the tourist visas were issued. But a lawsuit was filed against the mother for her slanderous remarks about Kuwait.

## 40-foot container of fake items busted



**KUWAIT:** Air cargo and custom inspectors managed yesterday to foil an attempt to smuggle into Kuwait a 40-foot container loaded with fake products of famous brands, said security sources. The shipment, which arrived from an Asian country, contained fake watches, bags, accessories, laptops and other items. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun



## Indoors shisha ban on Municipal Council's agenda

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** The Municipal Council is scheduled to hold its meeting number 4/2019 tomorrow, said informed sources, noting that the meeting's agenda includes discussing a proposal made by members Hamad Al-Azmi and Moghammed Al-Roqib to ban smoking shisha indoors. The agenda also includes discussing a proposal made by the cabinet's secretariat general to allocate a site for the firemen's club near Al-Messila Water Village, using modern waste disposal technology in new districts, and allocating a site to build the Munch University among several other proposals.



The Municipal Council

## Patients' right protection law ready

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** The Fatwa and Legislation Department has finished a legal review of the medical responsibility and patients' right protection law referred to it from the Ministry of Health (MoH), said informed sources. The sources added that the Cabinet will review the law next month pending referral to the parliament by the end of October or in November. "This law is a priority for the government that is expected to be passed," the sources highlighted. Meanwhile, MoH sources said the ministry is about to take over the Kuwait Institute for Media Specializations (KIMS) building project from the Ministry of Public Works (MPW), adding that the building is built over a total area of 15,000 sq m in Sabah medical zone.

local spotlight

## Withdrawal of medicines?



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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**M**edicines usually go through multiple processes until they reach patients. The most important of these methods is their official approval by competent authorities for their use. The medicines usually get marketed in some countries or all over the world, and sometimes patients suffer some side effects and risks with their use, so withdrawing them is required until alternatives are found to protect people's health.

Assistant undersecretary for drug and food control affairs at the health ministry Dr Abdullah Al-Bader announced that the department has suspended and withdrawn some ranitidine medications, including the innovative formulation Zantac, for the treatment of acidity and reflux, as a precautionary measure, based on the preliminary results of analyses that were carried out in the laboratories of the department of registration and control. The US Food and Drug Administration and the European Commission on Medicines have said some of these medicines are likely to be carcinogenic.

"The international health authorities are currently studying and determining the permitted safe proportions of NDMA in food products and pharmaceuticals," Bader said, adding that until the completion of these investigations, ranitidine medications are being withdrawn in order to ensure the health and safety of patients. Patients were advised to consult their doctors for the use of available alternatives and to report any side effects of pharmaceuticals through the drug side effects reporting form on the health ministry website.

I think the MoH did well by suspending the use of the drug, and I hope that patients who take medications continuously, especially people with diabetes and blood pressure, should follow medical updates because the price is their life. The ministry must inform people of developments that may appear.

I think people's awareness of the side effects of any medicine is important, especially since sometimes some people buy drugs that may be unlicensed through social media. This I believe is very dangerous. So I was very pleased to read that ministry of health recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the GSI Foundation to start activating the system of accurate tracking of medicines and medical supplies by barcode. This system tracks medicines and medical supplies accurately from the manufacturer through the stores and pharmacies until they reach the patient, according to a ministry statement.

It sometimes see some private pharmacies exaggerate the offers of their products, whether cosmetic or medical, to encourage people to buy. The ministry of health should not allow non-pharmacists to display medicines and products and sell them to the public due to the seriousness of the matter. I hope MoH distributes leaflets to patients at government hospitals and clinics with medical updates and latest news people need to learn about.

It is natural that the withdrawal of any medication, especially for those who use it for long periods of time, is worrying, but these patients should consult with their specialist doctors for other safe alternatives. I think the issue of withdrawing unsafe medicines requires public awareness and careful follow-up by the ministry of health.



Afghan voters defy attacks, delays to choose president

## Mugabe burial underway in rural Zimbabwe home



KADUNA: Some of the 300 male students of 'different nationalities' are pictured in the Rigasa area of Kaduna in northern Nigeria after being rescued by police from an Islamic seminary where they were tortured and sodomized. — AFP

# 'Abused' captives freed from Islamic school

## Over 300 students tortured and sexually abused

KADUNA: Police in the northern Nigerian city of Kaduna have rescued more than 300 male students being held at an Islamic school where many had been tortured and sexually abused, a police spokesman said yesterday. Officers raided a building in the Rigasa area of the city on Thursday where the victims including adults and minors were kept in "the most degrading and inhuman conditions in the name of teaching them the Koran and reforming them", Kaduna state police spokesman Yakubu Sabo told AFP.

"We found around 100 students including children as young as nine, in chains stuffed in a small room, all in the name of reforming them and making them responsible persons," Sabo said.

The school which has been operating for a decade, enrolled students brought by their families to learn the Koran and be rehabilitated from drug abuse and other illnesses, police said.

The proprietor of the school and six staff were arrested during the raid.

Victims at the facility were found padlocked to car hubcaps and had their hands and feet chained. Others bore scars down their backs.

"The victims were abused. Some of them said they were sodomized by their teachers," Sabo stated.

Police had been tipped off by complaints from local

residents who became suspicious of what was happening inside the school.

During the raid on the school, police said they found a "torture chamber" where students were chained, hung and beaten.

Local police chief Ali Janga said that despite its claims to be an educational institution, the conditions proved that the facility was "neither a rehab (centre) or an Islamic school".

Those held there "were used, dehumanised, you can see it yourself", Janga said. Private Islamic schools are common in mainly Muslim northern Nigeria, where government services are often lacking.

### 'Severe punishment'

One inmate quoted by Nigerian media described horrific conditions and treatment at the facility.

"I have spent three months here with chains on my legs," 42-year-old Bello Hamza said, adding that he was meant to be in South Africa studying for his Masters degree.

"This is supposed to be an Islamic centre, but trying to run away from here attracts severe punishment; they tie people and hang them to the ceiling for that."

Another victim Hassan Yusuf told AFP that he had been sent to the centre two years ago because he had

converted to Christianity.

"They keep you incommunicado, you can't talk to anybody," the married father said.

Television footage showed emaciated children being loaded into minivans and driven away for processing.

Police said the victims were of varying nationalities and that some had been brought from countries in the region including Burkina Faso, Mali and Ghana. The victims were taken to a camp on the outskirts of Kaduna where their identities were being documented to determine where they came from and to contact their families. Parents of some of the victims from within the city, contacted by police were "shocked and horrified" when they saw the condition of their children, as they had no idea what was happening inside the school.

Parents were allowed to visit their children every three months, but only in select areas of the premises. "They were not allowed into the house to see what was happening... the children are only brought to them outside to meet them," Sabo said. "All they thought was their children are being taught the Quran and good manners as they looked subdued," he added. One of the men allegedly running the facility insisted to local television channels that the centre was simply teaching Islamic studies and that those chained up "were the stubborn ones who attempt to run away". — AFP



KADUNA: A boy shows his marks of torture pictured in the Rigasa area of Kaduna in northern Nigeria where 300 male students of 'different nationalities' were rescued by police. — AFP

## Trump launches a counter-attack

WASHINGTON: Facing the threat of impeachment, US President Donald Trump has launched a ferocious counter-attack with the help of Republican loyalists in Congress, media allies and a stream of angry tweets. Veering wildly between rage, defiance and self-pity, Trump is seeking to undo the political damage from asking Ukraine's leader to conduct an investigation into his potential 2020 Democratic rival Joe Biden, and a possible White House cover-up. "We're at war," the 73-year-old president declared.

For the coming fray, Trump has enlisted his allies in Congress and the media to try to shift the focus away from any wrongdoing by him and on to Biden and his son, Hunter, who served on the board of a Ukrainian gas company while his father was vice president. A list of White House talking points to Republican supporters in Congress for responding to the fallout from the Ukraine scandal launched by an anonymous whistleblower was accidentally emailed to Democratic lawmakers this week.

The document listed "myths" and "facts" that Republican lawmakers should address when publicly discussing the July 25 call between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky that prompted the Democratic-led House of Representatives to launch an impeachment inquiry for abuse of power. "The real scandal here is that leaks about a second-hand account of the President's confidential telephone call with a foreign leader triggered a media frenzy of false accusations against the president," it said.

"The president didn't do anything wrong," said Mark Meadows, a Republican congressman from North Carolina, in a clip from an interview on Fox Business Network retweeted by Trump. Andy Biggs, a Republican congressman from Arizona, in another clip retweeted by Trump

from an interview with Fox Business, said the treatment of the president by Democrats is "outrageous." "Their real motive is to affect the election next year," Biggs said.

Trump sought to turn the Ukraine scandal to his electoral advantage on Friday, repeating unsubstantiated allegations against the Bidens in an ad for his 2020 reelection campaign. "Joe Biden promised Ukraine \$1 billion if they fired the prosecutor investigating his son's company," a narrator intones ominously as eerie music plays in the background. "But when President Trump asks Ukraine to investigate corruption the Democrats want to impeach him and their media lapdogs fall in line," the narrator says. "They lost the election. Now they want to steal this one."

### 'Presidential harassment'

The accusations against the Bidens have been pursued for months by Rudy Giuliani, Trump's personal lawyer, and the US president asked Zelensky to "look into" them with the former mayor of New York. The charge is that Joe Biden sought the removal of Ukraine's top prosecutor to shield his son from a corruption probe into the gas company where Hunter Biden held a lucrative position on the board.

But Hunter Biden has not been officially accused of any wrongdoing and by all accounts Joe Biden sought the dismissal of the prosecutor because the US, Western European countries and the IMF all believed he was not tough enough on corruption. The White House narrative on Trump and Biden has been echoed by Fox talk show hosts sympathetic to the president, but not by everybody on the news side.

"The spinning that's been done by the president's defenders over the last 24 hours since this very damaging whistleblower complaint came out-the spinning is not surprising, but it is astonishing and I think deeply misleading," Fox News anchor Chris Wallace said Friday. "To dismiss this as a political hack seems to me to be an effort by the president's defenders to try to make nothing out of something and there is something there," Wallace said. — AFP

## Police tighten restrictions in Indian Kashmir

SRINAGAR: Authorities in Indian Kashmir tightened restrictions on people's movements yesterday to prevent possible protests following a speech by Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan. In an address to the United Nations General Assembly on Friday, Khan warned of a bloodbath once India lifts its restrictions in Kashmir, which have been in force since it revoked the region's decades-old autonomy in August and detained thousands of people.

Soon after the speech, hundreds of Kashmiris came out of their homes, shouting slogans in support of Khan late on Friday night and calling for the independence of Kashmir. Muslim-majority Kashmir has long been a flashpoint between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan, which have fought two of their three wars over the divided territory. Both countries rule parts of Kashmir while claiming it in full.

Yesterday, police vans fitted with speakers made public announcements in some parts of Srinagar about movement restrictions, while additional troops were deployed to prevent protests, according to officials and two witnesses. The troops also blocked access to the main business centre of Srinagar with razor wire. "This was necessitated after protests across Srinagar city last night soon after Imran Khan's speech," said a police official, who declined to be identified.

Two Indian officials said six militants and one Indian soldier had been killed in two separate incidents in the state, two officials said. Three militants were killed in Ganderbal, about 12 miles north of Srinagar, according to one of the officials, who

declined to be named. Another three were killed in Batote, located on the highway connecting Jammu and Srinagar. Indian defense spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Devender Anand said.

### 'Inhuman curfew'

India's crackdown as it revoked Kashmir's special status was accompanied by severe restrictions on movement, as well as disconnection of telephone services. Though New Delhi has eased some of the movement curbs, no prominent detainees have been freed and mobile and internet connections remain suspended. While warning of the consequences of lifting what he described as an "inhuman curfew," Pakistani premier Khan demanded India do so and free all detainees.

In some areas in Kashmir-including the Soura region near Srinagar which has witnessed protests in the past against India's decision-people clashed with security forces by pelting stones on Friday night, forcing police to use tear gas to disperse them, said the Indian official. Khan addressed the United Nations a day after the senior US diplomat for South Asia called for a lowering of rhetoric between India and Pakistan, while saying that Washington hoped to see rapid action by India to lift restrictions it has imposed in Kashmir and the release of detainees there.

### India kills 4 militants

Meanwhile, security forces killed four militants in Indian-administered Kashmir yesterday, police said, as the disputed Muslim-majority territory simmers under a lockdown imposed by New Delhi after it revoked its constitutional autonomy in August. Three militants were killed in the Batote market area of Jammu where, according to officials, they had taken a local civilian hostage inside his house. The hostage was rescued unharmed, a spokesman for the central reserve police force told journalists. — Agencies

International

# Despite suspension, Syria's FM greets Arab League chief at UN

## US says Assad again used chemical weapons, vows action

UNITED NATIONS: The head of the Arab League exchanged a warm handshake Friday at the United Nations with the foreign minister of Syria, which has been suspended from the body since 2011. The exchange between Ahmed Aboul Gheit, the secretary general of the Arab League, and Foreign Minister Walid Muallem appeared to be brief and impromptu during the annual UN General Assembly. In a video posted on Twitter by a journalist for Abu Dhabi newspaper The National, Aboul Gheit walks in a hallway at the UN headquarters and sees Muallem, who turns around. "Good evening. Great. How are you?" Aboul Gheit says, before shaking Muallem's hand and kissing him on both cheeks.

The Arab League chief, who is Egyptian, then exchanges greetings with Syria's Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad and its ambassador to the United Nations, Bashar Jaafari. "Really, it's always a pleasure to see you," Aboul Gheit says to the Syrian officials before giving a friendly tap on the shoulder. Syria was suspended from the Arab League in 2011 with the outbreak of unrest ruthlessly crushed by President Bashar Al-Assad. The war has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions, but both Arab and Western officials have gradually come to accept that Assad will succeed in maintaining power.

### Chemical weapons

In another development, the United States vowed a response as it said it had confirmed another chemical weapons attack by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces, although there were no fatalities. The Assad regime used chlorine on May 19 in Latakia province during its ferocious offensive to take back the last major rebel stronghold in nearby Idlib. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said. "The United States will not allow these attacks to go unchallenged nor will we tolerate those who choose to conceal these atrocities," Pompeo told reporters in New York, where he was taking part in the UN General Assembly.

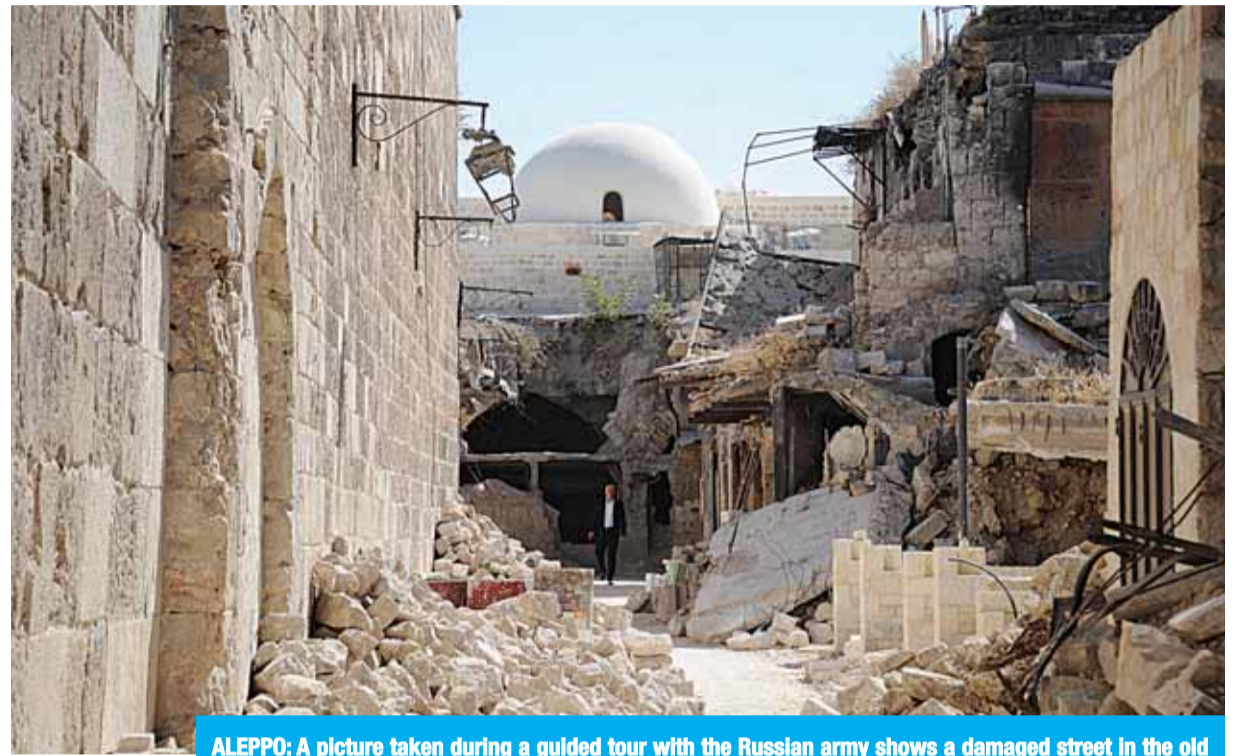
"The United States will continue to pressure the insidious Assad regime to end the violence directed at Syrian civilians and participate in the UN-led political process," he said. He later took part in a meeting on Syria with his counterparts from France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt, who said in a joint statement: "The use of any chemical weapons in Syria shall not be tolerated."

Four people were injured in the attack and, while there were no deaths, it marked the first known chemical attack in a year and raised fears of further use, said Jim Jeffrey, the US special representative for Syria. "We fear that the regime, which has very weak infantry forces, will try to use chemical weapons once again to make up for its inability to seize ground by combat power," Jeffrey told reporters. No independent verification was available of the attack from northwestern Syria, where rights observers say that more than 1,000 people have been killed and 400,000 displaced since the government began its bombardment in April. The United States and France had both earlier aired suspicions of a chemical attack but had held off on making a formal determination, saying more research was needed.

### Pattern of chemical use

International investigators say Assad has repeatedly used chemical weapons against civilian targets in his brutal quest to win the civil war, in which more than 370,000 people have died. Former president Barack Obama had called chemical weapons use a red line but ultimately declined military retaliation. Drawing a contrast, President Donald Trump ordered strikes with 59 cruise missiles in response to a sarin gas attack in April 2017 in the rebel-held Idlib town of Khan Sheikhun.

The reprisal evidently did not deter Assad, who enjoys strong support from Russia, which has vetoed UN Security Council bids to rein in Assad and deployed its military to Syria. Jeffrey believed Russian officers were aware of the chemical attack, saying: "It's very hard for me to believe that professionals as good as that, the way they



ALEPPO: A picture taken during a guided tour with the Russian army shows a damaged street in the old Aleppo market. —AFP

are spread out, would not know of something like this."

### Weighing response

The United States announced one countermeasure on Thursday, slapping sanctions on a Russian network of three individuals and five vessels for supplying fuel to Russian forces in Syria. Pompeo said that the United States was donating an additional \$4.5 million to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons,

the Hague-based body that monitors the international treaty banning such arms.

But Pompeo appeared to downplay the prospect of military action, noting that the attack involved chlorine, which affects the respiratory system. The Khan Sheikhun attacks, which the United Nations said killed 83 people, entailed sarin, an ultra-potent gas that devastates the nervous system. "So it's a bit of a different situation," Pompeo said. —Agencies

## Tanker seizures: What we know

TEHRAN: A British-flagged tanker headed into Dubai port in the United Arab Emirates yesterday after being detained for over two months by Iran, authorities and a tracking website said. Its seizure was one of several that have ratcheted up tensions this year between Iran and its arch-foe, the United States, and allies of Washington. Here's what we know about the vessels involved:

### Grace 1/Adrian Darya

Gibraltar security forces aided by British Royal Marines intercepted an Iranian tanker—the Grace 1—off the coast of the UK overseas territory on July 4. The supertanker was detained on suspicion of shipping its 2.1 million barrels of oil to Syria in breach of European Union sanctions. The Indian captain of the Panama-flagged vessel later said a military helicopter had landed on its deck before the Marines boarded.

Iran called its seizure an act of "piracy" and warned that the action would not go unanswered. A Gibraltar court ordered its release on August 15 despite an 11th-hour US legal bid to keep it in detention. A few days later, it set sail for the eastern Mediterranean flying the Iranian flag and with a new name—the Adrian Darya. Iran never officially stated the ship's destination, repeatedly denying it was bound for Syria as it zig-zagged eastwards.

The then US national security adviser John Bolton alleged, in a September 6 tweet accompanied by a satellite photo, that the Adrian Darya had arrived at the

Syrian port of Tartus. On September 8, state media in Iran cited foreign ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi as saying the tanker had berthed on Mediterranean shores and unloaded its cargo, without saying exactly where. London and Washington accused Iran of having delivered the oil to Syria. But TankerTrackers said on Twitter that the ship was still "fully laden with oil off the coast of Tartus, Syria".

### MT Riah

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said its forces detained a "foreign tanker" in Gulf waters on July 14 for allegedly smuggling contraband fuel. The tanker was seized south of the Iranian island of Larak in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, the Guards said. "With a capacity of two million litres and 12 foreign crew on board, the vessel was en route to deliver contraband fuel received from Iranian boats to foreign ships," it said. TankerTrackers reported at the time that the Panamanian-flagged MT Riah, used in the strait for fuelling other vessels, had crossed into Iranian waters, and at that point its automatic identification system stopped sending signals.

### Stena Impero

Revolutionary Guards surrounded the British-flagged Stena Impero with attack boats before rappelling onto the deck of the oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz on July 19. The 183-metre ship was impounded at the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas for breaking "international maritime rules"—by allegedly failing to respond to distress calls and turning off its transponder after hitting a fishing boat.

The seizure of the Swedish-owned



DUBAI: The British-flagged oil tanker Stena Impero is docked in Dubai after sailing from the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas where it was held for over two months yesterday. —AFP

vessel came hours after a court in Gibraltar said it was extending the detention of the Grace 1. Iran said the seizure was a legal measure and that further investigations were required, denying accusations from Britain that it was a tit-for-tat move. The Stena Bulk company that owns the vessel said seven of its 23 crew members were released on September 4.

Iranian government spokesman Ali Rabiee on September 23 said "the legal process has finished" and the vessel was free to leave. On Friday, the ship's owner and Hormozgan province's maritime organization said the vessel had set sail and reached international waters. The vessel arrived off Dubai shortly after midnight local time and halted in the busy waterway overnight according to

MarineTraffic.com, a ship tracking website. It began heading to its anchorage in the emirate on Saturday morning, the website said.

### Unknown vessels

Iran seized another ship on July 31 with seven foreign crew aboard, claiming it was smuggling around 700,000 litres of fuel. The Guards said the ship was transferred to Bushehr province and handed over to authorities, noting the vessel was en route to deliver fuel to Gulf Arab states. The vessel's identity and the nationality of its crew were not revealed at the time of its seizure. On September 7, Iran said its coast guard seized a tugboat allegedly carrying contraband fuel and arrested 12 Filipino crew members. —AFP

ing independence in the Northwest and Southwest regions has claimed more than 2,500 lives. UN agencies say that more than 530,000 have been forced to flee their homes.

### 'We're really safe'

The Excel College had to move into a building that is only accessible via pebble-strewn paths winding between residential housing, while school routines are rung out by a bell wired to the roof. The teacher alone with his two students occupied one of nine classrooms. "The place is cramped, but we're really safe," Tseke said, though such statements are not enough to reassure parents and their children. The inscription rate has dropped from 1,350 in 2016-2017 to less than 400 today and fewer than half of those remaining have turned up since the academic year began on September 2, according to school data.

The French-speaking section has been closed, since many parents decided to send their children to towns in francophone territory, which makes up eight of the 10 regions in Cameroon. Jeannette Benga, a prominent figure in local civil society who has lived in Buea for 25 years, is among the parents who resist threats from the separatists and keep their children in town. "My daughter was kidnapped coming out of school in 2017," then released three days later, Benga said, giving no further details. In spite of the incident she's still sending her four children to school in the town.

"It's a permanent worry to see them leave for school," she acknowledged. "We live in perpetual insecurity." "We're in a hurry to see an end to this crisis," she added, with a hopeful eye to the "Great National Dialogue" due to be held in the capital Yaounde for five days from September 30. The forum was announced by President Paul Biya, who has ruled for 37 years and is intransigent about the secessionist demands, but



BUEA: This file photo taken at the morgue in Buea, the capital of Cameroon's majority English-speaking southwest region, shows blood streaming from overflowing fridges containing ten bodies, victims of the conflict between separatists and government. —AFP

some separatist forces and opposition parties plan to boycott the talks while they have leaders and members in jail.

### Education 'that suits us'

In the past three years, more than 4,400 schools have closed in the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon, according to the UN Children's Fund. The closures directly affect the education of more than 700,000 youngsters. More than 300 students, pupils and teachers have been kidnapped since 2018. State schools in Buea have tried to maintain a semblance of business as usual since the start of September, but private schools are feeling the pinch. —AFP

## Schools at stake in Cameroon's separatist crisis

BUEA: A solitary teacher has just two pupils in his class in west Cameroon, where thousands of schools have closed down altogether because of kidnappings and threats by radical separatists. Since a crisis erupted in the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon late in 2016, schools have been a prime target for breakaway groups angered by the teaching of French, used in most of the central African country. On November 9, 2016, "hordes of people staged an assault on the classrooms in Excel College, wielding machetes and telling everybody to leave the premises or risk a bloodbath," a teacher in the private school recalled.

Known as "Mr Tseke", the teacher said the raid on the premises in Buea, capital of the Southwest region, led senior staff to arrange to move the whole school to a site in Clerks quarter, an administrative district with high security. "Not far from us, you'll find a gendarmerie contingent (paramilitary police), behind us you've got the police and down to the left, you have the 21st BIM (Motorized Infantry Brigade, an army unit with formidable firepower)," Tseke noted.

Home to most civil servants and police and army top brass, the Clerks district is a haven of peace in Buea. Separatist attacks are frequent elsewhere in the town, which sprawls over the eastern flank of Mount Cameroon. In two years, the conflict by English-speaking separatists demand-

## Ethiopians complain of persecution on the eve of major holiday

ADDIS ABABA: Orthodox Christian leaders in Ethiopia on Friday denounced what they described as a surge in violence that has seen dozens of churches burned to the ground. As they celebrated one of the year's most significant holidays - Meskel, or "the finding of the cross" - church officials urged Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to protect them and hold perpetrators of religious violence to account.

"The Orthodox Christians are not happy with the government," Aklil Damte, the church's project coordinator said. "The people expect the government to say something about the church. Why is the government remaining silent?" Rising tensions between the Orthodox leadership and Abiy's administration risk introducing a new element of instability in a country already grappling with ethnic violence ahead of elections next year.

Meskel marks the finding by Saint Helena of the "true cross" on which Jesus was crucified. It began Friday afternoon with Demera, a ceremony that drew tens of thousands of people to central Addis Ababa, the capital, for hours of dancing, chanting, drumming and prayer. On Thursday night, federal police issued a statement warning that "some forces" were "preparing to disrupt the Meskel celebrations." But the Demera ceremony unfolded without incident. After an hours-long parade featuring motorized floats bearing giant crosses, the crowd lit wax candles and looked on as a giant bonfire burned in the city's most prominent square, known as Meskel Square.

### 'Unprecedented'

The holiday is coming after two consecutive Sundays of peaceful protests in the country's Amhara region against church burnings. At least 25 churches have burned down throughout the country over the past two years, Aklil said, adding that the figure was unprecedented. The church's tally of attacks is difficult to verify. Orthodox Patriarch Abune Mathias used his Meskel message on Friday to condemn the burnings. "Those who are burning our churches must stop such acts," he told the crowd at Meskel Square, drawing cheers. "We can't accept at all those who would burn churches or attack our followers. Nothing good can come from this."

Church officials say the burnings reflect anti-Orthodox sentiment, but the motives for the attacks are likely more complex. Some of the burnings, for example, took place in July after a bid by ethnic Sidama leaders to form a new southern regional state kicked off days of unrest. Terje Ostebo, an expert on religion in Ethiopia at the University of Florida, said conflicts that appear to be rooted in religion are often also shaped by disputes over land use, ethnicity and other issues.

"These things are always entangled and I've had so many cases where I'm trying to figure out a local conflict that was presented as ethnic or religious, but it turns out they were both," he said. Nevertheless, Endale Gosaye, a 35-year-old marketing professional who attended the Demera ceremony, said he agreed with church leaders who believe Orthodox Christians are under threat in Ethiopia. "It's disgusting people who are doing that," he said of the burnings. "We want them to have a good heart because people are starting to follow them." —AFP

## International

# Mugabe finally laid to rest in rural Zimbabwe village

## Zimbabweans mourn 'founding father', 'liberator' and 'torch bearer'

**KUTAMA, Zimbabwe:** The body of Zimbabwe's former president Robert Mugabe was buried yesterday in a low-key ceremony in his home village after weeks of wrangling over his final resting place. Family members threw white roses into the grave as the coffin of the liberation hero turned despot, draped in navy blue velvet, was lowered to its final resting place in the courtyard of his rural home about 90 km west of Harare. A boys choir from Mugabe's old high school sang in the background.

The burial in the village of Kutama came after the Mugabe family finally opted to reject government proposals that he be laid to rest at the National Heroes Acre in the capital. Mugabe died in a Singapore hospital on Sept 6, aged 95, almost two years after a military coup ended his autocratic 37-year rule. Hundreds of mourners assembled for the burial, which was initially intended to be a private family event.

Many wore white Mugabe-emblazoned T-shirts with the slogans "founding father", "liberator" and "torch bearer". Some sang and danced. Others sat quietly under two white tents. Mugabe's widow Grace and his children accompanied the coffin. Clad in black, they took their places in a VIP tent ahead of the service. The words "DAD" and "BABA", meaning "father" in the local Shona language were spelled out in white flowers.

"Our hearts are bleeding because we have lost our father," said the priest, standing next to a portrait of Mugabe framed by white carnations. "This is a man who made use of the gifts he was given by God. This man was an asset, he was not a liability." No senior government officials were among the audience.

### 'It's his wish'

A mausoleum was being constructed at the site in Harare reserved for heroes of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. However the family said yesterday he would not have wished to have been buried there. "What we have done is his wish," said Grace's older sister Shuvai Gumbochuma, addressing mourners in Shona. "He (Mugabe) said with his own mouth that he didn't want to be buried at the heroes acre," she said. The ruling ZANU-PF party described the family's decision as "most unfortunate". "All patriotic Zimbabweans were shocked to learn that the remains of the former president had been surreptitiously taken yesterday to Zvimba for a private burial," said spokesman Simon Khaya-Moyo in a statement on Friday.

Former guerrilla leader Mugabe took power after independence from white minority rule in 1980. Initially hailed as a pan-African liberator, Mugabe's rule became increasingly repressive as he cracked down on his political opponents. This was combined with a series of disastrous economic policies that drove millions of Zimbabweans abroad. Mugabe was eventually toppled by his formerly loyal military generals in 2017.

Many in the family are bitter over his ouster and the role played by his deputy and successor Emmerson Mnangagwa, who was elected president in 2018. The army turned against Mugabe after he sacked Mnangagwa, a move many saw as an attempt to position Grace to succeed him. Zimbabwe remains deeply split over his legacy. "I was very comfortable that he be buried at the heroes acre," said local official Christopher Ndlovu before the ceremony. "That's what we wanted as local villagers. But since it's a family decision to bury him here, we will respect it." —AFP



**KUTAMA:** The coffin of former president of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe arrives for his burial at his home village in Kutama yesterday. —AFP

## The hearty food and handshakes: Chirac's countryside roots

**CORREZE:** Dominique Marchi shows off the table near the towering granite fireplace at his restaurant where Jacques Chirac always sat with his family in the village of Correze, deep in the heartland of central France where his family had its roots. "Every time he came for lunch, he would first say hello to everyone on the patio," Marchi told AFP after the former president's death aged 86 on Thursday. The young Chirac spent his holidays in the Correze region, where he would eventually win his first elected post as council president in 1970.

The lush rolling hills of farmland and stone-hewn villages would remain his political base throughout his career, helping cement an everyman image that made him a favorite of rural France. "You have to understand that when he discovered Correze in his youth, it was like living in the Middle Ages," Marchi said, amid photos of Chirac inside his restaurant, the "Pecheur de Lune" (The Nighttime Fisherman). "He told himself that he could do good things here - he felt useful," Marchi said.

Despite eventually moving on to becoming mayor of Paris, "he was quite at ease with people from the country, simple folks," he said. His restaurant was just a short drive the Chateau de Bitry, which Chirac had bought in 1969, and Marchi quickly learned Chirac's favorites. "He liked rich cooking, meats in

sauses. Charcuterie too, and scallops once in a while," he recalled. "One Friday I suggested fish. He frowned and said, 'Oh, you know me, fish...!' So I said I could make him some veal sweetbreads, and he shot back: 'Perfect!'"

### 'A terrific memory'

"I've lost a friend," said Louis Jaubert, 93, a childhood friend of Chirac's in the nearby village of Sainte-Fereole, where Chirac often spent his summers as a boy. "We'd go fishing for crayfish at night, it wasn't allowed but there were so many of them!" Jaubert said, showing a picture from 2001, when Chirac famously ordered his motorcade to make a detour to visit his old friend.

"When he came to see me, he would stop to drink a beer, maybe two, he wouldn't say no to that," he said. It was Jaubert who drove Chirac around when he launched his first political campaign in 1967. "What made him such a force was the way he learned everyone's name, and addressed them by their first names. He had a terrific memory," he recalled.

"You saw that he was a human being," but despite the jovial tone, "If he wanted to tell you off, he'd do it. He wasn't one for niceties." And according to Jaubert, who eventually became a butcher, it was he who introduced Chirac to the dish that would become the symbol of his love for hearty French staples. "Jacques had just been elected to the local council of Sainte-Fereole. He told me to choose the meal. So I made his some calf's head," he said.

Some 50 kilometers northeast of Jaubert's vil-



**PARIS:** People wait to sign condolence registers for late former French President Jacques Chirac at the Elysee presidential palace in Paris yesterday. —AFP

lage, a condolence book set up at the Chirac Museum in Sarrahan had already garnered dozens of messages Friday. "A man who loved France AND people," one wrote, while another offered "a final message for a great man of the Republic, so accessible and so close to us, the little people." Inside the museum visitors admired the numerous gifts he received from dignitaries worldwide as president: sandals from former US president Bill Clinton, or a mask from the Bobo people of Burkina Faso. "We decided to make a detour to come and pay our little tribute," Martine Widowski, who was returning from a camper-van vacation with her husband Bernard said. "We'll never forget his smile - he loved life," she said. —AFP

### News in brief

#### 7 drown as boat capsizes

**RABAT:** Seven Moroccan migrants were found dead yesterday off Morocco's Atlantic coast near Casablanca after their boat capsized, the interior ministry said. Three others were taken unconscious to hospital, while search operations are ongoing, the ministry said in a statement. The incident reflects a growing trend in illegal migration to Spain from the Atlantic coast following a government crackdown on Mediterranean routes. Morocco is only 14 kilometers south of the Spanish coast at the strait of Gibraltar and shares land borders with the small Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta on its Mediterranean coast. Moroccan authorities say they have stopped 57,000 migrants from illegally crossing to Spain between Jan 1 and Sept 1. —Reuters

#### Sicilian drug-infused food

**ROME:** A well-known Sicilian chef who was arrested with drugs at his home, justified their presence by saying he was looking for "new flavors" for contemporary cuisine, Italian media reported yesterday. Officers found two two-metre-high marijuana plants and 500 grams of Indian hemp inflorescences at chef Carmelo Chiamonte's home in Trecastagni, a village at the foot of Mount Etna. They also found cannabis flavored wine, olives, coffee and tuna. The 50-year-old chef, who has been released pending trial, told police he was an "agro-food consultant for third millennium cuisine". Chiamonte also said he was "researching new flavors". Famous on his native island, the iconoclast chef was known for his cuisine at the Katane Palace Hotel restaurant in Catania. He then made his name as a host on an Italian culinary TV show. —AFP

#### US ex-diplomat Wilson dies

**NEW YORK:** Joseph Wilson, a US diplomat who questioned the central underpinning for the invasion of Iraq under former President George W Bush, died on Friday at the age of 69, the New York Times reported. Wilson's ex-wife, Valerie Plame, a former CIA officer now running for Congress, told the Times his cause of death was organ failure. Wilson died at his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the Times reported. Wilson served in several diplomatic posts during a 23-year career that began in 1976. In 2002, the CIA asked Wilson to investigate claims that Iraq had attempted to buy uranium yellowcake, a nuclear material, from Niger. Bush, in his State of the Union address in January 2003, made a case for the Iraq war by saying the country's leader at the time, Saddam Hussein, had recently sought "significant quantities of uranium from Africa." —Reuters

#### Tanker blast sparks fire

**SEOUL:** A huge blast on an oil tanker in a South Korean port yesterday sparked a raging fire that spread to a nearby vessel, leaving 18 people injured, authorities said. A ball of fire shot up high above the ship and thick black smoke billowed into the air, dramatic images showed. Firefighters struggled to contain the blaze and prevent it spreading, shooting streams of water up onto the deck from beside the vessel in the southeast port of Ulsan. All 25 of those on board the Cayman Islands-flagged tanker and the 21 people on the second ship have been rescued, according to the Coast Guard. Twelve sailors and six rescue workers were injured, Yonhap news agency said, quoting local authorities. Nine of the injured were South Korean. The Russian vice-consul in Busan said the tanker crew comprised 10 Russians, including the captain, and none had been seriously injured. —AFP

## British PM referred to police watchdog over businesswoman links

**LONDON:** The government of London said it had referred Prime Minister Boris Johnson to Britain's police watchdog for potential investigation over allegations of misconduct involving a US businesswoman while he was mayor of London. The Greater London Authority (GLA) said on Friday it had referred a "conduct matter" concerning Johnson to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), which investigates complaints connected to the police.

The referral follows allegations, first reported by The Sunday Times, that when Johnson was mayor, he failed to declare close personal links to tech entrepreneur Jennifer Arcuri who received thousands of pounds in public business funding and places on official trade trips. Asked about the referral, Johnson's spokesman said: "The prime minister as mayor of London did a huge amount of work when selling our capital city around the world, beating the drum for London and the UK.

"Everything was done with propriety and in the normal way," he added. Arcuri did not immediately respond to an emailed

request for comment. The matter has been referred to the police watchdog because Johnson was head of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, a role equivalent to a police commissioner, during his 2008-2016 term as mayor.

Under the referral, the authority will try to determine whether there are grounds for a full investigation that could lead to criminal charges of misconduct in public office. The GLA said in a statement: "The Monitoring Officer of the GLA has today recorded a 'conduct matter' against Boris Johnson and referred him to the Independent Office for Police Conduct so it can assess whether or not it is necessary to investigate the former Mayor of London for the criminal offence of misconduct in public office."

It said the action had been taken in accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. In a letter to Johnson, the GLA said: "Subject to any explanation provided by you, these matters give rise to a suggestion that there has been a failure to safeguard the public purse and if so that amounts to a significant breach of public trust. "These are the ingredients of the offence of misconduct in a public office," said the letter from the office of the authority's monitoring officer, which was made public.

The letter said Innotech, Arcuri's then company, received 11,500 pounds (\$14,000) from London & Partners, the mayor's promotional agency, for two events in 2013 and



**HARLOW:** Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson reacts as he talks with staff during his visit to The Princess Alexandra hospital in Harlow, north of London. —AFP

2014. She was able to attend a trade mission to Singapore and Malaysia in 2014 through Playbox, one of her companies, even though an initial application through Innotech had been declined.

The letter said the Monitoring Officer was also aware "from media reports and elsewhere" that Arcuri also had been allowed to participate in events around two other trade missions - to New York and

Israel in 2015 - although she had not qualified for the New York mission and had been rejected for the mission to Israel. Johnson has vowed to take Britain out of the European Union by Oct 31. British opposition parties are discussing tabling a vote of no-confidence in Johnson as early as next week over his handling of Brexit, the Telegraph newspaper reported on Friday. —Reuters

## 52 killed in Chad as gold mine collapses

**N'DJAMENA:** At least 52 people died when an illegal gold mine collapsed in northern Chad this week, a government source said on Friday, with authorities still searching for more bodies. Chad officials initially said as many as 30 people may have died when the mine caved in on Tuesday in Kouri Bougoudi, in Tibesti province, near the Libyan border, an area rife with illicit

mining and smugglers. Another source who was part of a mission to visit the area also confirmed the new death toll. "There are 37 injured, including 21 seriously," the second source said. Tibesti is largely lawless and home to numerous gangs and traffickers seeking to profit from a gold rush in the area.

Clashes in January between Arab miners from Libya and miners from Chad's Ouaddai community left "dozens" dead, according to security and mining sources. Kouri Bougoudi has been the centre of clashes among ethnic, local and foreign groups since 2012 and 2013 after the discovery of gold deposits there. The

Chadian government has authorized mining companies to exploit the deposits but rights groups accuse authorities of using Arab fighters to force a takeover of the area.

Chad, a huge impoverished country in the heart of the Sahel, has been chronically unstable since it gained independence from France in 1960. In March, the Chadian government decided to set up a joint security force in Tibesti and closed the border with southern Libya - a major source of trafficking and a haven for Chadian rebels. That move was followed in August by a decree by President Idriss Deby declaring a state of emergency in Tibesti and two other provinces. —AFP



## International

# Afghan voters defy attacks, delays to choose president

## Tens of thousands of troops deployed to counter Taliban

**KABUL:** Afghans braved the threat of militant attacks and delays at polling booths to vote in a presidential election yesterday, a major test of the Western-backed government's ability to protect democracy against Taliban attempts to derail it. The election was marred by numerous small-scale Taliban attacks, but only one confirmed death. Turnout was low, however, with the violence - plus earlier Taliban threats against polling stations - likely contributing factors. Voting was extended by two hours, as the start of polling was delayed around the country with stations failing to open on time amid technical problems.

Independent election observers and activists said a slow pace to voting triggered confusion at some polling stations, with long queues forming outside. "It took the first voter 31 minutes to vote. For subsequent voters it was taking around five minutes and then it started to streamline to 3 minutes and 30 seconds," said Nishank Motwani, an observer stationed in Kabul. "Election commission staff looked panicked and voters were getting angry that the queue was not moving."

### Taliban intervention?

Some observers feared the Taliban had forced a partial shutdown to upset the final results as the Independent Election Commission's (IEC), without giving a reason, said it had failed to establish contact with 901 of the 4,942 polling centers. The hardline Islamist group, which controls more of the country than at any time since its regime fell in 2001, has warned the more than 9 million registered voters to stay at home or face dire consequences.

Yesterday's presidential vote is the fourth since the Taliban were toppled. A dozen candidates are vying for the presidency, led by incumbent Ashraf Ghani and his former deputy Abdullah Abdullah. Due to logistical difficulties, results will not be known until Nov 7. The winner will play a crucial role in the country's quest to end the war with the Taliban and any resumption of talks between them and the United States that were called off this month. To protect

voters and polling stations, tens of thousands of troops were deployed. Abdul Moqim Abdulrahimzai, director-general of operations and planning at the Interior Ministry, said at least 21 civilians and two Afghan forces were injured in about a dozen small-scale attacks during the first hours of voting. Other attacks had been foiled, he said. A senior Western security official in Kabul said the Taliban had not conducted large-scale attacks but had scared some voters away. Early turnout was "very poor", said the Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan, also citing as a reason the requirement for voters to be photographed, to which female voters in conservative areas objected.

Others were determined to vote. "Bravado gets defined when one musters courage to cast ones vote," said Kabul doctor Roya Jahangir (after casting his ballot?). "We hope this time there is no fraud." Hundreds of voters complained their names were missing from voters' lists or the biometric devices used to prevent fraud. Addressing those concerns, the IEC eased restrictions, allowing anyone with election stickers on their national identity cards to vote.

### Polling stations attacked

Small-scale Taliban attacks took place across the country. An explosion at a polling station in a mosque in the southern city of Kandahar wounded 16 people, according to a security source. In the northern province of Faryab, Afghan forces clashed with Taliban fighters in six districts, forcing people to stay indoors and refrain from voting. The Taliban said their fighters attacked polling stations in Laghman province, in eastern Afghanistan. Officials said four explosions in the eastern city of Jalalabad, in which one person was killed, disrupted voting at some stations. Blasts also hit Kabul and Ghazni, officials said, while more than 400 polling centers remained closed because they were in areas under Taliban control. Western diplomats said the scale of the Islamist militant group's election attacks would determine whether talks with Washington resumed. "Talks can only begin if the



**KABUL:** Afghan First Lady Rula Ghani (right), wife of Afghan President and candidate Ashraf Ghani looks on as she casts her vote at a polling station in Kabul. — AFP

Taliban exercises restraint and allows people to vote," said one diplomat overseeing the elections.

Ghani cast his ballot in a Kabul high school, telling reporters: "I thank God that today that people's vote will help the republic of Afghanistan to move forward." Abdullah voted at a different Kabul school. "The threats to innocent

people do not show the strength of the Taliban," he said. Both men came to power in 2014 after a bitterly contested election marred by fraud. Afghanistan's political scene is still tainted by the aftermath of that vote, which forced the two main rival groupings to form an unstable partnership. Both sides were accused of massive electoral cheating. — Reuters

## Taliban cuts off his finger for voting, he 'defied them again'

**KABUL:** The Taliban cut off Safiullah Safi's right forefinger for voting in 2014. That did not stop the businessman from doing it again. Safi's act of defiance in Afghanistan's 2019 presidential elections yesterday sparked admiration after a photo of the 38-year old was posted on Twitter showing his missing right forefinger and the left one stained with indelible ink, indicating he had voted.

Braving the threat of militant attacks and delays at polling booths, Afghans cast their ballots in a major test of the Western-backed government's ability to protect democracy. The Taliban regime was overthrown by US-led forces in 2001. But the Islamic insurgency is now at its most powerful since its defeat, violently disrupting the nascent democracy's elections and carrying out gruesome, often deadly retribution on those who take part.

During the 2014 presidential vote, Taliban fighters cut off the fingers of at least six voters. "I know it was a painful experience, but it was only a finger," Safi said by telephone. "When it comes to the future of my children and country I will not sit back even if they cut off my whole hand." Safi described how in 2014 he had cast his vote and a day later travelled from the capital Kabul, where he lives, to the eastern city of Khost, his finger

marked by the ink from voting. "The Taliban took me out of the car and away from the road where they set up a court," he said. "They cut off my finger, asking why I had taken part in the election despite their warning... My family told me to not do it this time, but instead I took them all to cast our votes." The show of resistance was warmly met by Afghans on social media, many of whom fear a return to Taliban rule and the end of democracy and hard-won freedoms.

"He voted in support of democracy and for saying no to the Taliban system," said Twitter user Kabuli. In the parts of Afghanistan controlled by the Taliban, a larger territory now than at any point since 2001, voting is especially fraught with danger and turnout tends to be very low. The insurgents shut down many voting centers in a show of their authority. — Reuters

## Haiti gripped by violent protests against president

**PORT-AU-PRINCE:** Angry protests rumbled through Haiti and its capital of Port-au-Prince Friday as thousands of people took to the streets against President Jovenel Moïse, drawing tear gas from police as demonstrators looted and threw stones. Protesters took over a police station in the impoverished Cite Soleil neighborhood, making off with sheet metal roofing, furniture and police protection equipment, only slightly slowed by the air wafting with tear gas.

"Now we are taking whatever we need to better our homes because we are tired of getting soaked when it rains," said Steven Edgard, a protester. In the early hours of the day, groups of young people prevented traffic from circulating on some of Port-au-Prince's main arteries. Lamp posts, burning tires, tree trunks and piles of trash were used to create barricades under the helpless gaze of police patrols.

Violent clashes later broke out as protesters threw stones in response to tear gas. Shots were also heard ringing out from the melee. After the demonstrators were dispersed, several shops were looted in the wealthiest areas of the capital. The day's demonstrations were part of a larger wave of protests that have rocked Haiti throughout the week as the country's inhabitants voiced anger over Moïse, who is implicated in several corruption scandals.

Protesters rejected a "truce" proposed by Moïse in a rare address broadcast to the nation on Wednesday, in which he appealed for national reconciliation and a unity government. In June, judges of Haiti's High Court of Auditors said in a report that Moïse was at the center of an "embezzlement scheme" that had siphoned off Venezuelan aid money intended for road repairs, laying out a litany of examples of corruption and mismanagement.

The aid money came through Venezuela's PetroCaribe program, which had allowed Haiti to buy petroleum products at discount and on credit but which was plagued by allegations of corruption. However, the program has now been suspended for more than a year because of deteriorating relations between Venezuela and the United States. The suspension has meant that Haiti's long-suffering population has been faced with an extra burden: an ever-worsening fuel shortage that has resulted in closed service stations, rising prices and long lines to buy petrol.

### Police gone

Gary Desrosiers, a spokesman for the police said that all measures were taken to "avoid clashes with the population" and that elite SWAT agents had evacuated officers at the looted police station after the protests began. The police had taken all of their weapons so that protesters could not abscond with them, he said. "We did not want the police to come out of their base because this is a unit that fired real bullets at the people, that uses tear gas grenades when all people want is to be respected," said Edgard, the protester. One of the poorest countries in the Americas, three-fifths of Haiti's population lives below the poverty line of \$2 a day. — AFP

## Biometric machines in Afghan vote improve

**KABUL:** Biometric machines aimed at preventing fraud in Afghanistan's presidential election performed better than in a poll last year but still left voters waiting a long time to cast their ballots, election observers said yesterday. The machines were used for the first time in the October parliamentary poll, when many malfunctioned or failed to work altogether. Chaos during that vote was blamed on the machines' performance, along with incomplete voting lists and delays in holding the election.

The Independent Election Commission (IEC) decided to use the machines during the presidential election but gave staff more training and issued spare batteries for the devices at each of the polling centers in a country with chronic power shortages. Polling stations, which each had one device, had paper registration forms as backup in case biometric verification failed.

"The technology improved a little bit, so it is not as bad as the parliamentary election," said Naem Ayubzada, director of Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan, which observed polls in all 34 provinces. He said machines could still take up to 10 minutes to identify a voter, although he said problems of identification were often the result of registration problems, while some women were deterred by the machines' facial recognition software. In conservative areas of Afghanistan, most adult women and older girls cover their faces outside the home.

The machines, made by Germany's Dermalog Identification Systems, use fingerprint scans and photos to identify voters before they cast their ballots to reduce fraud that has been widespread in Afghan votes since the 2001 fall of the Taliban. "The process is too lengthy," Shaharad Akbar, head of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, said on Twitter about the biometric identification process. Hava Alam Nuristani, head of the IEC, said any issues with the machines would be addressed in future. Dermalog could not be reached for comment outside normal German office hours. — Reuters



**MAZAR-I-SHARIF:** An Independent Election Commission (IEC) official scans a voter's face with a biometric device at a polling station in Mazar-i-Sharif yesterday. — AFP



**PALU:** Survivors of the 2018 earthquake-triggered tsunami attend a mass prayer to commemorate the disaster in Palu, Central Sulawesi yesterday. — AFP

## Thousands attend mass prayer in the quake ravaged Palu

**PALU:** Thousands attended a mass prayer in the devastated Indonesian city of Palu yesterday, one year after a quake-tsunami swallowed up whole neighborhoods and killed more than 4,000 people. Many in the crowd sobbed as they remembered victims of the 7.5 magnitude quake and subsequent deluge that razed swathes of the coastal city on Sulawesi island last September.

Some 4,300 people were listed as dead or missing while nearly 60,000 people are still living in makeshift accommodation after their homes were destroyed, according to the Red Cross. The force of the impact saw entire neighborhoods leveled, with the earth turning to quicksand. Elsa Lawira, whose seven-year-old son died in the disaster, was among some 3,000 people at Saturday's vigil, which was held in badly-hit Balaroa district.

"The past year has been traumatic," the 36-year-old Lawira told AFP as she sobbed. "My only wish is that God will protect my son and a disaster like this never happens again." Former Balaroa resident Lusiana lost her mother, father, and a sibling in the double catastrophe. "My life has been just empty this past year," she said.

The disaster also destroyed fishing boats, shops, and irrigation systems, robbing many locals of their income. Rebuilding has been slow, and some people still living in temporary shelters-wonder if they'll ever have a home again. "I've been living in this tent since the quake struck," said Ela, a mother of four. "It's been really hard. My kids got sick, it's hot and sometimes we have to sleep on wet ground after it rains. The kids' father is still working but we can't afford to buy mattresses," she added.

Nani, another mother of four kids, said her home was destroyed. "I don't know if I'm going to get permanent housing," she added. Hundreds of damaged schools across the region have not been repaired. Many "are so badly affected they remain too dangerous to use, forcing children to learn in temporary classrooms where they have to attend in shifts due to a lack of space," Save the Children said Saturday. Earlier the World Bank offered the country up to \$1 billion in loans to get the city back on its feet.

Indonesia is one of the most disaster-prone nations on earth because it straddles the so-called Pacific Ring of Fire, where tectonic plates collide. The Southeast Asian archipelago is also dotted with more than 100 volcanoes, including one that erupted between Java and Sumatra in late 2018 and unleashed a tsunami that killed more than 400 people. On Boxing Day 2004, a 9.1-magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Sumatra and triggered a tsunami that killed 220,000 across the Indian Ocean region, including around 170,000 in Indonesia. — AFP

## Analysis

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## Washington Watch

## It's Israeli policy, stupid

By Dr James J Zogby

Much to the consternation of Western liberals, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin has invited Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to take the first crack at assembling a new government. Their concern is both misplaced and mistaken. Misplaced, because the odds are slim that Netanyahu will be able to form a government. And mistaken, because their hope that a victory for Benny Gantz would help undo the damage done to Israel's image among Democrats is wishful thinking.

While Gantz's Blue-White party edged out Netanyahu's Likud party, winning 33 seats in the next Knesset as compared with Likud's 32, because Netanyahu's bid to form a government has been supported by a larger number of Knesset Members (55 to Gantz's 54), he was the one tapped to cobble together a governing coalition of 61 Members.

The dysfunctional drama that defines Israeli politics will now be on clear display. As I noted last week, the only way for any government of 61 Knesset Members to be formed will require that either party leaders betray their promises to their voters, or that individual newly elected Members betray their pledges to their leaders.

What might also change the calculus of government formation is if Netanyahu is indicted for corruption and his "faithful" break ranks and either join the opposition or elect a new leader to replace Netanyahu. Even then, they will face the wrath of some voters if in the process of doing so they betray their pledge to remain united with their religious party coalition partners.

If one or another of these betrayals do not occur within a few months, Israel will be headed to yet another election - the third in a year! However, no matter the outcome, whether new elections or a government of betrayal, what's clear from this election is that Israel has moved so far to the right, no one should expect any significant change in Israeli policy toward the occupation or Palestinian human rights. And because it is precisely Israeli policy that is the determinant factor behind the US' deep partisan divide toward Israel, that will not change either.

This being the case, when the New York Times editorializes, as they did below, it's more liberal wishful thinking than fact-based analysis:

"At the same time, elements of the Democratic party have grown increasingly suspicious of Israel, if not hostile to it. Mr. Netanyahu's exit, should it materialize, may halt this dangerous shift and provide a new Israeli government the opportunity to reclaim broad bipartisan support in the United States."

Much the same came from a US-based Democratic pollster who worked for Blue and White when he breathlessly proclaimed that the post-Netanyahu period would be "a tremendous opportunity for Israel to reset its relationship with Democrats."

Before I allow my liberal friends to indulge themselves in more fantasy, it's important for them to consider two critical facts:

First, all of the prospective contenders to the post of Prime Minister share similar approaches to the occupied territories. All will: continue settlement expansion; insist on maintaining control over the Jordan Valley and extending Israeli sovereignty to this area and many of "settlement blocs"; maintain the annexation of what Israeli's refer to as "East Jerusalem"; and keep the strangulation hold over Gaza. In fact, some of the positions of Benny Gantz, "the liberals' hope," are more harsh than those of Netanyahu.

Second, while the Democratic Party's establishment, including the majority of its Congressional delegation, will be inclined to welcome the downfall of Netanyahu for several reasons, the views of the Democrat's voter base are not so wobbly as that of their leaders. "Liberal" Members remain upset at Netanyahu's opposition to Obama's nuclear deal with Iran; his illiberal alliance with Israel's ultra-religious parties whose policies run counter to the more secular views of Reform and non-religious American Jews; and his virtual "marriage" with Donald Trump.

While these matters have contributed to the US partisan divide, the major factors driving Democratic voters attitudes toward Israel have more to do with the very policies that all major parties in Israel will continue to pursue - the very policies that the Democratic establishment appears loathe to condemn (recall that in 2016, the party establishment would not allow mention of "occupation" or "settlements" in the party platform).

In polling we conducted before Trump was even elected, we found among all voters a noticeable downward slide as we measured support for Israel (61 percent), support of Netanyahu (38 percent), and support for Israeli settlements (25 percent).

**NOTE:** Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute

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



A child runs as he visits the Palais Ideal (the "Ideal Palace") created by late French postman Ferdinand Cheval, better known as Facteur Cheval, on Sept 11, 2019 in Hauterives. — AFP

## ‘Ideal Palace’ still delivers on postman’s dream

With twisted stonework, exotic-looking statues and breathtaking flights of the imagination, it would not look out of place in the hot climes of Southeast Asia or in a surrealist painting. But this is not India or Cambodia but southeast France and this extraordinary edifice was not dreamt up by an ancient mystic or Salvador Dali but over a century ago by a humble French provincial postman.

The "Ideal Palace" was created by Ferdinand Cheval, known as Facteur Cheval (Postman Cheval), in his home town of Hauterives south of the city of Lyon. Cheval created the monument by hand, picking up stones especially oddly shaped ones on his postal rounds and elsewhere over a period of 33 years from 1879 to 1912. And after finally finishing his life's work, he set about designing and building his own tomb next door. In recent years, the site has attracted tens of thousands of visitors a year as one of the most extraordinary examples of naive art architecture anywhere in the world, a fact that would no doubt delight its creator, who died aged 88 in 1924.

## ‘Saved from ruin’

But its survival is in no small part due to the novelist Andre Malraux, who exactly half a century ago won protection for the Ideal Palace as a historical monument while serving as culture minister. Malraux defied experts at the time, who denounced the edifice as hideous, to bestow the

protection on the Ideal Palace on September 23, 1969. "The tenacity of Malraux saved the palace from ruin," said Frederic Legros, the palace's current director.

Walking round the edifice, an extraordinary melange of influences from east and west, Legros pointed out inscriptions in the palace by Cheval to guide visitors. "By creating this rock, I wanted to prove what the will can do," one inscription reads. "It is true that there is a dimension to wanting to overcome your social condition," said Legros. "It is this idea that this man, who was very poor, built himself a palace, the perfect palace," he added.

After finishing the Ideal Palace - whose name simply comes from a poem left by a young visitor from Grenoble describing a visit - Cheval embarked on building his own mausoleum. He had originally wanted to be buried in the palace but both the Church and local state authorities made clear this would not be acceptable. Cheval spent the next seven years sculpting his own tomb, another wildly ornate structure, where he is buried. Legros said it was "his masterpiece".

## ‘A total mixture’

The Ideal Palace contains representations of a mosque, a Hindu temple and a mediaeval castle. It has sculptures portraying figures like the Gallic King Vercingetorix, Roman Emperor Julius Caesar or Greek inventor Archimedes. "It is true that it is a total mixture without any

superiority of one culture over another. Everything is mixed and everything is made equal," said Legros. Cheval, who was born in 1836, began the building when he tripped over a stone with an unusual form. The first stone retains a prominent position to this day. "He discovers these rather exceptional shapes and marvels at what nature can do and this encourages him to throw himself into the Ideal Palace," said Legros.

## ‘Never saw them’

Cheval, who proudly described himself as a peasant and the son of a peasant, had of course never seen an elephant or a leopard in real life, still less travelled to see oriental temples. A self-taught visionary, Cheval drew his inspiration from postcards or illustrated magazines. "He has never seen them, but he reproduces them anyway in his palace, sometimes with a certain amount of reality because it's the interpretation of an image," said Legros. The fame of the monument grew even during Cheval's lifetime. Pablo Picasso visited the palace with fellow artist Dora Maar, with whom he had a years-long relationship, and his friend the poet Paul Eluard. An all-star biopic directed by prominent French filmmaker Nils Tavernier released in 2018 - "L'Incrovable Histoire du facteur Cheval" (called simply the "Ideal Palace" in English) - further increased interest in his life. According to Legros, last year's visitor numbers of 180,000 was already reached on July 31 this year. — AFP

## Climate change threatens peoples, body and soul

When global warming swallows up the postage stamp island of Warraber, forcing its 300 residents to find a new home, "it will not just be the loss of our land, but also a piece of us that is washed away," says Kabay Tamu. Tamu, 28, is likely to see that traumatic transition during his lifetime, according to a landmark UN report on oceans and Earth's frozen regions, released this week. Even before the creeping global waterline covers this low-lying atoll between Australia and Papua New Guinea, it will probably be rendered uninhabitable by a tropical storm engorged by rising seas, or salt-water infiltration.

"We see first-hand the impact of climate change in rising sea level, coastal erosion," Tamu told AFP phone from New York, where he had gone to bear witness as world leaders gathered in a climate summit. "We have a deep connection - culturally, spiritually - with the land that will be lost." Confronted with this grim future, everyone on Warraber - and hundreds of similarly situated tropical islands worldwide - is confronted with a choice.

But for Tamu and his family, "leaving is not an option,"

he said emphatically, noting that his people had lived on this and neighboring islands for thousands of years. "To be taken away is to lose our deep spiritual connection to the land. This is our home." The problem of populations uprooted by global warming is generally framed in terms of logistics, geopolitics and economics: who will accommodate them and who will bear the cost? But there is another dimension that remains largely neglected, said Bina Desai, head of policy and research at the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre in Geneva.

## Cultural and spiritual home

"With sea level rise, we have to recognize that there is no return," she told AFP. "It is a resettlement that is not only physical, but cultural and spiritual as well." For some Pacific islanders, she noted, the thought of leaving without the remains of their ancestors is intolerable. When people's sense of self is interwoven with the soil and sand, the unique trees and birds of their island homelands, "how can they move without disrupting the identity of their culture?" she asked.

The problem is not unique to island cultures. "The Saami people belong to Sapmi, and Sapmi belongs to the Saami," said Jennie Staffansson, a member of the Saami Council in Sweden, referring to the cultural region in northern Scandinavia historically inhabited by her people. Climate change is already devastating the Saami homelands, where snow cover is thinning or melting, and the reindeer upon which so many livelihoods depend are in trouble.

"It is heartbreaking to watch the animals struggle," she told AFP by email. "And it is going to get worse because of other people's unwillingness to change. If we lose the reindeer, we lose a huge part of our culture." On the other side of the Arctic Ocean, things are not much better in Alaska and Canada. "The Inuit communities want to maintain their way of life," said Dalee Sambo Dorrough from the Inuit Circumpolar Council in Canada, which represents some 160,000 indigenous people.

## ‘Our people are strong’

"We depend on the sea ice in the same way that the marine mammals depend on it," she said via Skype. "Hunting is still vital to our culture." And if things get so difficult that the only option left is to relocate? "Out of the question - the Arctic is our homeland," she said. Yes, she acknowledged, villages already falling into the sea due to crumbling permafrost and storm surges need to be moved. "But I know that our people are very strong," she said. "We've managed to survive the Arctic by adapting, so we have that capacity."

The Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) report on oceans and the cryosphere warns of threats to the "cultural identity of Arctic inhabitants," especially indigenous peoples, who number approximately four million. But these are not the only cultures menaced by global warming and rising seas, noted Anders Levermann, a professor at the Potsdam Institute of Climate Impact Research in Germany and a top expert on Antarctica. — AFP

## Going underground in Slovenia ... to prepare for outer space

In Slovenia's dramatically beautiful Karst region, six astronauts have been put through their paces for future missions - not in a flashy futuristic space centre but deep underground in the area's network of cold, dark and muddy caves. This Wednesday they emerged blinking into the light after swapping their space suits for caving gear and spending six full days underground in the UNESCO-listed Skocjan cave system. All in all they completed six weeks of training organized by the European Space Agency's (ESA) CAVES program.

But why were they heading underground? "Living in a cave is very similar to living in space, mentally. Actually, I thought it was much harder than living in space," 43-year-old Japanese astronaut Takuya Onishi told AFP. Onishi's harsh tone is unsurprising given temperatures in the cave fluctuate between six and 10 degrees, not to mention 100-percent humidity and the fact the participants only had the light of their head lamps to guide them. "Caves are a fantastic alien world. You actually live in an environment which is terrifyingly difficult, different and risky," said Loredana Bessone of the CAVES program.



Astronauts pose for a photo during a meeting with journalists at the end of a six-day training organized by the European Space Agency's (ESA) CAVES program in the Divaska cave, southern Slovenia, on Sept 26, 2019. — AFP

## ‘Cavenauts’

This was the sixth time the program had been run, but the first outing in Slovenia's caves. After two weeks of learning about speleology, or cave exploration, the "cavenauts" are dispatched to explore and map the underground maze, gathering scientific material and relying on teamwork to solve various problems. The experiments include monitoring life in the caves such as microscopic organisms as well as assessing atmospheric conditions.

"The main goal for the astronauts is to work together as a team and achieve a mission in a very complex envi-

ronment, to prepare better for an analogous situation, which is space," the head of the programme's science component Francesco Sauro said. One of the astronauts, Germany's Alexander Gerst, told AFP about the feeling of complete isolation from the world outside in the silent darkness. You feel "deprived of all sensual input, out of your comfort zone", said 43-year-old, who has already completed two missions on the International Space Station. Onishi and Gerst were joined by colleagues from the United States, Canada and Russia.

## ‘Our planet is special’

NASA's Jeanette Epps admitted that when it came time to finally leave, she was "kind of sad" despite the cold, slippery conditions which had been made more dangerous by rainy weather. "But then I looked up and... it was beautiful," she said. "Just the smell alone and the sunlight on your face, I didn't realise how different I felt being in the cave." 48-year-old Epps said. Onishi had slightly prosaic concerns once he was "back on the ground". "Honestly speaking I was a little timid because I didn't know how badly I smelled after six days of life in a cave," he said. "So, when I saw people on the ground of course I was happy to see them but I tried to be far from them," Onishi said, laughing.

Despite the hygiene concerns, he said the program had been unique in the opportunities for learning non-technical skills needed for space voyages. Bessone agrees and says astronauts from all over the world are queuing up to participate in the program and that few others can create an experience so valuable in preparing for conditions in space. "We're coming back next year!" she said. — AFP

## Business

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2019

**12** UK rate cut 'plausible' if Brexit uncertainty persists: Saunders**13** NBK Mega Day 2019: More prizes and even more engaging activities**14** Toyota Land Cruiser series global sales pass 10m mark

NEW YORK: Traders work before the closing bell at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) on Friday at Wall Street in New York City. — AFP

# US consumers, industry falter in Aug

## Economic outlook dims amid growing trade war worries

WASHINGTON: US consumer spending slowed sharply in August, according to the latest government data Friday, suggesting turmoil from President Donald Trump's trade wars was hitting home for the general public. And in another sign trade tribulations are weighing on American industry, demand for big-ticket manufactured goods also showed unwelcome weakness, economists said.

The new data Friday caused some economic forecasters to cut their third-quarter GDP growth estimates sharply, and they also were likely to exacerbate disagreements among US central bankers over the path of interest rates. Federal Reserve policymakers are increasingly divided over the direction of monetary policy but markets expect they will vote to cut the benchmark lending rate again this year to cushion the trade war's impact on the economy.

But the data also showed underlying inflation perking up by the most in seven months on an annual basis in August, which economists said could put the Federal Reserve in a difficult position as it seeks to keep the longest economic expansion on record, now in its 11th

year, on track. The Fed last week cut interest rates for the second time this year, citing the ongoing risks from the Trump administration's nearly 15-month trade war with China and slowing global growth. The US central bank lowered borrowing costs in July for the first time since 2008.

"We still expect the Fed will cut rates in the fourth quarter, but squaring this soft read on the consumer, business investment and a slight rebound in underlying inflation admittedly pulls the Fed in opposite directions," said Tim Quinlan, a senior economist at Wells Fargo Securities in Charlotte, North Carolina. Consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of US economic activity, edged up 0.1 percent last month as an increase in outlays on recreational goods and motor vehicles was offset by a decrease in spending at restaurants and hotels.

On one hand, a key component of the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation measure of ticked higher in August for the third month in a row, although it remains below the Fed's two percent target, according to Commerce Department data. That could bolster argu-

ments against cutting interest rates again.

But on the other hand the decline in consumer spending and weakness in durable goods orders suggest the world's largest economy is slowing faster than expected, suggesting easier interest rates are needed to boost it. Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics said Friday said the trade war made consumers "nervous" and "the consumer boom is coming to an end, rapidly." The Commerce Department said disposable incomes adjusted for inflation rose 0.4 percent in August, the biggest increase since February, suggesting consumers have plenty of cash available.

But spending slowed to show a tepid 0.1 percent gain, its smallest monthly pace since February. Compared to the same month last year, the increase was the weakest recorded since December 2018.

### Forecasts slashed

As a result, savings rose to \$1.36 trillion, the highest level since March, meaning American consumers are holding onto their cash. Meanwhile, August appeared at first glance to be a better-than-expected month for US

manufacturing, with a second straight sales gain for military aircraft and equipment, according to a Commerce Department report.

Together with a boost in sales of primary metals, overall new orders for big-ticket, US-made items rose 0.2 percent, far better than the one percent drop economists had expected. But the data show other industries had a painful month, with notable declines for civilian aircraft, autos, communications equipment, electronics and appliances. A measure seen as a proxy for business investment, and a sign of future business activity, also fell in August after recording a flat July.

Taking the developments into account, Macroeconomic Advisers slashed their third-quarter GDP forecast by 0.6 percentage point to 1.6 percent about half what it was at the start of the year.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell last week said trade policy tensions, which "have waxed and waned, and elevated uncertainty is weighing on US investment and exports," adding that US central bank contacts had told policymakers that trade policy uncertainty "has discouraged them from investing in their businesses." — AFP

## Thomas Cook's home city looks to future

PETERBOROUGH, United Kingdom: "Most of us in Peterborough know somebody who works for Thomas Cook," said Phil Dobbs, a human resources manager who works in the city, home to the collapsed travel firm.

Peterborough in Cambridgeshire, eastern England, has rushed this week to help the 1,000 staff who lost their jobs early Monday when Thomas Cook filed for bankruptcy. "Thomas Cook has been in the city for forty years and it is a blow to lose so many jobs," said John Holdich, the Conservative leader of Peterborough City Council.

"They have been losing jobs over the years as they have modernized but 1,000 jobs in one go is a blow to the city and it's got a human cost," he told AFP in an interview. "It's not just 1,000 jobs to Thomas Cook—it's all those to supporting Thomas Cook in terms of people that repair their

computers and clean the offices and so on."

The shock failure of the travel giant, which was plagued by huge debts, sent shockwaves across Britain and the world-leaving 600,000 passengers of various nationalities stranded abroad and 22,000 staff worldwide without a job. "It's a real blow for the economy. It probably doubled the number of job seekers" in the city, added Dobbs.

### 'Gutted'

In Peterborough, whose center is dominated by the imposing 12th-century gothic cathedral, local authorities and businesses are racing to help Thomas Cook's former employees. Stuck to a window at one of the city's Thomas Cook outlets, a sheet of paper-alongside advertisements for sunny travel destinations—informs customers of its closure. "I'm really gutted for all the people that are stranded and all the people that have lost their jobs," Tammy Beckwith, 31, told AFP. "All of a sudden everyone's affected. It's upsetting, I just feel for them all."

Kelly Swingler, 39, founder of local HR agency Chrysalis Crew, told AFP she spotted a Facebook jobs appeal by redundant workers on Monday—and sprang into action

to offer help finding alternative work. "We are offering Thomas Cook employees CV reviews, interview support, some career advice and basically to give them somebody to offer them a listening ear and get them through this difficult time," Swingler said. "Thomas Cook have always been one of the largest employers locally and I've had lots of friends and family that have worked there since the head office moved to Peterborough back in the 1970s."

Elsewhere in the city, businesses have lined up to offer free assistance to beleaguered workers, many of whom have been with Thomas Cook for decades. "I'm very, very proud of our city, the way they've come together," said Holdich. "Free haircuts, free taxi rides, free bus rides... you name it, whether it's firms or individuals, they've really come behind this and supported those that have lost their jobs."

Local football club Peterborough United has meanwhile offered redundant workers free tickets for their home game on Saturday against AFC Wimbledon.

Thomas Cook formerly sponsored the club, which plays in English football's third tier and is managed by Darren Ferguson, son of former Manchester United leg-



PETERBOROUGH: People walk past a closed-down branch of the global travel group Thomas Cook, three days after the company filed for bankruptcy, in Peterborough, central England. — AFP

endary boss Sir Alex.

### 'Writing on the wall'

Around 9,000 Thomas Cook workers have lost their jobs in Britain, although some have been retained by liquidators to help oversee the winding-down of the business. Authorities in Peterborough, which lies

approximately 100 kilometers north of London and has a population of 200,000, are holding a jobs fair on Wednesday to help find new positions for those affected. Britain's once world-renowned travel operator collapsed after it failed to raise sufficient funds, buckling under high costs and soaring debt after a series of mis-timed mergers. — AFP

Business

UK rate cut 'plausible' if Brexit uncertainty persists: Saunders

Brexit, slower world growth building case for rate cut

BARNESLEY, England: The Bank of England may need to cut interest rates in the likely scenario that high levels of uncertainty over Brexit persist, policymaker Michael Saunders said on Friday in the first clear signal that the BoE is considering a cut.

Last week, without directly raising the prospect of cutting interest rates, the Bank of England said Brexit and slower world growth were increasingly causing Britain's economy to perform below potential. Saunders - who was one of the first BoE policymakers to vote for higher interest rates in 2017 and 2018 - said it was now his view that the unpredictable path of Brexit would effectively act as a "slow puncture" for the economy.

"Growth has slowed to a mere crawl," he told local businesses in Barnsley, northern England. "I think it is quite plausible that the next move in Bank Rate would be down rather than up."

After the comments, sterling fell by as much as half a cent against the dollar to a three-week low, and short-dated government bond yields dropped 4-5 basis points as investors priced in the increased chance of lower borrowing costs.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has pledged to take Britain out of the European Union by Oct. 31, without any transition agreement if necessary, but is in a standoff with parliament which has voted to block a no-deal departure next month. Even if Britain temporarily avoids a no-deal Brexit, uncertainty was likely to remain high, either due to the risk of a no-deal Brexit in 2020 or due to a lack of clarity about longer-term trading relationships with the EU, Saunders said.

"In this case, it might well be appropriate to maintain a highly accommodative monetary policy stance for an extended period and perhaps to loosen policy at some stage, especially if global growth remains disappointing," he said. British economic growth

continuing at its current level of 0.1 percent-0.2 percent would be sufficient to justify lower rates, due to the risk of slack opening up in the economy and pushing inflation further below its 2 percent target, Saunders said.

The economy shrank by 0.2 percent in the second quarter of 2019 and last week the BoE trimmed its third-quarter growth forecast to 0.2 percent from 0.3 percent, while inflation dropped more sharply than expected to 1.7 percent in August. David Cheetham, chief market analyst at brokers XTB, said the BoE looked increasingly likely to follow the US Federal Reserve and European Central Bank and cut rates. "The economy is still barely keeping its head above water. Throw in the almost universally acknowledged continued levels of heightened uncertainty on the political front ... and it is actually pretty shocking that a comment that a rate cut is 'quite plausible' has caused such a response."

No wait and see

Simply waiting to see what happened with Brexit risked leading to inappropriate monetary policy, and the cost of reversing a rate cut if the outlook brightened would be low, Saunders added at the event hosted by the Barnsley and Rotherham Chamber of Commerce and Institute of Chartered Accountants.

"In general, I would prefer to be nimble... accepting that it may be necessary to change course if the outlook changes significantly," he said. Saunders still agreed with recent BoE guidance that a limited and gradual increase in interest rates would be needed over the medium term, if Brexit uncertainty reduced significantly and global growth perked up a bit.

In the event of a no-deal Brexit, Saunders repeated the BoE position that all policy options would be open. Earlier this month, BoE Governor Mark



LONDON: In this file photo, estate and rental agents' boards are pictured on a residential street in Hackney, east London. Prices down, paralyzed transactions and depressed agents: Brexit has had a chilling effect on British real estate, particularly in London. —AFP

Carney estimated in a worst-case, chaotic scenario that a no-deal Brexit could reduce the size of the economy by 5.5 percent. The Paris-based OECD has predicted a 2 percent hit in the case of a more managed no-deal Brexit.

Saunders was clear that a no-deal Brexit - advo-

cated by some Brexit supporters as a way to resolve the uncertainty facing businesses - was not a good solution. This would probably immediately leave some firms unprofitable. Others might face longer-term questions about their viability, or whether they would be better off relocating. —Reuters

AUB reveals winner of KD 250,000 prize in Al-Hassad draw

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank announced on the 26th of September 2019 the lucky winner of its quarterly grand of Al-Hassad Islamic program, the very first draw account in Islamic banking in Kuwait that has reshaped the lives of thousands lucky winners. Al-Hassad has have over 850 prizes, over a 12 month period. It was a special occasion for Tahani Mubarak Alazmi who won the KD 250,000 grand prize, being the biggest surprise in her life.

The draw was live on FM 88.8 Kuwait Pulse. The event also saw many surprises, shows, entertainment activities and competitions for attendees and participants.

On the occasion Ahli United Bank congratulate its winning customer Tahani Mubarak Alazmi and commented that there are many chances to win waiting for our customers. Draws are held every Wednesday at AUB Kuwait or AUB Bahrain depending on the draw plan. On religious and national holidays, the draw is postponed to the next business day. Al-Hassad Islamic Account presents also 4 quarterly mega prizes of KD 250,000. One powerful new aspect of the Al-Hassad Islamic Account is the prize draws on the holy occasion of both Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha, when the winning customers will receive the eid prizes of KD 100,000 each. May the Eid always bring prosperity and blessings to the Islamic nation.

Al-Hassad Islamic Account presents 21 weekly prizes comprised a grand prize of KD 10,000, 20 prizes of KD 1,000 each in addition the monthly draw to win a prize of KD 100,000. In addition to the highly attractive package of the prizes, there is the annual expected profits on, which makes the Al Hassad account a useful tool for family and other savings, both for the short term and for the longer term - a fact which well appreciated by a large multitude of new and old customers.

Burgan Bank launches new Qatar Airways co-branded Mastercard prepaid card

KUWAIT: Bringing all customers and non-customers exclusive shopping experiences and travel benefits, Burgan Bank has unveiled the Qatar Airways co-branded Mastercard Prepaid card in Kuwait. Continuing its long-standing collaboration with one of the leading global airlines, the new card accommodates all with a wide range of special discounts, and notable Qmiles on all purchases.

In response to current trends and changing lifestyle needs, Burgan Bank launched the highest prepaid card Qmiles rewards program in Kuwait, which is also ranked as the highest in the region for an airline co-branded card. The Qatar Airways Co-branded Prepaid card is offered on the Mastercard network platform allowing customers access to combined privileges offered by Burgan Bank, Mastercard and Qatar Airways.

The card allows customers to convert their every-

day purchases, into Qmiles which can be redeemed for selection of services such as complimentary flights, upgrades and excess baggage awards on Qatar Airways as well as all the partner airlines in oneworld alliance. Customers can be assured of the ease in receiving their brand-new card as the issuance is swift and bears no restrictions. The card offers unrivalled 3 Qmiles for every KD 1 spent locally, and 5 Qmiles for every KD 1 spent internationally.

Nasser Al-Qaisi - Chief Retail Banking officer at Burgan Bank said, "We are pleased to announce the release of a new variant of Qatar Airways cards, we are a bank driven by people whose convenience and comfort lies at the heart of all our offerings. With fast growing lifestyle preferences witnessed, it is essential to stay up-to-date, through the aid of beneficial partnerships with entities that share the same values."

Qatar Airways Vice President of CRM and Loyalty, Jake Miller, said: "We are delighted to expand our partnership with Burgan Bank, and introduce our new Prepaid payment card. Our ambition is to provide all of our members in Kuwait with a hassle-free payment experience and an everyday way to earn Qmiles, regardless of who they bank with."

Somu Roy, General Manager, Qatar, Kuwait and Iraq, Mastercard, added, "As a global and regional leader in the airline cobrand card space, Mastercard is delighted to collaborate with Burgan Bank and Qatar



From left to right: Fadi Hijazin - Country Manager at Qatar Airways, Naser Mohammad Al-Qaisi - Chief Retail Banking Officer at Burgan Bank, Ritesh Shukla - Director Account Management

Airways to bring unmatched benefits to cardholders through the market's most rewarding prepaid card miles program. Powered by Mastercard technology, the co-branded card will allow travelers to make simple and secure transactions across the globe and reward them with a range of travel benefits through the Qmiles program."

Warba Bank sponsors SIBOS 2019 in UK

KUWAIT: Warba Bank announced its participation and sponsorship of SIBOS 2019: The financial sector specialized conference organized by The Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT); the international provider of secure financial telecommunications services.

SIBOS 2019 took place in London from 23-26 September. It brought

together more than 8,000 business leaders, financial strategists, decision makers and financial services providers who have a strong influence in the international banking sector trends in addition to multinational corporations and technology partners. The conference was as a perfect platform to discuss business strategies, and cooperation in shaping the future of the financial and investment sector to secure economic growth in various fields.

This year, SIBOS explored the impact of new technologies on the banking institutions' infrastructures while elaborating on the importance of investing in them. As well, it discussed the value propositions and business models and identify the culture, skills and working practices that organizations needed to maximize the potential of both human and machine

capabilities by enhancing digital ecosystems, leveraging data and keeping ahead of cybersecurity threats.

Warba Bank participated in SIBOS 2019 through its own corner and delegation. For on this occasion, Ayman Salem Al-Mutairi - Executive Manager Corporate Communication, commented on the bank's presence in SIBOS saying: "It was an ideal opportunity to meet leaders of the financial community worldwide to exchange ideas and experiences, discuss method of cooperation in several areas including digital technology and payments, securities, cash management, and trade.

He further elaborated that Warba Bank's presence at this global exhibition confirms its interest and endeavor to acquire the necessary knowledge that supports the Bank's approach in providing

digital banking services and financial products to the highest international standards, through new and innovative banking channels that allow our customers to process their banking transactions anytime, anywhere with ease and flexibility.

Warba Bank has always been at the forefront in adopting modern technologies and harnessing them to serve customers in the form of creative banking solutions and digital services that have contributed in bringing overwhelming change in the individuals' banking experience. This was also the prime motive behind launching "Al-Wateen" - Warba's Digital Factory- which formed the starting point of a revolutionary era in the digitization of the banking services by creating new and exclusive products that go in line with the Bank's development strategy.

EXCHANGE RATES

Table with columns for 'EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES', 'ASIAN COUNTRIES', 'GCC COUNTRIES', and 'ARAB COUNTRIES'. It lists various currencies like US Dollar, Euro, Japanese Yen, etc., along with their exchange rates.

Table titled 'Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd' showing 'Rate for Transfer' and 'Selling Rate' for various currencies including Egyptian Pound, Yemen Riyal, Tunisian Dinar, etc.

Table titled 'BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL' with columns for 'CURRENCY', 'BUY', and 'SELL'. It lists currencies like British Pound, Czech Korune, etc., and their corresponding rates.

Table showing exchange rates for 'Arab' currencies such as Bahraini Dinar, Egyptian Pound, Iranian Ryal, etc., with columns for the currency name and its rate.

# NBK Mega Day 2019: More prizes and even more engaging activities

Bank announces winners of summer campaign, Al-Jawhara draw, Honda and GAC cars



Huge participation from the audience



NBK team

**KUWAIT:** The National Bank of Kuwait held its annual NBK Mega Day on Friday (27th September) at the Grand Avenue, The Avenues, during which the bank held Al-Jawhara account's quarterly draw of KD 250,000, the Summer Campaign cashback draw in which ten winners were announced, the draw for the Honda car in the campaign held specifically for Al-Shabab Package, as well as the announcement for the GAC car in the NBK Mobile Banking campaign. All draws were conducted in the presence of a representative from Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

NBK Mega Day received great attendance from customers and visitors, giving them a chance to win valuable prizes in the activities that were planned during the day. The event was attended by officials from NBK, and comprised live competitions and entertaining segments designed for all ages, in addition to a unique performance by singer Alaa Al-Hindi.

The event that was hosted by presenter Salman Al-Nejadi and covered live by Kuwait Pulse FM 88.8 kicked off at noon with activities. At 4 pm, the live performances began with a special show organized in partnership with KidZania, followed by entertainment segments and competitions that enabled the audience to win valuable cash prizes as well as prizes from stores participating in NBK's Rewards Program.

#### A special day

Speaking of the NBK Mega Day event, Mohammed Al-Othman, General Manager of Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We strive at NBK to reward our customers through unique and

### Al-Othman: We strive to reward our customers through unique campaigns and draws that meet their aspirations

exclusive campaigns and draws, and NBK Mega Day is the most important of them which is awaited each year by customers and comes as part of our continued commitment to interacting and engaging with our customers and providing them with a fun-filled day for the whole family to enjoy."

He added: "We are also focused on introducing our digital services to our customers, and presented the latest updates and enhancements made to our NBK Mobile Banking App and NBK Online Banking, in addition to the latest services and products that were designed for all our customer segments."

Al Othman continued by saying: "We aim at NBK to satisfy our customers' needs by providing them with the most advanced services, and tailoring exclusive campaigns and events to ensure they enjoy a rich and integrated banking experience that meets their aspirations and reaffirms our commitment to providing them with the best of services."

Al-Othman concluded: "We are happy with the great success of the NBK Mega Day this year and the positive responses we've received from the audiences".

#### Ten winners in Summer Campaign

During Mega Day, NBK held the draw for the Summer Campaign launched in June. The ten winners who won cash back of the value of their purchases for

a year with a limit of up to KD 500 per month were: Laila Murad Hajji Ashkenani, Ahmed Yousri Ahmed Nour Aldin Helmy, Asayel Mohammad Abass Almutawa, Ahmad Reyadh Ahmad Al-Sanea, Faisal Bader Sulaiman Al-Othman, Alain Pierre Clement Hamidou Kere, Kamel Saad Manee Al-Fadhli, Mariam Abdulredha Ahmad Al-Hendiani, Yaqoub Yousef Yaqoub Al-Mumen and Fahad AbdulMohsen Abdullah Al-Matrouk.

#### The grand prize of KD 250,000

During the event, the quarterly draw of Al-Jawhara account was held live, announcing Mona Mohammad Akbar Lari as the winner of KD 250,000. Al-Jawhara monthly and quarterly draws are supervised and audited by Deloitte.

NBK allows customers to automatically enter the draws of Al-Jawhara account, giving them a chance to win KD 5,000 weekly, KD 125,000 monthly and a KD 250,000 grand prize quarterly for every KD 50 deposited into their account. The minimum amount that can be deposited in the account is KD 400 and the maximum is KD 500,000.

#### Honda and GAC cars

Committed to rewarding customers through valuable prizes and draws, NBK held a draw on a GAC car and another on a Honda car. The winner of the new

GAC GA4 car Ahmed Mohamed Hassan ElSaid was announced during the event. The draw concludes NBK's competition held for customers who downloaded and used the NBK Mobile Banking App in an aim to encourage them to make and complete transactions using the app, ensuring they remain up to date of the features and enhancements made continuously to the app.

During the event another draw was held for a Honda Civic LX Sport. Abdullah Jaseem Abdullah Al-Khamees was announced as the winner in the Honda car. This was the first draw of two scheduled as part of NBK's new campaign launched this year exclusively for Al-Shabab customers who downloaded and used the NBK Mobile Banking App. The campaign builds on NBK's aim to reward young customers and offering them campaigns that align with their fast-paced lifestyle.

#### NBK displays its latest digital services

In its continued commitment to communicating with its customers and ensuring they remain up to date with its latest digital banking products and services, NBK showcased its advanced cash withdrawal and deposit services with a simple tap and without inserting their card when using Tap & Pay feature.

And with NBK's latest update, customers can also enjoy the convenience of cardless cash withdrawals using their Civil ID or mobile phone number. The Bank also introduced the latest updates to NBK's Online and Mobile banking services, in addition to the direct Video Chat service allowing customers to speak face-to-face with NBK Service Officers.



Engagement from the audience



Al-Jawhara Quarterly Draw



Announcing the 10 Winners in the Cashback Campaign



Singer Alaa Al-Hindi



Fun Activities



Activities for all the family



GAC GA4 car winner announced



Honda Civic LX Sport winner announced



KidZania characters on stage



A segment from the event

## Business

# Toyota Land Cruiser series global sales pass 10m mark

Premium SUV's new milestone highlights customer trust and loyalty for the brand



**KUWAIT:** Toyota announced yesterday that the cumulative global sales of its legendary Land Cruiser series have surpassed 10 million units as of August 31, 2019. The new milestone comes as a recognition for the premium SUV's standing as a global and regional icon that continues to touch the lives of millions of people across the globe every day.

"We are grateful to each and every one of our customers for their trust and support in our journey towards achieving this important milestone, cementing it as a remarkable success story over the years," said Yugo Miyamoto, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation. "Since its introduction over six decades ago, the Land Cruiser has evolved into one of the most fully capable premium SUVs, exceeding expectations across successive generations to establish itself as a favorite among the region's families."

"The legendary Land Cruiser embodies Toyota's reputation for reliability, durability, and capability, and has become an integral part of people's lives in

virtually every part of the globe. We remain committed to continue working together with our customers to create 'ever-better' cars," Miyamoto added.

Launched on August 1, 1951, as the Toyota Jeep BJ, the Land Cruiser is the company's longest-running vehicle. The production of the world-beating vehicle, which assumed its current name in 1954, has continued for 68 years with nine generations dominating the Premium SUV market across the world.

Full-scale exports of the Land Cruiser began with the 20 series, which was introduced in November 1955, four years after the launch of the first-generation vehicle. Since then, Toyota has consistently developed versions that cater to customer needs, while staying true to its reputation for reliability, durability, and drivability on poor roads - essentially the development concepts on which the Land Cruiser is based.

As a well-deserved recognition for its genuine off-road capabilities, the Land Cruiser has continued to receive the support of customers around the world.

Even though fewer than 100 units were exported per year initially, by 1965, 10 years after full-scale exports commenced, that figure had surpassed 10,000 units per year. At present, the Land Cruiser is sold in approximately 170 countries and regions worldwide, with annual global sales standing at approximately 400,000 units.

The Land Cruiser contributed significantly to increased trust in the Toyota brand around the world and created a foothold for the company to expand its exports. Due to its outstanding reliability and durability, there are regions where Land Cruiser 40 series vehicles continue to be used today, some 50 years after they were manufactured.

The history of the Land Cruiser symbolizes Toyota's QDR - Quality, Durability, and Reliability. Over the years, the Land Cruiser has carved out a reputation for itself as a reassuring companion for business and lifestyle needs. It is widely recognized as a vehicle that transports people's lives and items, that fulfills people's mobility dreams, and that enables

people to go where they want, when they want, and to return safe and sound.

Owing to its versatile features and capabilities, the thoroughbred four-wheel-drive off-roader is utilized around the world for a broad array of diverse needs. The applications range from carrying out humanitarian assistance operations in remote areas and herding cattle on vast cattle ranches, to facilitating mobility in deep underground mines and harvesting high-elevation crops on steep fields at altitudes as high as 3,400 meters, where even humans have difficulty standing. Indeed, there are many places around the world where it would be impossible to live from day to day without the Land Cruiser.

Going forward, in order to continue to cater to - and even exceed - customer expectations, development of the Land Cruiser will take place on the premise that it will be used in every corner of the world. To this end, Toyota itself intends to set more rigorous standards and continue to engage in car-making with the goal of creating a truly unique vehicle.

## Here is what you can do with 128GB storage on your Huawei P30 Pro

**KUWAIT:** The summer is here and it is time to pack up your bags and head out for your much-awaited summer holidays! However, while you are packing you can't forget your camera, extra storage devices, your laptop and of course your tripod to make sure you get some of the best pictures and videos of those warm and fun summer nights. But, what if you didn't have to pack all of this, instead just use one device for it all?

Following the wide success of the Huawei P30 Pro, Huawei has added one more member to the Huawei P30 family, providing users with more choice. The new edition offers users with a 128GB storage option along with the rest of the Huawei P30 Pro's powerful features, packed into the beautiful Breathing Crystal body.

### Taking a lot of photos? No problem

A wonderful summer holiday is bound to have key moments that you need to save forever. From morning sunrises to stunning beaches, glorious sunsets to family dinners, each memory is precious and deserves to be saved. To help you take these pictures, the Huawei P30 Pro packs a powerful Leica Quad camera setup that can take beautiful pictures under any situation. Lack of light, subjects too far away or even scenes that don't fit in one frame, the Huawei P30 Pro does not face any challenge thanks to its award-winning camera setup.

You can take as many photos as you want without having to worry about running out of space on the Huawei P30 Pro, as the new 128GB edition offers a solid storage capacity. What better way is there to come home with all your memories safely stored in one place?

### Space for all your videos

Not only is this powerful camera setup great for clicking pictures, but it can also record stunning videos. Simply point and click, making you the director of your own little holiday movie, music video or even the next episode of your VLOG. Apart from high quality videos, your videos can also get a unique look thanks to the Huawei P30 Pro's Dual-View Video feature that splits your display in two with a close-up shot on one frame and a wide-angle shot on the other. For example, you can record your children's expressions while they are swimming while also capturing the whole scenery at the same time. Not only does this make way for creative videos,



but you can also record a concert or a show entirely while also focusing on the lead performers.

High quality videos do take up space, all the more reason why you need the extra storage space that the Huawei P30 Pro's 128GB edition offers.

### Install all the apps you will ever need

Travelling to a new place might sometimes be a little intimidating, unless you have the right arsenal of apps installed on your phone. Travel guides, currency converters, local maps, transport services, are just some examples of apps you will need when you are moving out and about your holiday destination. Thanks to the 128GB storage, users can download and install all the apps they need onto their Huawei P30 Pro. Be it for business or leisure, there is an app for it all, and the Huawei P30 Pro 128GB edition has the space for it. If you have some free time, you can also indulge in some fun gameplay by downloading and installing some of the best games available on mobile platforms.

## Gulf Bank announces winner of 3rd Al-Danah quarterly draw for KD 500,000

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank has announced the winner of the third Al-Danah quarterly draw of the year. The lucky winner, Bader Yousef Mohammad Al-Nasrallah, took home a cash prize of KD 500,000.

The draw, which took place live on air on FM 88.8 'Q8 Pulse' (Nabd Al-Kuwait) in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce, is the third Al-Danah quarterly draw of 2019.

Commenting on the third quarterly Al-Danah draw of the year, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager of External Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "We look forward to the Al-Danah draws every quarter, as they are a great chance for us to see the Al-Danah account and all its benefits in action. Al-Danah chances are added on a daily basis, meaning the more customers save and the longer they save for, the higher their chances in winning. Furthermore, Al-Danah is the only draw account in Kuwait that provides loyalty chances; loyalty chances refer to all the accumulated chances a customer gains in the previous year, which are then rewarded to their next year's chances to enter the draw; terms and conditions apply.

For example, the total chances gained by customers in 2018 have been added to all loyal customer's 2019 chances, and the same will be done for 2020; all their chances gained in 2019, will be added to 2020 and so on.

In addition to the millionaire annual prize, the Al-Danah account offers account holders quarterly prizes of up to KD 500,000, as well as weekly prizes of KD 1,000 each for a total of five winners. We are excited to continue to reward our customers for saving with their Al-Danah accounts, and we encourage everyone to continue depositing into their accounts to increase their chances of becoming our 2019 Al-Danah millionaire in our upcoming draw!"

Gulf Bank customers have until October 31, 2019 to enter the yearly Al-Danah draw of the year, which will take place on January 16, 2020. The fourth and final draw of the year will culminate in the announcement of the 2019 Al-Danah millionaire, who will receive a grand prize of KD 1 million. To participate in this year's quarterly and annual draws, customers must keep the balance required by the Al-Danah account. To deposit into an Al-Danah account, customers can visit any one of Gulf Bank's ATMs or ITMs, as well as any of the 58 Gulf Bank branches around the country.



Ahmad Al-Amir



What's On

# Jumeirah Group announces its new appointments across Dubai & Europe

**M**ahmoud Sakr was recently welcomed as the new Managing Director of Jumeirah Zabeel Saray Hotel and Royal Residences. Mahmoud brings over 30 years' experience and joins from Jumeirah Emirates Towers where he was General Manager and Area General Manager - City Hotels.

Originally from Egypt, Mahmoud is passionate about providing a personalized guest experience at this award-winning resort on Palm Jumeirah. As one of Jumeirah's most experienced business leaders, he has played a pivotal role in the company's journey over the last 20 years. He is a seasoned hotelier and his dedication to his employees and guests alike sets a great example and is highly commendable. Mahmoud's strong market knowledge and excellent operational knowledge makes him well placed to take on the challenge of managing Jumeirah Zabeel Saray. Prior to joining Jumeirah Group, Mahmoud worked for Le Meridien for 13 years across Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Senegal.

Jumeirah Beach Hotel and Wild Wadi Waterpark recently appointed Jason Harding as Managing Director. He brings extensive experience to the role, having worked in the luxury hospitality industry for 28 years, nine of these in the UAE. Originally from the UK, Jason's journey began in 1991, when he joined the London Hilton Park Lane. His career has included General Management roles across the Rocco Forte Hotels. In 2010 Jason relocated to Dubai and worked as General Manager and Regional General Manager at The Palace - Old Town and Armani Hotels and Resorts with responsibility for their Dubai and Milan properties. Jason then took on Area Director and Complex General Manager roles at Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces and Marriott International.



Abhijith Ghosh - General Manager - Jumeirah Vittaveli



Amit Majumder - Regional Vice President - Boutique Resorts



Fergus Stewart - Regional Vice President - Europe



Jason Harding - General Manager - Jumeirah Beach Hotel

Jason has extensive managerial experience which includes handling overall hotel operations, strategic direction and overseeing multi-million pound renovations. He has an impressive record of growing profitability, improving guest satisfaction, increasing staff retention and delivering increased revenues.

Rajesh Jhingon has been appointed as Regional Vice President for Jumeirah Hotels and Resorts and leads the operations and management of four distinct hotels: Jumeirah Al Naseem, Jumeirah Mina A'Salam, Jumeirah Al Qasr and Jumeirah Dar Al Masyaf. With more than 18 years' hospitality experience, Rajesh is a passionate service-driven hotelier and has worked in both leading luxury resorts and city-centre hotels in the Maldives, Singapore, Las Vegas, Manila, and his home country of India. Prior to joining Jumeirah Group, Rajesh held the role of Senior Vice President of Resort Operations for Solaira

Resort and Casino in Manila for four years.

Rajesh has been instrumental in the positioning of quality hotel openings and refurbishments, including the opening of Mandarin Oriental Las Vegas in 2008 and the multi-million dollar renovation of Mandarin Oriental Singapore in 2004. Fergus Stewart joins as Regional Vice President, Europe and will be responsible for overseeing the upcoming renovation of Jumeirah Carlton Tower in London in addition to the extended London portfolio and hotels in Europe.

Originally from Scotland, Fergus has over 30 years' experience working in the luxury hospitality industry. He spent 25 years working overseas in 11 different countries and regions including Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand and the UAE. He joins Jumeirah from an 11-year tenure at IHG, where most recently he held the position of

Vice President of the Luxury Hotels Division - Europe, responsible for overseeing iconic hotels including The Carlton Cannes, Paris le Grand, The Amstel in Amsterdam and the Intercontinental Park Lane. In addition, Fergus also oversaw Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants in Continental Europe, where he played an integral role in the expansion to key gateway cities.

Amit Majumder, previously General Manager at Jumeirah Vittaveli, has been appointed as Regional Vice President, Boutique Resorts, for Jumeirah Hotels and Resorts. In Amit's new role, he will be based in the Dubai Design District at Jumeirah Group's headquarters. His new mandate will include oversight of Jumeirah Vittaveli, and the development of expansion plans for high end luxury boutique resorts within the Jumeirah brand.

During Amit's tenure at Jumeirah Vittaveli,

he achieved many milestones and commercial success in the resort's positioning, which included the opening of the lavish five-bedroom Royal Residence. Originally from India, Amit started his hospitality career with Oberoi in India and joined Jumeirah in 2002, where he contributed to the successful operations at Burj Al Arab.

Abhijith Ghosh has been appointed as the new General Manager at Jumeirah Vittaveli and joins in September. Originally from India, he brings a wealth of 19 years' hospitality experience gained during his time working with Six Senses, Hilton and Soneva. Throughout his successful career, Abhijith has demonstrated efficient leadership and people management skills with strong experience in managing multi-cultural teams across Jordan, Thailand, India and Vietnam.

## BSK students represent Kuwait in World Schools Debate Championships

**T**his summer, Team Kuwait sent a five-person team to Thailand to participate in the World Schools Debate Championships (WSDC). Comprising of four BSK students: Yousef Mehany, Daniel Puumalainen, Farah Badr and May El-Amir and one KES student, Vedant Khaitan, Team Kuwait enjoyed a series of eight debates and competed admirably in such a prestigious tournament, eventually won by a formidable Team India.

Prior to the tournament, the students committed themselves to rounds of trials and a thorough research program. Thereafter the World Schools Debating Championships provided a steep learning curve for our students, who explored topics such as breaking up multi-national companies, ethnic minority representation and debt in society.

Team Kuwait's five successful students, led by Abigail Bartholomew and Jeremy Grigg of The British School of Kuwait, embarked upon the competition in Bangkok with a series of pre-released debates. They went toe to toe with Team Wales and Team Turkey on the initial day of the tournament exploring the issues of gentrification and US National Security. The day was rounded off with a fierce debate against a well-drilled Oman team. In spite of three losses, the team adjusted to the demands of the tournament, and further honed the specifics of speaker roles and engaging in points of clash, chances to interject between speeches, to carry them forward.

During the next rounds of the Championships, Team Kuwait faced Team Italy who were arguing to 'break up Amazon.com'. Strong arguments were put forward by Team Kuwait through swift rhetoric and rebuttal against the principle, but Team Italy shaded the win here. The next match, against Team Rwanda, was a tense affair on the issue on 'pay day loans' and we lost this debate. Yet, in



spite on these losses, the team showed verve, resilience, camaraderie and dug in to fight for the next rounds.

South America provided the next challenge, in the form of Venezuela and a tough motion about 'granting amnesty to perpetrators of crime in lost-conflict societies.' Adjusting to the demands of the competition, the structure of speeches became tighter and the consistency of arguments across team speakers gathered more fluency.

Interjections became sharper, and more focused too, and Team Kuwait achieved a unanimous verdict from the judges and a convincing win.

Regional opposition came next, from a passionate Saudi team. Team Kuwait debated the representation of younger politicians in parliament and the judges were split in their decision. Yet, the spirit of the team, the communication, and the morale of the team remained strong, leading into the final round against Northern Ireland. Debating international marriage, Team Kuwait showed how far they had developed across the tournament and in spite of the loss, the judges credited analytical argumentation, breadth of knowledge and passionate engagement.

Team Kuwait were a credit throughout the competition. As well as gracious and respectful opponents, the students were enthusiastic throughout and embraced the range of cultural experiences across the tournament, including a river boat tour through Bangkok and the annual cultural night. Embracing opportunities to share experiences of clothing, food, music and architecture, Team Kuwait were recognized as outstanding young citizens by tournament participants and organizers, and made many international friendships. Overall the students represented the country remarkably and made the trip a huge success. We look forward to the development of the team, and further selection processes for WSDC 2020 in Mexico City.



Commercial Bank of Kuwait recently sent educational supplies and equipment to schools in Hawally to show its support to the governorates of Kuwait and to ensure the prosperous future of Kuwait by supporting the community and its educational institutions.



## Burgan Bank offers a chance to watch 'Joker' movie for free

**B**urgan Bank, in collaboration with Grand Cinemas, announced yesterday that its Youth Account Holders will be offered the exclusivity to watch the first screening of the new movie "Joker" for free at the luxurious movie theatre of Grand Cinemas located in Al Hamra Luxury Centre. The movie screening will be held on Thursday October 3rd, 2019, wherein each customer is entitled to 2 free tickets on one of the two shows, at 5:00 pm or 7:30 pm.

To book the free seats, Youth Account Holders are required to visit Grand Cinemas box office in Al Hamra Luxury Centre and present their Youth ATM card. The bank strives to reward its Youth account holders with exclusive offers that fits their lifestyle. The Youth Account is dedicated for young individuals, between the ages of 15 to 25, and who seek to attain a successful future. Furthermore, account holders receive an ATM card which entitles them to discounts at selective merchants along with an exclusive discount at Grand Cinemas Theatres.



English teacher Abdul Aziz Yahya Ismail, from Salahuddin Secondary School was recently promoted to a senior teacher and transferred to Jaber Al-Ali Secondary School in the Mubarak Al-Kabeer educational area where he started his new position as head of the English department. Abdul Aziz is a young enthusiastic and energetic HOD and a valued addition to the school. Congratulations and all the best.

# Greta Thunberg marches for global climate protests

**MONTREAL:** Teen activist Greta Thunberg urged Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and other world leaders Friday to do more for the environment as she led half a million protesters in Montreal as part of a global wave of "climate strikes." The 16-year-old Swede met privately with Trudeau but later told a news conference with local indigenous leaders that he was "not doing enough" to curb greenhouse gases responsible for global warming. "My message to all the politicians around the world is the same. Just listen and act on the current best available science," she said.

Thunberg generated headlines around the world earlier this week with her viral so-called "How Dare You?" speech at the UN climate summit, accusing world leaders of betraying her generation.

"You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words," she thundered, visibly angry and close to tears. The teen has inspired millions of youngsters, drawn to her cause by her passion and a mature, committed rhetorical style-articulated in near-perfect English-that belies her young age.

"It's incredible to be united in such a way for a common cause," she told the cheering Montreal crowd, adding: "If the people in power won't take their responsibility, then we will." "This week, world leaders from all around the world gathered in New York. They disappointed us once again with their empty words and insufficient plans," she went on. "It should not be up to us, but somebody needs to do it. This is an emergency, and we will not be bystanders. We are the change and change is coming."

Trudeau and other Canadian party leaders took a

breather from a tight election campaign to join Thunberg at the Montreal rally-along with around 500,000 protesters, according to organizers. Walking with his wife and children, Trudeau mingled with a boisterous crowd that brandished placards reading "Respect Mother Earth" and "Make America Greta Again"-a riff on a campaign slogan popularized by US president and noted climate skeptic Donald Trump.

### Two billion trees

One man was tackled by security when he appeared to lunge at the prime minister, while 13-year-old Annabelle Vellend broke out in tears when she spotted Thunberg marching, telling AFP: "I really believe in Greta's movement." "She is doing amazing things and it's great that she's able to press politicians to act on climate change, during an election," she said. In his first term, Trudeau cast himself as a champion in the fight against global warming, but his green image was tarnished by his nationalization of an oil pipeline to salvage the construction project after years of delay.

The prime minister said after meeting Thunberg and pledging to fund the planting of two billion trees: "I agree with her entirely. We need to do more." Earlier this week, the Liberal leader promised Canada would reach net-zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050, joining 66 other countries that have already signed onto the pledge. Last Friday, more than six million youths-and adults-rallied in "climate strikes" around the world.

Turnout at events a week on was smaller, but still vocal. In Italy hundreds of thousands of young people

took to the streets while an estimated 40,000 protested outside New Zealand's parliament, and in Switzerland police intervened when protestors tried to block a major thoroughfare. "Don't take away my planet, you jerks!" yelled demonstrators who surged through the streets of Madrid singing raucously along to a brass band, and dancing.

### Record CO2 emissions

Climate is "being talked about every day, everywhere, by everyone," commented Maria Paralejo, 22. Her friend Alicia Portela told AFP it wasn't just up to politicians to act. "We have to stop using so much plastic, cut back on eating meat and reuse clothes instead of buying new ones." Back at the giant Montreal march made up mostly of children and a few adults, Alexanne Lessard stood out in her tree costume. "I'm here for our future, to show our government that we the majority want to do something and that they can take big steps that will have an impact," she said.

The world's top scientists believe the long-term average temperature rise must be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels to prevent runaway warming and catastrophic longer term damage. But the level of emissions being released into the atmosphere has risen to an all-time high, triggering global weather hazards from heat waves to intense hurricanes and raging wildfires. The UN estimates that the world needs to increase its current efforts five-fold to contain climate change. The UN summit in New York sought to reinvigorate the faltering Paris agreement on climate change. — AFP

## 3 more elephants killed in Sri Lanka, bringing toll to 7

**COLOMBO:** Wildlife officials found three more dead wild elephants in central Sri Lanka yesterday, raising the number believed to have been poisoned by angry villagers to seven. The animals were found at a forest reserve near Sigiriya, a fifth-century rock fortress and UNESCO-protected heritage site, police said.

"Since Friday, we have found the remains of seven cow elephants, including a tusker," police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekera said. Nearly 200 elephants are killed every year on the island, many by farmers after the animals stray onto their land. Marauding elephants kill roughly 50 people annually, mostly when the creatures stray into villages near their habitat. A pregnant female and a male were among the four carcasses found on Friday.

Wildlife experts and vets will carry out autopsies, said a police official in Sigiriya, north of Colombo, as they suspect the animals may have been poisoned. Police said there had been a spate of incidents involving wild elephants storming villages and destroying crops in the area. Killing the animals is in theory punishable by death. Sri Lanka's elephant population has dwindled to just over 7,000, according to the latest census, down from an estimated 12,000 at the beginning of the last century. — AFP

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248 33 199

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- Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
- Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).

مسشفى دار الشفاء  
Dar Al Shifa Hospital  
Tele:1802 555

daralshifa

**DR KHALED ALMERRI**  
Consultant interventional Cardiology  
Department: Heart & Vascular Center

**Specialized in:**

- 1-Diagnosis and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty). Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4-Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6-Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring

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**Know your Doctor**  
Otorhinolaryngology (E.N.T)  
**Dr Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj**  
ENT Specialist

- Laryngology Fellowship - Canada
- Fellow of the European Board Otorhinolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery
- Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- Member of the British Laryngological Association
- Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- Member of the Eurpean Laryngological Society

**Specialized in:**

- Management of benign and malignant vocal cord lesions.
- Vocal cord augmentation.
- Treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
- Adenotonsillectomy using latest techniques.
- Thyroid surgery.
- Surgery for the deviated nasal septum.
- Endoscopic sinus surgery.
- Treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- Treatment of snoring.
- Treatment of vertigo.

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**IC INTERNATIONAL CLINIC**  
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AL SALAM INTERNATIONAL HOSPITAL

**American Board Certified in General Surgery**  
**Member of the Society of American Gastrointestinal & Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES)**  
**Higher specialization in Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary surgery & Organ Transplantation**  
**Member of many prestigious surgical societies.**

- Day case surgeries
- Minor surgeries (lipoma, sebaceous cyst, Ingrowing nail)
- Diagnosis, treatment and follow up of all surgical emergencies
- Hemorrhoids, fistula & anal fissure surgeries
- Surgery for morbid obesity (sleeve, gastric bypass)
- Breast surgeries
- Hernia repair
- Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- Surgery for reflux disease
- Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

**Dr. Hani Haider**  
General Surgery Consultant  
http://www.international-clinic.com  
Tel: 1886677

**Scope of Clinical Practice:**

- General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- Single Port Surgery
- Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
- Surgical treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- Stomach Balloon insertion & removal
- Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery

**Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:**

- American Board of General Surgery
- Fellow of American College of Surgery
- Canadian Board of General Surgery
- Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- American Board of Colo-Rectal Surgery
- American Board of Surgical Critical Care

**Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad**  
Surgery Department  
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo-Rectal Surgeon

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**DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM**  
Consultant Pediatrician

Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American Board in Pediatrics-Canadian Board in Pediatric Emergency

Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368  
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**DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED**  
Consultant of General Surgery  
Laprosopic and Bariatric Surgery

**Academic Certificates - Training**

- Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- (IFSO) member .
- Faculty member of (BEST).
- Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

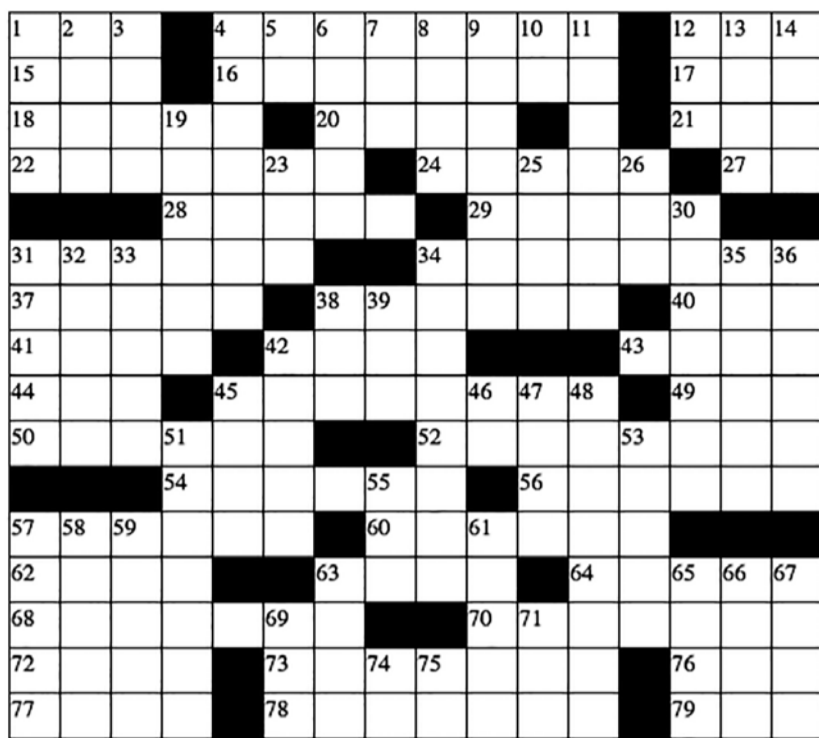
**Scope of clinical Practice.**

- Bariatric surgeries.
- Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- G.I. surgeries.
- Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- Anal surgeries.

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228  
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2319



ACROSS

- 1. Your general store of remembered information.
4. Full of or giving praise.
12. The compass point that is one point south of due east.
15. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
16. Small free-swimming tunicates.
17. Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
18. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
20. A fencing sword similar to a foil but with a heavier blade.
21. A master's degree in business.
22. An annual publication including weather forecasts and other miscellaneous information arranged according to the calendar of a given year.
24. German mathematician who created the Klein bottle (1849-1925).
27. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
28. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
29. Genus of erect herbs of the Middle East having showy flowers.
31. A historical region of southwestern India on the west coast.
37. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
40. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
41. A stick that people can lean on to help them walk.
43. Flesh of fish found in colder waters of northern Atlantic coast of the United States.
44. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
49. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
50. A block of absorbent material saturated with ink.
52. The Mon-Khmer language spoken in Vietnam.
54. A medicinal drug used to evoke vomiting (especially in cases of drug overdose or poisoning).
56. An investigator who is employed to find missing persons or missing goods.
57. Heater that removes ice or frost (as from a windshield or a refrigerator or the wings of an airplane).
60. A zodiacal constellation in the northern hemisphere between Taurus and Cancer on the ecliptic.
62. Very fertile.
64. Squash bugs.
68. A department of Greece in the central Peloponnese.
70. The presence of potassium in the circulating blood.
72. The rate of flow of energy or particles across a given surface.
73. Relating to or derived from a glacier.
76. To make a mistake or be incorrect.
77. A port in southern Lebanon on the Mediterranean Sea.
78. Structure built of stone or brick by a mason.
79. (meaning literally 'born') Used to indicate the maiden or family name of a married woman.

DOWN

- 1. The basic unit of money on Malta.
2. An official language of the Republic of South Africa.
3. Injure or wound seriously and leave permanent disfigurement or mutilation.
4. A deciduous tree of the family Ulmaceae that grows in the southeastern United States.
5. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
6. Any of several tall tropical palms native to southeastern Asia having egg-shaped nuts.
7. X-ray picture of the kidneys and ureters after injection of a radiopaque dye.
8. A branch of the Tai languages.
9. An island republic on the island of Iceland.
10. A colorless odorless gaseous element that give a red glow in a vacuum tube.
11. A region (and former kingdom) in northwestern Spain on the Atlantic and the Bay of Biscay.
12. Any of various trees of the genus Ulmus.
13. A small cake leavened with yeast.
14. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
19. Flightless New Zealand birds similar to gallinules.
23. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
25. A river in central Europe that arises in northwestern Czechoslovakia and flows northward through Germany to empty into the North Sea.
26. Remaining after all deductions.
30. Lacking motor coordination.
32. At full speed.
33. Indian religious leader who founded Sikhism (1469-1538).
34. A cephalosporin antibiotic (trade name Ultracer).
35. A liquid solution that results from elution.
36. A straight sword with a narrow blade and two edges.
38. Goddess of the dead and queen of the underworld.
39. (informal) Of the highest quality.
42. (Judaism) The ceremonial dinner on the first night (or both nights) of Passover.
45. A strip of land projecting into a body of water.
46. Not out.
47. (prefix) Opposite or opposing or neutralizing.
48. In a carnal manner.
51. A heavy iron tool with a wooden handle and a curved head that is pointed on both ends.
53. A state in New England.
55. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
58. At or near the beginning of a period of time or course of events or before the usual or expected time.
59. Make oneself subject to.
61. Battles in World War II in the Pacific (November 1943).
63. The arch of bone beneath the eye that forms the prominence of the cheek.
65. A primeval personification of air and breath.
66. A title of address formerly used for a man of rank and authority.
67. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
69. One of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
71. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
74. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
75. A heavy odorless colorless gas formed during respiration and by the decomposition of organic substances.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

This Sunday you may be moved to take risks. When we become truly inspired by something that we consider to be extraordinary then truly extraordinary things begin to happen for us—particularly in our thought process. Today you are inspired. Science projects or artistic opportunities spark ideas in your head. This could also mean a shop has begun to teach some fun through small classes in some type of art or science class. You may even decide to have your own class in your garage; perhaps a guest could teach. What a great way to learn, earn money for the holidays or enjoy the company of a loved one while experimenting with art.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Practical matters are uppermost in your mind—you sort out anything that needs doing. Taking care of personal business may be the major theme where your emotional orientation is concerned. You like organization and practicality and you want to get things accomplished. After the bills are written and the letters are answered you may decide today is the perfect time to pay a visit to a museum or library or to attend a lecture. There are some profound changes available for you now, on a personal level—psychologically and perhaps physically as well—as if you are transforming into an entirely new person.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Your emotions are not in tune with the more sensitive and private areas of your life. Push on now without gaining some kind of focus and you risk some very turbulent emotional scenes. Take some time to enjoy a hobby or some form of self-expression. This is a very contemplative day as you delve back into your memories and reassess many of the pivotal events of your life. This would be a good time to go through the old photograph albums. You are looking for some level of meaning now and will examine your past looking for patterns. Look at the achievements that you have made recently. With a new focus on your goals, the time is positive for new beginnings. Refreshed and refurbished, consider a night of dancing this evening.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You seem to be in a hurry this day—which may place yourself at odds with others. You could make mistakes you regret. Pace yourself—others want to help you. You have a lot of energy for making improvements in your surroundings or life situations. You are motivated to improve. This could also involve repair or decoration of your home. A short trip into the country, for nature's artistic gifts—colored leaves, berries, herbal seeds—may involve the whole family. Your support system—family, home, those who give you nourishment—becomes more secure these days. You are able to dispense with some of the unessential and develop what is most true in your environment.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

There are many meaningful days this month. The energies present at this time seem to bring out your unique qualities. You and your friends have plans for the afternoon and you should have a blast with all the activity that they have planned. A game could be played and may be an incentive to use your imagination. You could be very inventive when ingenuity is needed. There is a desire to explore all kinds of new horizons. Travel, education and other ways to stretch your horizons open new doors of opportunity soon. This is a good day to think about your next vacation or drive to the country to collect colorful fall leaves for decorating your home. Time away from your regular responsibilities brings a renewed appreciation of your life.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Friends and distant family members have a need to stay in touch today. The phone is ringing and an accidental sighting of a friend may have many of your friends wanting to chat about the next reunion or holiday gathering. This is a great time to be with others. If you are visiting in-laws or family members today, make it a point to give thanks to your host or hostess. Forgetfulness may be the earmark of the day's energies; keep notes. You find inspiration for a creative talent—art, poetry, etc.—and may find yourself encouraged to teach a creative class before the next holiday season; perhaps greeting cards, thank you notes or handmade gifts.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Challenges provide you with many choices and this is one of those days when there should be thinking before acting. Stay as focused as possible on whatever projects you have set out for yourself; you will be quite satisfied at the results. You could be building the model of the next super airplane or spaceship. Conversations with friends this afternoon could get into things like time travel or a psychic premonition. There is the possibility of new visions or sudden insights into your self-image or into your ideals and dreams. You may find breakthroughs in understanding as you view a situation from a different angle. You put a lot of consideration into reshaping and renewing your philosophy or religion, during which your imagination is at full tilt.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This is the best time this month to start a diet or a new exercise plan. You have an instinctive urge to get serious about taking care of yourself. Diet, exercise and work somehow mean more now; you want to feel good about yourself and the way you do things. You could have difficulty getting outer recognition for your efforts or accomplishments. This does not mean they are worthless but it does mean you should throw your efforts into work or a venture you really love doing. A friend wants your approval on an upcoming decision. This evening would be a good time to spend with a loved one. Emotions are up and you may even find yourself pondering a bit on the meaning of life.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may be able to enjoy your life situation this Saturday. A friend may occupy much of your day with activities that are enjoyable for the both of you. There is much communication between you and your friend. This is a good day to enjoy taking some time off from the everyday sort of routine and just having a good time. You appreciate your particular situation and enjoy support from those around you. Outer circumstances and the flow of events make it easy for you to make clear decisions, see the road ahead and gain a focus for future action. Things seem to fall into place and progress is easy. Be careful not to overextend yourself at this time.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Emotional security, a sense of belonging and nurturing are felt instinctively now. You want roots, and you want a sense of intimate connection. You make every effort to improve your living conditions as well as relationships. You value what is factual and straightforward and have a particular repugnance to anything secret. You know you must be willing to listen in order to have the best communication between hard-to-understand people. Making a good impression and putting your best foot forward takes on greater importance now as you receive many social invitations this fall. You may be reassessing your wardrobe as appearances and styles are important to you.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

There is a more outgoing quality to your lifestyle now. Besting others in the heat of competition and taking on a leadership role mean more to you now than in the past; second best is not good enough! This may mean some sort of competition involvement. It could also mean that it is time for the annual "tell the best scary story" competition. This could be in your own home, your neighborhood, in your neighborhood library, etc. Rules that keep stories age appropriate can be decided upon and the fun begins.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You are in control today and it is up to you to keep the peace. This may mean you have more seniority than your peers or it could mean you have been appointed a particular responsibility. This is called power and it is not a bad word! Once you adapt to the concept of power, you may acknowledge that you are able to successfully make a positive difference in whatever you are trying to accomplish. You may spend much of today in tearing down what does not work and building it up again. Blending in with the group has not always been uppermost in your mind but is becoming workable now. With all of this energy you may find romance and social interactions become greatly important. Tell someone of your love in a romantic and unique way tonight.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Fourth Of July

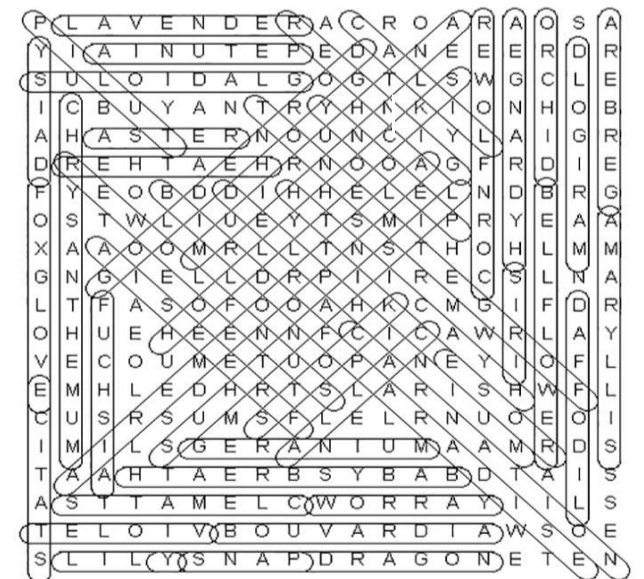
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an Abraham Lincoln quotation.



- BALD EAGLE, CONCERTS, HOLIDAY, PATRIOTIC, ANTHURIUM, DECORATIONS, HOT DOGS, PHILADELPHIA, ASTER, DEMOCRACY, INDEPENDENCE, PICNIC, BABY'S BREATH, FIREWORKS, JOHN ADAMS, RED WHITE BLUE, BELL FLOWER, FLAG, LIBERTY, STARS AND STRIPES, BIRD OF PARADISE, FLOATS, NATIONAL ANTHEM, STREAMERS, BOUVARDIA, FREEDOM, NATIONHOOD, THOMAS JEFFERSON, CALLA, GREAT BRITAIN, PARADE, USA, CARNATION, HAMBURGERS, PARTY, WHITE HOUSE, CHRYSANTHEMUM, CLEMATIS, HISTORY.

Friday's Solution

Flowers



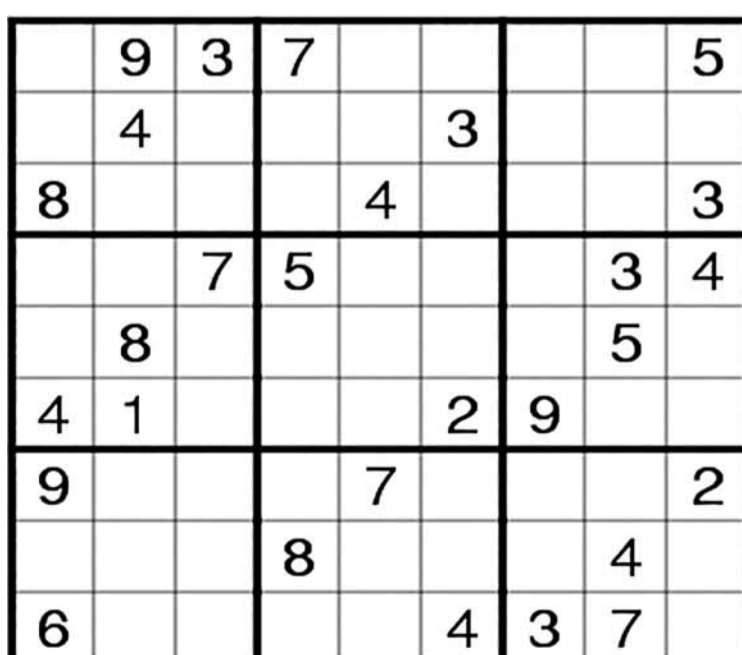
- ALSTROEMERIA, ANTHURIUM, ASTER, BABY'S BREATH, BELL FLOWER, BIRD OF PARADISE, BOUVARDIA, CALLA, CARNATION, CHRYSANTHEMUM, CLEMATIS, CORNFLOWER, DAFFODIL, DAISY, DELPHINIUM, FORGET-ME-NOT, FOXGLOVE, FREESIA, FUCHSIA, GERANIUM, GERBERA, GINGER, GLADIOLUS, GOLDEN ROD, HEATHER, HOLLYHOCKS, HYACINTH, IRIS, IRIS, LAVENDER, LILAC, LILY, LISIANTHUS, MARGOLD, ORCHID, PANSY, PEONY, PETUNIA, ROSE, SNAPDRAGON, STATICE, STOCK, SUNFLOWER, TULIP, VIOLET, YARROW.

The hidden sentence is: A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME WOULD SMELL AS SWEET

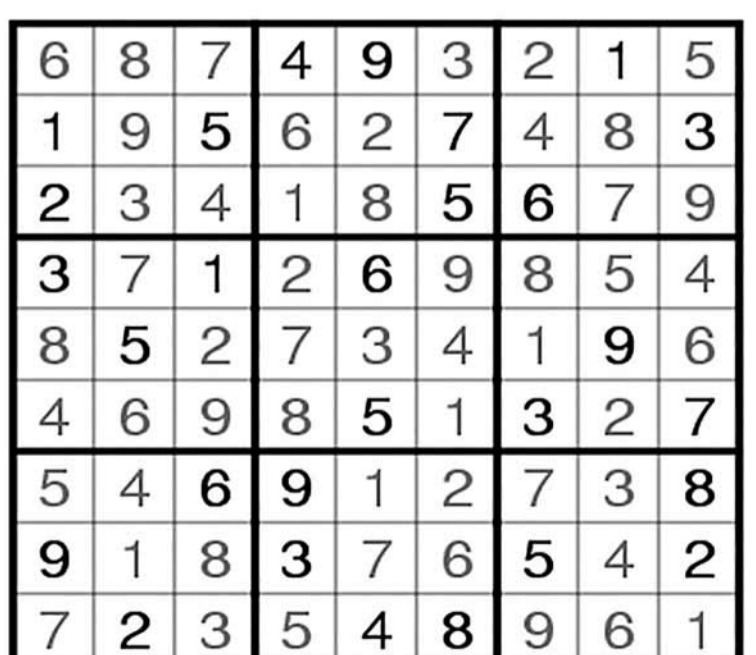
Friday's Solution



Daily Sudoku



Friday's Solution



# Lifestyle

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2019



Gallery assistants pose with an artwork entitled 'Devolved Parliament' by British artist Banksy, during a press view in London on September 27, 2019, ahead of Sotheby's contemporary art sale, as part of the Frieze Art Fair. — AFP

## Banksy's chimpanzee parliament goes under the hammer

A painting by British street artist Banksy depicting parliament populated by chimpanzees went on show yesterday before going under auction. "Devolved Parliament", painted in 2009, is due to go on display until October 3, when it will go under the hammer at Sotheby's auction house. The derivative work is expected to fetch £1.5 million to £2 million (\$1.85 million to \$2.45 million, 1.7 million to 2.25 million euros).

The current auction record for a Banksy artwork is \$1,870,000, achieved by "Keep it Spotless" at Sotheby's New York in 2008. The sale comes after the controversial five-week suspension of Britain's parliament by Prime

Minister Boris Johnson was deemed unlawful by the Supreme Court, with time running out before Britain is due to leave the European Union on October 31.

Parliament was due to return on October 14 but instead reconvened on Wednesday, since when MPs have spent their time angrily arguing over the suspension, and then arguing about whether their language in doing so was too strong. House of Commons Speaker John Bercow said they were the most toxic scenes he had ever seen in his 22 years in the elected lower chamber. "There's never been a better time to bring this painting to auction," Alex Branczik, Sotheby's European head of contemporary art, told AFP.

"Inevitably what we have been seeing in the Houses of Parliament over the last few months and weeks has become a daily soap opera, not just in the UK... but also across the rest of Europe and indeed the world. The painting measures 4.46 meters by 2.67 meters — the largest known canvas by the anonymous street artist. It shows chimpanzees on the green benches of the Commons, from the viewpoint of the main entrance.

"What he's pointing to here is the regression of the oldest parliamentary democracy in the world into tribalistic animalistic behavior, the sort that we've seen broadcasted on our televisions," said Branczik. "The real

genius of Banksy is his ability to reduce this incredibly complex debate into one single simple image, which importantly is very readily shared in this age of social media and a very image-consuming population." Banksy got the painting out again for March 29 this year, when Britain was originally due to leave the European Union. "I made this 10 years ago. Bristol Museum have just put it back on display to mark Brexit day," the mysterious artist said at the time. "Laugh now, but one day no-one will be in charge." — AFP



## Metallica frontman enters rehab

Metallica are postponing their upcoming tour of Australia and New Zealand after lead vocalist James Hetfield re-entered rehab, the American band announced Friday. The heavy metal band was set to perform their first Australian show as part of their WorldWired tour on October 17, but will now fully refund all tickets, band members Lars Ulrich, Kirk Hammett, and Robert Trujillo wrote in a series of tweets.

"As most of you probably know, our brother James has been struggling with addiction on and off for many

years. He has now, unfortunately, had to re-enter a treatment program to work on his recovery again. Once again, we are devastated that we have inconvenienced so many of you, especially our most loyal fans who travel great distances to experience our shows." Metallica formed in 1981 in Los Angeles and went on to become one of the world's most successful heavy metal bands, selling tens of millions of albums. — AFP

## 'Ideal Palace' still delivers on French postman's dream

With twisted stonework, exotic-looking statues and breathtaking flights of the imagination, it would not look out of place in the hot climes of southeast Asia or in a surrealist painting. But this is not India or Cambodia but southeast France and this extraordinary edifice was not dreamt up by an ancient mystic or Salvador Dali but over a century ago by a humble French provincial postman.

The "Ideal Palace" was created by Ferdinand Cheval, known as Facteur Cheval (Postman Cheval), in his home town of Hauterives south of the city of Lyon. Cheval created the monument by hand, picking up stones especially oddly shaped ones on his postal rounds and elsewhere over a period of 33 years from 1879 to 1912. And after finally finishing his life's work, he set about designing and building his own tomb next door.

In recent years, the site has attracted tens of thousands of visitors a year as one of the most extraordinary examples of naive art architecture anywhere in the world, a fact that would no doubt delight its creator, who died aged 88 in 1924.

### 'Saved from ruin'

But its survival is in no small part due to the novelist Andre Malraux, who exactly half a century ago won protection for the Ideal Palace as a historical monument while serving as culture minister. Malraux defied experts at the time, who denounced the edifice as hideous, to bestow the protection on the Ideal Palace on September 23, 1969. "The tenacity of Malraux saved the palace from ruin," said Frederic Legros, the palace's current director.

Walking round the edifice, an extraordinary melange of influences from east and west, Legros pointed out inscriptions in the palace by Cheval to guide visitors. "By creating this rock, I wanted to prove what the will can do," one inscription reads. "It is true that there is a dimension to wanting to overcome your social condition,"

said Legros. "It is this idea that this man, who was very poor, built himself a palace, the perfect palace," he added.

After finishing the Ideal Palace — whose name simply comes from a poem left by a young visitor from Grenoble describing a visit — Cheval embarked on building his own mausoleum. He had originally wanted to be buried in the palace but both the Church and local state authorities made clear this would not be acceptable. Cheval spent the next seven years sculpting his own tomb, another wildly ornate structure, where he is buried. Legros said it was "his masterpiece".

### 'A total mixture'

The Ideal Palace contains representations of a mosque, a Hindu temple and a mediaeval castle. It has sculptures portraying figures like the Gallic King Vercingetorix, Roman Emperor Julius Caesar or Greek inventor Archimedes. "It is true that it is a total mixture without any superiority of one culture over another. Everything is mixed and everything is made equal," said Legros.

Cheval, who was born in 1836, began the building when he tripped over a stone with an unusual form. "He discovers these rather exceptional shapes and marvels at what nature can do and this encourages him to throw himself into the Ideal Palace," said Legros.

Cheval, who proudly described himself as a peasant and the son of a peasant, had of course never seen an elephant or a leopard in real life, still less travelled to see oriental temples. A self-taught visionary, Cheval drew his inspiration from postcards or illustrated magazines. "He has never seen them, but he reproduces them anyway in his palace, sometimes with a certain amount of reality because it's the interpretation of an image," said Legros. The fame of the monument grew even during Cheval's lifetime.

Pablo Picasso visited the palace with fellow artist Dora Maar, with whom he had a years-long relationship, and his friend the poet Paul Eluard. An all-star biopic directed by prominent French filmmaker Nils Tavernier released in 2018 — "L'Incroyable Histoire du facteur Cheval" (called simply the "Ideal Palace" in English) — further increased interest in his life. According to Legros, last year's visitor numbers of 180,000 was already reached on July 31 this year. — AFP

## Lifestyle | Features

## Scorsese and Netflix unveil ambitious new film 'The Irishman'

Director Martin Scorsese unveiled his new film "The Irishman" Friday, kicking off the New York film festival with the ambitious Netflix movie that was more than a decade in the making. The star-studded gangster epic had a budget of \$160 million, using 117 different filming locations to shoot 309 scenes which together add up to a run time of 3 hours 29 minutes.

Scorsese and actor Robert De Niro started planning the film adaptation of Charles Brandt's book "I Heard You Paint Houses" 12 years ago. "Things got in the way," Scorsese told journalists Friday after the world premiere screening. "We couldn't get backing — there was no way — for years," he added. "I'm just happy we all got finally to do it because it did take a long time," said De Niro. "We were lucky to get people to put up the money."

After several studios declined the project, it took Netflix's deep pockets to get the green light for "The Irishman" — the nickname of Frank Sheeran, whose account of real-life events forms the basis of the book and film. Former henchman Sheeran (played by De Niro) claimed to have killed more than 25 people on the orders of mafia boss Russell Bufalino (Joe Pesci) and truck driver union leader Jimmy

Hoffa (Al Pacino). The film uses a new technology developed by Industrial Light & Magic (ILM) — the effects firm created by George Lucas — to digitally "de-age" actors on screen. De Niro, 76, is able to play Sheeran across several decades, from a 34-year-old in 1955 to his 2003 death aged 83. Scorsese said it was necessary to "come up with a solution for a de-aging that wouldn't interfere with Bob and Joe and Al." "Talking to each other with helmets on or tennis balls in their faces — they were not going to do it," he said.

ILM eventually succeeded in developing technology which did not require fitting the actors with any devices. After an unsettling first few minutes the special effects work well, with Pacino also shedding multiple decades in some scenes. De Niro's first reaction to when he saw his younger digital self? "I could extend my career another 30 years," he joked.

## Murder and morality

The movie will be released in a limited number of theaters in the United States on November 1, before it appears on Netflix on November 27. With "The Irishman" Scorsese returns to the gangster movie genre, following "Goodfellas," "Casino" and "The Departed."

But this film adheres more closely to real-life facts and characters.

It also sets a slower, calmer pace than those earlier films, taking a step back as Sheeran, as an old man, takes stock of his life in a series of flashbacks and examines the morality of each event. The movie also revolves around a key episode of his relationship with Hoffa, in 1975. "He finds himself at the most important point of his life in a moral conflict because he's basically a good man," said Scorsese.

The director also makes greater use of dialogue, in particular humor, illuminating scenes between acting giants De Niro and Pacino. Scorsese said he wanted to evoke the atmosphere of the 1960s as a violent time when it seemed like "everybody was getting shot," starting with President John F. Kennedy. Seemingly tracing a link from those events to the current day, the director described "the true dark forces that are in our nation." "It doesn't happen maybe with one gunshot," said Scorsese cryptically. "It happens on every level incrementally and before you know it, it's over." — AFP



Robert De Niro along with the cast of "The Irishman" attend the 57th New York Film Festival - "The Irishman" Intro at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center on September 27, 2019 in New York City. — AFP



This photo taken on September 6, 2019 shows performers participating a acrobatics show, Battle of Shanghai, in Shanghai. — AFP photos

## 'Red culture' adapts to new audiences ahead of 70th anniversary

Dressed in a blood-stained Chinese army uniform and a cap with a red star in the centre, Wang Huaifu and his comrades gesture with guns in front of a row of soldiers triumphantly waving torn scarlet flags. Wang is the lead actor in the patriotic "Battle of Shanghai" acrobatics show, a visual recreation of 1949 battles between the Communists and the Nationalists for control of Shanghai. "Today's China and Shanghai did not come to be as it is easily. It was fought for," said 35-year-old Wang, who stars as a commander.

absorb through the charm of art itself."

The historical drama "My People, My Country" — based on seven memorial moments since 1949 — draws on "narrative and production techniques more commonly associated with Hollywood", said Nicole Talmaacs, China cinema scholar at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University. The film "downplays the stiff didactic approaches to 'history telling' that previous anniversary films have resorted to," Talmaacs said. The historical drama will roll out in almost 40 countries including the US, Canada and Australia the day

but are frowned on by the authorities for celebrating a lavish, scheming lifestyle under empirical rule. And in June, the premiere of Chinese war epic "The Eight Hundred" was cancelled after an association of retired party cadres deemed it "inappropriate" because they said it glorified the Chinese Nationalist Party, the Kuomintang.

Instead, a wave of stirring artistic offers are being rolled out to "firmly grasp the correct political direction, public opinion and value orientation," the top media body said mid-September. The China Film Producers' Association has called on the cinema industry to use films to "vigorously promote patriotism as the core of the national spirit".

## 'Powerful tool'

Movies such as "Liberation", "My People, My Country" and "Chairman Mao 1949" are filling Chinese movie theatres. "The Bugle from Gutian", a film reflecting events that established the principle of absolute leadership of the Communist Party over the army, hit the cinemas on Army Day in August. "I was very touched," said audience member Liu Hexin, after watching it in Beijing. "There had been so many predecessors shedding their blood for the beautiful life we have today."

Since the young crew of "Battle of Shanghai" was not alive 70 years ago, Dong and other directors on the show arranged visits to cemeteries where soldiers from the Communist People's Liberation Army are buried, as well as history classes. "I think culture is the most powerful tool (for conveying messages) because literature and art works can cultivate roots and souls," said the show's chief director Li Chunyan. As streets, subways, and screens across the country turn red ahead of the October 1 anniversary, Wang said he will celebrate the PRC's 70th year on stage. "I hope to spread the positive energy and spirit to more people... so that I can be worthy of playing such a hero like the commander," he says. — AFP

## 'Inappropriate' entertainment

While China's entertainment industry tries to appeal to wider audiences, censors have recently whittled out and replaced shows with those that push the Communist cause. In July the National Radio and Television Administration's development research centre released a list of 86 TV programmes that "eulogize the motherland, the people and the heroes" for TV stations to play during the key political year. It also banned costume serials and dramas that have "strong entertainment elements" during the run-up to the anniversary.

Costume dramas — such as the hugely popular series "Story of Yanxi Palace", which drew 18 billion views — used to be abundant in China



From movie screens to theatre stages, China's entertainment industry has turned red ahead of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on Tuesday. China's film sector wields huge power and is expected to become the largest cinema market in the world by 2020 with strong box office growth and rising ticket prices, according to consultancy PwC. Ever since it seized power in 1949, the ruling party has used media and entertainment as propaganda tools to spread patriotism which is rooted in the core of communism ideologies.

But experts say patriotic entertainment has had to adapt to appeal to China's urbanized and cosmopolitan young adults who have become huge fans of Hollywood blockbusters. "We are not trying to proceed with the spoon-feeding, rigid type of education," said Dong Zhengzhen, scriptwriter of "Battle of Shanghai". "We should let the young people feel and consciously

## Los Angeles police to boost visibility for 'Joker' opening

The Los Angeles Police Department said Friday it plans to step up its visibility around movie theaters for the opening of "Joker" because of heightened fears over the film's content. A police spokeswoman told AFP that while there have been no credible threats in the Los Angeles area, "the department will maintain high visibility around movie theaters when (the film) opens" next week.

"We encourage everyone to go out and enjoy all of the weekend leisure activities this city has to offer, however, Angelenos should remain vigilant and always be aware of your surroundings," spokeswoman Rosie Cervantes said. "As always if you see something, say something." The Warner Bros. film portrays its murderous outcast villain, played by Joaquin Phoenix, as a hero and some critics have suggested the movie could incite violence.

"Joker" is being released seven years after 12 people were killed in Aurora, Colorado, when a gunman opened fire during a screening of Batman film "The Dark Knight Rises." Earlier this week, families of some of the victims published an open letter in Hollywood trade publications expressing concern about the new film. "When we learned that Warner Bros. was releasing a movie called 'Joker' that presents the character as a protagonist with a sympathetic origin story, it gave us pause," the letter said.

## Restrictions imposed

The film depicts the Joker as a severely depressed young man trying to build a

career as a stand-up comic, but who is constantly rejected and beaten down by society until taking matters into his own — extremely violent — hands. In their letter, the Aurora families noted that their real-life tragedy had been "perpetrated by a socially isolated individual who felt 'wronged' by society."

While the letter did not condemn the film, and expressed support for "free speech and free expression," it urged the Hollywood studio to use its platform to lobby for gun reform and to support victims. Warner in response denied that it sought to glorify the main character of the film or that the story line in any way endorses violence. "It is not the intention of the film, the filmmakers or the studio to hold this character up as a hero," it said in a statement.

Given the mounting controversy, the studio said Friday that it was restricting access for print and broadcast journalists on the red carpet of the "Joker" premiere this weekend at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood. The studio said only photographers will have access to the cast and filmmakers attending the event. "A lot has been said about 'Joker,' and we just feel it's time for people to see the film," a studio spokesperson told AFP in explaining the decision. Some theaters have also banned costumes, masks and face paint at screenings of "Joker" amid concerns the film could prompt a repeat of the 2012 massacre. — AFP



A poster for the upcoming film "The Joker" is seen outside Warner Brothers Studios in Burbank, California.

## Chaplin to Tarantino: Hollywood eatery Musso &amp; Frank turns 100



(L-R) Actor Danny Trejo, Vice Chair of CA Film Commission Donelle Dadigan, Hollywood Chamber of Commerce president Rana Ghabban, COO of Musso & Frank Grill Mark Echeverria, his wife Tina Echeverria, Councilman Mitch O'Farrell, author Michael Callahan and TV host Marc Summers pose by the Musso & Frank star on the Walk of Fame celebrating the restaurant 100th anniversary in Hollywood. — AFP

Legendary Hollywood eatery Musso & Frank Grill prides itself on treating regulars like celebrities and celebrities like regulars — but made an exception when Quentin Tarantino came asking for a favor. The "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" director wanted the restaurant sealed off for five days to shoot his homage to Tinseltown, which begins with Leonardo DiCaprio, Brad Pitt and Al Pacino discussing movie deals over whiskey sours and Bloody Marys at its iconic bar.

"We've never shut the restaurant down for any kind of movie. But when Quentin came to us and described what his vision was, it was definitely something we wanted to be part of," said Mark Echeverria, owner of the restaurant which marked its 100th anniversary Friday. "We love

Quentin to death. He's been coming in a long, long time," he told AFP.

The film was released last month to widespread acclaim and Oscar buzz, with Musso & Frank prominent among the Hollywood landmarks showcased in its pastiche celebration of the 1960s. But Tarantino is far from the first megastar to make himself at home in the old-fashioned Hollywood Boulevard institution, known for its discreet red leather booths and dark-paneled wooden walls.

Tales are legion of the restaurant's star-studded past, from Charlie Chaplin riding there on his horse to Buster Keaton shooting "Cops" on the roof in 1922. Since Hollywood's golden age, it has continued to draw stars from Humphrey Bogart and Rita Hayworth to Marilyn Monroe

and Steve McQueen. Authors such as Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck and F. Scott Fitzgerald have all worked the restaurant — and its martinis — into their novels.

Echeverria refuses to be drawn on his favorite celebrity encounters. According to actor Danny Trejo, speaking at Friday's ceremony, Musso & Frank differs from more glamorous rival Hollywood institutions because it is not a place where stars "come to be seen." But head chef JP Amateau admits there was an occasion on which he was starstruck. "I'd say one time, Margaret Thatcher — she ordered lamb chops!" he told AFP. "She came to me and she wanted to know what chop it was, and where the lamb was from." — AFP

# Two tribes: Culture wars rage on the Paris catwalk

The culture war has come to the catwalk. Divisions over race, gender and the climate crisis are bubbling to the surface in a world where political debate is usually about as welcome as bingo wings. Two of Paris fashion's biggest stars, Hedi Slimane of Celine and Saint Laurent's Anthony Vaccarello, have both warned of a new "puritanism".

Slimane even fears that this "disguised neo-conservatism" is threatening "the fundamental liberty to create". "Demagogic political correctness has become a kind of tragic tyranny of the literal," he declared in a rare interview last month. Vaccarello went further on the eve of Paris fashion week, saying "it is impossible now to have an opinion that goes against" the herd. The Belgian also railed against the "PR of quotas, which counts the number of people of color in a show". Both men have been mauled by feminists in recent seasons — Vaccarello over "porno chic" ads that the French regulators said were degrading to women, and Slimane for thrashing the artful legacy of British designer Phoebe Philo, his predecessor at Celine.

### 'You can't say anything'

Her fans, known as the "Philophiles", savaged the reclusive designer, with the Hollywood Reporter asking, "Is Hedi Slimane the Donald Trump of fashion?" while the Financial Times branded his look "super-skinny and near exclusively white". Both men's closeness to French screen

legend Catherine Deneuve, who defended men's "right to pester women" at the height of the #MeToo movement, did not go unnoticed by their critics.

"You can't say or do anything anymore," Richard Rene of Guy Laroche told AFP after his show Wednesday, which celebrated a notorious Paris madam who pimped former models to visiting heads of state. The contrast with Dior, which has become a standard-bearer of feminist activism under its first female designer, Maria Grazia Chiuri, could not be more stark.

Her debut show in 2016 opened with a T-shirt emblazoned with the slogan, "We Should All Be Feminists", and since then the Italian has not missed an opportunity to beat the empowerment drum. On Tuesday Chiuri embraced climate activism and the need for action "if humanity is to survive", sending out models in Greta Thunberg plaits. But the following day, the brand's billionaire owner Bernard Arnault, the world's second richest man, called out the Swedish teenager for "surrendering to total catastrophism... that is likely to demoralize the young. She doesn't offer anything other than criticism," he told reporters.

Minutes earlier the famously green British designer Stella McCartney, Arnault's new personal advisor on sustainability, had been urging executives of his LVMH group to factor the fight against climate change into their thinking.

### 'The battle's not finished'

Beyond Dior, Stella McCartney, rising young French upcycler Marine Serre and the American Rick Owens, a growing band of brands are banking on empowerment and the environment to win them a new generation of "woke", socially aware customers. Indian creator Manish Arora used his show to push for greater LGBTQIA rights, saying we needed greater awareness of lesbian, gay, transgender, questioning, intersex and asexual people.

But Vaccarello, who prefers to sell on hard and fast sexiness, said a "witch-hunt atmosphere was marring... these anxiety-ridden times." "Misogyny and racism are in the eye of the other," he insisted, pointedly closing his diverse Paris show Tuesday with black supermodel Naomi Campbell. But Balmain's Olivier Rousteing, the first black designer to lead a major Paris house, said fashion still clearly lacked diversity.



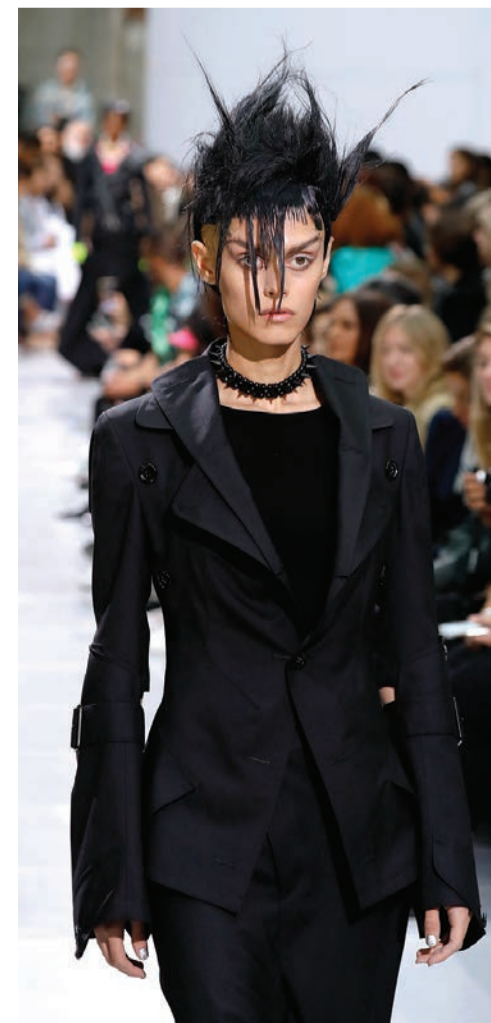
"That is obvious for everybody," he said. "I am not judging people who have another point of view, but I don't feel the battle is finished. We still have to fight for the rights of women, for diversity and for homosexuality to be accepted, not just tolerated," he added. "Sorry, if people think there's still not a fight for that, that's old-fashioned." — AFP



**PARIS**  
FASHION WEEK



Models present creations by Junya Watanabe during the Women's Spring-Summer 2020 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show, in Paris. — AFP photos





## Jennifer Lopez's twins 'would love' a brother or sister

**F** The 'On The Floor' hitmaker has 11-year-old twins Emme and Max with her ex-husband Marc Anthony, and has said they'd both be keen to welcome another child into the family if Jennifer was to have a baby with her fiancé Alex Rodriguez. Jennifer herself played coy about the idea, but said she also thinks Alex's two daughters Natasha and Ella - whom he has from his previous marriage - would be "thrilled" as well. Speaking to 'Extra', she said: "I think they would love to have a brother or sister. They love having [Alex's daughters] Natasha and Ella in their lives and having two extra bonus sisters. ... We really form a beautiful blended family, and I think they would all be thrilled." The 50-year-old singer admitted earlier this month she wants to have a baby with the former baseball star, 44, as when asked if it was on the cards, she simply said "Yeah". Meanwhile, Jennifer recently said she wants

her children to be "good people", and doesn't care if they don't want to follow in her footsteps. She said: "I don't care what they want to be. I just want them to be happy, fulfilled and to love themselves. They don't dance, but they both sing. They're adorable. I just want them to be good people." And the 'Hustlers' actress admitted her kids played a key part in her decision to settle down with Alex when she was looking for a new partner. She explained: "Everything is about my kids. You want somebody around who understands children, who really cares. You can't have any random, selfish person come into your life when you have kids. No way."

## Parker says key to her marriage with is not talking

**T** he 54-year-old actress has been married to Matthew for over 20 years, and has said they keep their romance going because they "don't talk" publicly about their marriage, and keep everything between themselves. She told Us Weekly magazine: "We've grown. We have a family, we have children, we have friends that have passed away, we have relationships ... We don't talk about it - that's how it stays strong!" The 'Sex and the City' star added she and the 'Godzilla' actor like to keep their marriage "nice and private". Sarah met her 57-year-old spouse - with whom she has 16-year-old son James and 10-year-old twins Marion and Tabitha - shortly after splitting with Robert Downey Jr. in 1991, and the pair married six years later in 1997. And in 2013, Sarah spoke about the long lasting privacy

of her marriage, saying they come from "a different time and place" than the younger stars of Hollywood. She said: "Matthew and I come from a different time and place. When we were young people, all we ever wanted was to be good working actors. We didn't think of fame or money because, honestly, money was never part of the dream. It was to work in theatre, to be around those people whose work I was in total awe of. I never saw the trapings: nobody talked about being a celebrity." The 'Divorce' actress then expressed her "love" for the 'WarGames' star, and said the pair have no desire to marry anyone else, as they "can only be in the marriage we are [in]."



## Elle Fanning believes women are expected to be jealous

**T** he 21-year-old actress thinks there is such a "stigma" surrounding women in the workplace, but she thinks that in Hollywood, all women are told to pit themselves against one another. She said: "There is a stigma placed on women in any workplace. But especially in Hollywood. You must be super competitive and super jealous. And it's something that people want to project, but it's actually not the case." The 'Maleficent: Mistress of Evil' star had a passion for acting from a young age and her and sister Dakota Fanning used to act scenes together in their house. She added: "Well, I saw my sister doing it and I was a huge ham growing up. We would constantly put on these scenes around the house. It wasn't for anyone, only for ourselves. We would do lines, characters, it was very funny. It just felt right at home for us ... "We weren't supposed to do this at all. My mom played tennis, my dad played baseball, my mom's dad was a quarterback in the NFL. We were supposed to play tennis or something." Elle also opened up about Duchess Meghan and Duchess Catherine, praising the royals for "doing royal femininity very differently". Speaking to the November issue of Tatler magazine, she shared: "Kate and Meghan are doing royal femininity very differently. I can't imagine being in the public eye like that. Every single move you make is critiqued. I like Harry. Isn't he the fun one?"



## Snoop Dogg's grandson Kai has died



**T** he 47-year-old rapper tragically lost his newborn grandson Kai Love on Wednesday, his son and Kai's father Corde Broadus revealed on social media on Thursday. In a post which included an image of Kai's name plaque at the hospital, as well as a video of his 13-month-old daughter Elleven Love giving her baby brother a kiss, Corde wrote: "Kai Love 9/15/19 - 9/25/19 // My Son Kai brought so much love and positivity into this world. His energy will live on and these 10 days of love will always be special to us. Let's all cherish life and those we love while we are here. Thank you (sic)" Corde, 25, had Kai with his partner Soraya, who is also the mother of Elleven. He is also father to a four-year-old son named Zion, whom he has with his ex-girlfriend Jessica Kyzer. Snoop is yet to comment on Kai's tragic passing, but previously said he prioritises his family - including Corde and his other children, 22-year-old Cordell, and 20-year-old Cori, whom he has with wife Shante Broadus, and 21-year-old Julian, whom he fathered with Laurie Holmond - over everything else. He said: "Well, I think I'm about a seven plus. I've got three things that I can work on, but I feel like my relationship with my kids is more important than anything. It's a friendship relationship. It's based on me being a father, a mentor and a friend to where they can always talk to me and feel like they don't have to run away from me." And the 'Young, Wild & Free' hitmaker has also said he wants to be a very liberal grandfather.

## Kesha almost killed herself trying to be perfect

**T** he 'TiK ToK' hitmaker has made it her mission to promote self-care as she got "sick" of being mean to herself and "starving" herself to try and fit the "stereotypical" look. She told Billboard magazine: "I just got sick of being mean to myself. I'm not starving myself for s\*\*t anymore. I'm too old for that. Been there, done that, it sucked, almost killed me, no thank you. I turned 30 and I'm OK with it!" Meanwhile, Kesha previously admitted she "never thought" she'd be able to overcome her body confidence issues. She shared: "The final straw was when I was with my mom at a family dinner party and I was so anxious. Driving home, I had to pull over, and I was like, I can't keep this secret anymore. It was scary, but I finally put my foot down and chose life. That was a huge turning point. I'm not a size. I'm not a number. I am a strong woman, and quite frankly, I like my junk. Ten years ago, I never thought I'd be able to say that." And the 32-year-old singer feels she has gained strength from her "darkest moments". She explained: "It's from our darkest moments that we gain the most strength. There were so many days, months even, when I didn't want to get out of bed. I spent all day wanting to go to sleep, and then when I did fall asleep, I had horrible night terrors where I would physically cry and scream through the dark. I was never at peace, night or day. But I dragged myself out of bed and took my emotions to the studio and made art out of them. And I have never been happier with a body of work as I am with this record. I hope this song reaches people who are in the midst of struggles, to let them know that no matter how bad it seems now, you can get through it. If you have love and truth on your side, you will never be defeated. Don't give up on yourself."



## Justin and Hailey can't wait to host their second wedding

**T** he married couple tied the knot in secret on the day they got their marriage license in September last year, and are due to host a second ceremony in front of family and friends in South Carolina. And sources have said the ceremony will be a "different experience" to their first wedding, with "extremely meaningful" vows. One insider said: "They can't wait to say their vows in front of their family and friends. It will be a different experience to have their pastor there and everyone close to them. They both feel it is important to have a religious ceremony before God. After a year, their love has grown even more, so it's exciting to restate their vows. They understand what it takes to be married and what goes into it. Their vows are extremely meaningful." Justin, 25, and Hailey, 22, are also said to be excited to celebrate their marriage with their family and friends. The source added: "They are also very excited to have a celebration and party with family and friends. They've never had everyone together in one place so they are excited about that. They are looking forward to having friends and family get to know each other throughout the weekend. They have several different events planned and hope that people will have a great time." The guest list for the wedding is being kept under wraps, but it has been reported Daniel Caesar will perform at the wedding while Hailey's father Stephen Baldwin will walk the model down the aisle.



## Cyrus thought her romance moved far too quickly

**T** he 26-year-old singer struck up a relationship with Kaitlynn following her split from estranged husband Liam Hemsworth after seven months of marriage, and after she called time on their romance earlier this month, sources have now said she "wants to be on her own". An insider said: "Miley leaned on Kaitlynn throughout the divorce and she felt that they moved far too quickly. Miley made the final decision to split with Kaitlynn. Her relationship with Kaitlynn is over and she wants to be on her own. Miley wasn't thinking long term and when Kaitlynn realized Miley was done, it was a total shock." Now, instead of relying on another partner, the 'Slide Away' hitmaker is "leaning on her family" for support. The source added: "Miley is leaning on her family now. She is getting support from her family and just wants to move on, just being around family members is what is keeping her grounded right now. Those that know her well truly feel she has moved forward." Miley isn't interested in getting married again, and is "doing really well" in the wake of her recent break ups. Speaking to 'Entertainment Tonight', the source said: "Miley loves her autonomy and is a free spirit. And she doesn't plan to remarry anytime soon. Despite her breakup with Liam, she's actually doing really well." Meanwhile, it was previously claimed the 'Malibu' singer is focusing on her career now that she's single again. Another insider explained: "Miley doesn't want a serious relationship. She and Kaitlynn spent every day together and it just wasn't anything that Miley wanted to continue doing. She wants to focus on her career."









## Sports

# Ferrari's Leclerc on pole in Russia with his fourth victory in a row

## Hamilton pulls out dazzling final lap to take second ahead of Vettel

**SOCHI:** Charles Leclerc confirmed Ferrari's Formula One resurgence when he reeled off his fourth consecutive pole position with another stunning lap yesterday as he topped the times in qualifying for today's Russian Grand Prix.

The in-form Monegasque clocked a best lap of one minute and 31.628 seconds to improve his time in the final seconds and set up an end to Mercedes' five-year domination of the event since it began in 2014.

After three successive Ferrari wins, two by Leclerc, he appears set to extend the scarlet scuderia's run of current success to four races. His performance made him the first Ferrari driver since Michael Schumacher in 2001, when Leclerc was only three years old, to secure four straight poles.

Series leader and defending five-time champion Lewis Hamilton pulled out a dazzling final sector and final lap to take second ahead of Sebastian Vettel in the other Ferrari by a narrow margin.

Vettel, who won in Singapore last Sunday, was third ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen, who is set to take a grid penalty. Valtteri Bottas in the second Mercedes and Carlos Sainz of McLaren.

"The car felt amazing. It definitely feels amazing to be back on pole, but I don't know if it's the best track to start on pole," said Leclerc. "The straight at the start is very long. It definitely feels very special (to take four consecutive poles), but I don't want to think about those stats!"

Hamilton said he remained amazed at Ferrari's power and speed on the straights. "I tell you, it was a tough session. These guys have another level on the straights - jet mode. I gave it everything I had and the team was able to tinker and push forward... I didn't expect to get on the front row."

Vettel said: "Obviously I'm not entirely happy and extracted the maximum from the car. Turn One is a long way - and we're on different tyre strategies compared to

the Mercs. Personally, I need a good start and then you worry about the race."

### LOST CONTROL

The session began in dry and warm conditions following overnight rain with Hamilton, on softs, leading the way before a lurid spin from Williams' Robert Kubica was followed by Red Bull new boy Alex Albon crashing heavily at Turn 13. He lost control and went into the barriers, damaging the rear of his car. He was unhurt. This led to a brief red flag stoppage before Vettel went top ahead of Hamilton and Verstappen. Out went Alfa Romeo's Kimi Raikkonen ahead of his 307th start, which is set to put him third in the all-time list ahead of Michael Schumacher and Jenson Button, leaving only Fernando Alonso on 311 and Rubens Barrichello on 322 ahead of him.

The Finn was joined by Williams duo George Russell and Kubica, Albon and the luckless local hero Daniil Kvyat of Toro Rosso in making early exits. Kvyat took no part after requiring an engine change following final practice.

Leclerc topped the first runs in Q2 and stayed there ahead of Vettel with Verstappen third and the Mercedes men fourth and fifth, running on mediums. After a fierce scrap, both Renaults squeezed through to the top ten shootout and out went Pierre Gasly in the second Toro Rosso, Sergio Perez of Racing Point and Antonio Giovinazzi of Sauber ahead of Haas's Kevin Magnussen and Lance Stroll in the second Racing Point.

This left the usual suspects to fight it out for pole position with Ferrari revelling in their straight-line speed advantage to lead the way. Mercedes toiled to keep pace with them, but Hamilton was half a second slower than the Monegasque who appeared to be in supreme form as he sped around the former 2014 Olympic Park track before trimming that to grab a spot on the front row and split the Ferraris. — AFP



**SOCHI:** Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc (L) smiles next to Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton after taking pole position in the qualifying session for the Formula One Russian Grand Prix at The Sochi Autodrom Circuit in Sochi yesterday. — AFP



## Sarah Al-Hawal wins gold at 9th Asian trap event

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait shooter Sarah Al-Hawal won the gold medal at the 9th Asian Championship trap event, being held in Almaty Kazakhstan. Second place went to the Kazakh shooter Anastasia and the third place went to China's Lexi Hong.

Al-Hawal dedicated her win to HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince, government and people of Kuwait. She said this tournament comes as part of Kuwait Shooting Federation's plan to qualify Kuwaiti shooters for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, adding that she is preparing for the Asian Championship next November during which winners will qualify for the Olympics, as Kuwait has two shooters who already qualified and looking for more.

Sarah said she was happy for winning after competing with Asia's best, and lauded the support of KSF officials who provide all that is necessary to ensure winning in all arenas.

## Thomas may target 2020 Giro rather than Tour de France

**HARROGATE:** Geraint Thomas has admitted a glut of talent at Team Ineos may force him to target the Giro d'Italia next season rather than bid for a second Tour de France title. The popular Welshman won the Tour in 2018 but came second behind his teammate, 21-year-old Egan Bernal in July.

Ineos will also welcome four-time winner Chris Froome back to action in October and have added Giro champion Richard Carapaz to their roster, making competition for leadership places ferocious. In Harrogate for the 2019 UCI world cycling championships Thomas cut a smooth relaxed figure at a press conference for the British team ahead of the epic 287km run from Leeds to Harrogate today.

"The difference between winning the Tour and coming second is huge, you come second and nobody cares," lamented Thomas, who said he had been able to relax more since losing the crown, and added he was unsure he would be back in France in 2020.

"I'm going to wait at least until I see the courses, the routes for the Giro and the Tour and then go from there," Thomas said. "You'd think Egan would want to ride (the Tour) again, obviously, being the defending champion," he admitted of his 2019 Tour co-captain who was better suited to the

ultra-mountainous route earlier this season. "Froomey, it's his big goal, he wants to win five," Thomas said of Froome's quest to join Eddy Merckx, Bernard Hinault, Jacques Anquetil and Miguel Indurain as the cyclists with the record amount of Grand Boucle wins. "I'm definitely not going to make a call until at least our December training camp," Thomas said.

### 'GET ME OUT OF BED'

The route for the Tour is revealed in October and the Giro in November. "Even if I did the Giro, it would still certainly excite me and get me out of bed in the morning," said Thomas, who has yet to win the Giro or the Vuelta a Espana.

Both Froome and Carapaz have won the Giro, while Bernal as a mountains specialist may actually be better suited to the Italian race than Thomas. The 33-year-old says his form has not peaked this season as it did in 2018 and will be riding for fellow Briton Ben Swift this weekend but could get in the mix if a large group arrive at Harrogate in today's world road title race.

Thomas is riding despite pulling out of the time-trial this week saying he was off form. "I'll stay in the wheels and try and hold on, obviously it would be amazing but maybe top five is the target," Thomas said on Friday. — AFP

## DeChambeau takes two-shot lead at Safeway Open

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Bryson DeChambeau fired eight birdies in an eight-under par 64 on Friday to seize a two-shot lead over fellow American Nick Watney at the US PGA Tour Safeway Open in Napa, California.

DeChambeau, seeking sixth Tour title and his first since he won in Las Vegas last November, was buoyed by a couple of birdie bombs, including a 36-footer at the sixth hole and a 23-foot birdie putt at 14 — where he was in a fairway bunker off the tee.

His 21-foot eagle putt at 18 came up just short, but he tapped in for a final birdie and a 36-hole total of 132 on the Silverado course. "I made a couple of good putts, that was obviously awesome," world number 11 DeChambeau said after his second straight bogey-free round.

"I struck it better today. Honestly the key to my play these last couple of days was my wedge play," added DeChambeau, who was delighted with the performance of new wedges with stiffer graphite shafts.

Watney had eight birdies and a bogey in his seven-under 65 and was alone in second on 134, one stroke in front of a group of five players. World number six Justin Thomas headlined the group on 135 after a 64 that featured nine birdies and just one bogey. He was joined by Canadian Nick Taylor, who carded a 66, South African Dylan Frittelli who posted a 65 and Americans Adam Long and

Cameron Champ, who both shot 68. Thomas, who closed fast after a shaky start on Thursday, kept up the good work to put himself in contention heading into the weekend of his first start of the season. "I know that you can go low out here," he said. "It's a course that it's very short and the ball goes quite a long way with how firm it is.

"But because of how firm it is, you have to get it in the fairway and really have the correct angles into the greens, and I felt like I did a pretty good job of that today." Australian Adam Scott and American Andrew Landry, who shared the overnight lead, both slipped back, Scott carding a one-over 73 that left him six adrift and Landry with a 74.

Former NFL star Tony Romo, whose chances of making a first cut at a PGA Tour event looked promising after his first-round 70, plummeted down the leaderboard with a six-over 78 that left him four-over for the week.

The 39-year-old American, who played 14 seasons for the Dallas Cowboys, was playing on a sponsor exemption for the fourth time in a PGA event. Five-time major-winner Phil Mickelson, hoping for strong enough showings in the tour's early 2019-2020 tournaments to become a captain's pick for a 12th straight Presidents Cup team, also missed the cut, which fell at two-under, by two strokes. — AFP



**NAPA:** Bryson DeChambeau hits on the ninth hole during the second round of the Safeway Open at Silverado Resort in Napa, California. — AFP

## McLaren to renew partnership with Mercedes from 2021

**SOCHI:** McLaren will renew their once-revered partnership with Mercedes from 2021, the German manufacturer and British racing team announced at the Russian Grand Prix yesterday. Mercedes will succeed Renault as McLaren's engine-supplier when their current contract ends next year.

The former champions have agreed a long-term deal with Mercedes that will run to 2024 and, if successful, beyond. The confirmation of the deal was made in a joint statement in which Mercedes motorsport boss Toto Wolff said he was delighted to "welcome McLaren back to the Mercedes-Benz racing family".

"We hope that this new long-term agreement marks another milestone for McLaren as they aim to take the fight to the sport's top teams, including our Mercedes works team," said Wolff. McLaren won 78 races, three drivers' championship titles and one constructors' title during their previous partnership with

Mercedes from 1995 to 2014 before an ill-fated return to Honda.

Championship leader and defending five-time champion Lewis Hamilton took his first title with McLaren-Mercedes in 2008. Mika Hakkinen won two titles with them in 1998 and 1999. McLaren are currently in a rebuilding period with a driver line up of Spaniard Carlos Sainz and British rookie Lando Norris.

The team is without a race win since 2012, but have recovered from a dismal spell to become one of the contenders for fourth place in this year's constructors' championship. McLaren team chief Zak Brown said: "This agreement is an important step in our long-term plan to return to success in Formula One."

The start of the new deal will coincide with the introduction of a new identity and set of rules for Formula One. Mercedes supply engines to their own factory team, Racing Point and Williams. — AFP

## Old hand Valverde ready for cycling world title defence

**HARROGATE:** Established stars Peter Sagan and Alejandro Valverde face a potential generational shift today as the 2019 world cycling championships wrap up with an epic men's elite road race between Leeds to Harrogate.

The 2019 cycling season has been lit up by youthful riders. Egan Bernal won the Tour de France at 21. Tadej Pogacar finished third at the Vuelta at 20. Remco Evenepoel came second here in the time-trial at just 19. At the other end of the age scale is Valverde. The seasoned 39-year-old, is on flying form for the defence of his title despite giving flat-out performances at the Tour de France and the Vuelta, his Movistar team boss Eusebio Unzué told AFP.

"He's ready, he's always ready for the worlds. There is something about the world championships that makes him light up," said Unzué, who has directed Valverde for years at Movistar. "Spain have brought a strong team, but maybe this course is more open than at Innsbruck," Unzué, a Spaniard who is not involved with the national team, told AFP in Harrogate.

Valverde finally struck gold in 2018 after first finishing third four times and second twice. "If this race ends with a select group of riders going into the final kilometre, Valverde will be one of them unless something happens to him," the affable Unzué insisted.

Valverde says the race will finish that way. "There will be a small group of us because of the rain and the slope at the end suits me," Valverde said on Friday. The main challenge over Sunday's 287km (176miles) of likely rain-slick roads appears to be the seven technical laps around the tight Harrogate town centre, where crashes have occurred all week.

The wetter-than-usual late September in Yorkshire has opened the door for an unexpected winner. British ace Chris Froome is absent after a spring fall, while 2018 Tour de France champion the popular Welshman Geraint Thomas is riding despite pulling out of the time-trial this week saying he was off form.

"I'll stay in the wheels and try and hold on, obviously it would be amazing but maybe top five is the target," Thomas said on Friday.

### THE BELGIAN CHALLENGE

The road race looks very much like a Belgian spring classic run on rainy, narrow roads over great distances. "I see a Belgian, maybe on a solo break," Unzué said straight-faced when asked if he thought Valverde would win.

The Belgian team is strong. Olympic champion Greg van Avermaet recently won the Quebec grand prix, Philippe Gilbert won the Paris-Roubaix cobbled classic this season before winning two stages in emphatic style at the Vuelta.

The 19-year-old Evenepoel won the junior road race and time trial at Innsbruck last season. If 30 or so riders come home together, that would offer a tantalising chance to three-time former winner the 29-year-old Slovak Sagan.

There could even be an Australian double in the men's marquee races. Rohan Dennis took the time trial and powerful puncher Michael Matthews has said repeatedly this week 'I'm here to win' in the road race.

The favourite is Dutch 24-year-old Mathieu van der Poel who told the Dutch press this week he dreams of adding the world title here to his European mountain-bike title and world cyclo-cross title. Frenchman Julian Alaphilippe, who started as the favourite last year but fell off the pace deep into the race, arrived in Yorkshire on Friday still on a high after his 14 days in the Tour de France yellow jersey.

"This will be the best year of my life with or without a world title," Alaphilippe told AFP. "But this world championships route suits me too," he added. Yorkshire is hosting the worlds after vast crowds gave the Tour de France a raucous welcome in 2014. The Tour de Yorkshire was also set up in the wake of that success. — AFP





**25** Ferrari's Leclerc on pole in Russia with his fourth victory in a row

**26** World Cup explodes into life as hosts Japan stun Ireland

**27** Chepngetich takes marathon gold as heat decimates rivals



**SHEFFIELD:** Sheffield United's English defender Jack O'Connell (L) and Liverpool's Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk (R) go for the ball during the English Premier League football match between Sheffield United and Liverpool at Bramall Lane in Sheffield, northern England yesterday. —AFP

## Liverpool win to romp clear in EPL

**Kane saves Spurs, first league win of the season for Wolves**

**LONDON:** Liverpool sent out an ominous warning to the rest of the Premier League yesterday, proving they can win ugly as Harry Kane rescued 10-man Tottenham. Elsewhere, there was a first league win of the season for Wolves, against bottom club Watford, while West Ham's draw at Bournemouth lifted them to third in the table.

Jürgen Klopp's Liverpool won their seventh Premier League game out of seven to pull eight points clear ahead of Manchester City, thanks to Georginio Wijnaldum's fortunate strike in a 1-0 victory at Sheffield United. The European champions looked short on invention against the well-organised Blades until Wijnaldum's shot from the edge of the box 20 minutes from time trickled between the legs of United goalkeeper Dean Henderson.

Liverpool, who have won 16 consecutive league games, finished a single point behind champions

Manchester City in the Premier League last season but are now setting a searing pace as they chase their first top-flight title since 1990.

"For us it was important to win, we had unbelievably big chances," Klopp told BT Sport. "In the first half we had two big chances and in the second one which we scored from. These games, they are not all beauties and you have to work hard for the results."

The hosts had their chances to spring a huge shock against their off-colour opponents but all of their good work was undone with one mistake when Wijnaldum pounced on a loose ball 20 yards from goal. His strike should have been easily handled by Henderson, who instead watched on in horror as the ball slipped under his grasp.

### KANE STRIKES

Tottenham boss Mauricio Pochettino recalled his

big guns for the Premier League game against Southampton at home, making 11 changes from the side that suffered a shock League Cup loss at Colchester in midweek.

Spurs had won just two of their opening eight games in all competitions before and looked in deep trouble when they were reduced to 10 men against Brighton. Tanguy Ndombele fired the home side ahead in the 24th minute but they suffered a blow when Serge Aurier was sent off after half an hour for two yellow cards.

Hugo Lloris then gifted Southampton an equaliser with a goalkeeping howler, Danny Ings dispossessing the Frenchman in his six-yard box and forcing the ball home before Kane restored the home side's lead shortly before half-time.

The win lifted Spurs into fourth place in the Premier League, one spot behind West Ham, who drew 2-2

away to Bournemouth after beating Manchester United last week. Crystal Palace were 2-0 winners against Norwich, thanks to a Luka Milivojevic penalty and a late Andros Townsend goal while a Matt Doherty strike and a Daryl Janmaat own goal gave Wolves a much-needed 2-0 victory against Watford.

Aston Villa's John McGinn gave his side a 2-1 lead in the 79th minute but Chris Wood levelled for Burnley just two minutes later and the match finished level.

Pep Guardiola's City face a tricky-looking trip to Goodison Park to take on Everton in the late kick-off, knowing they must win to cling onto Liverpool's coat-tails, even this early in the season.

Early team news revealed Sergio Aguero, Bernardo Silva and David Silva were all on the bench for City. High-flying Leicester host struggling Newcastle today while Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's misfiring Manchester United are at home to Arsenal tomorrow. — AFP

## Sabalenka beats Riske in WTA Wuhan final

**WUHAN:** Aryna Sabalenka was in disbelief after she became the first player to claim back-to-back titles in Wuhan thanks to a 6-3, 3-6, 6-1 victory over American Alison Riske in the final yesterday. The 21-year-old improved her record at the event to a perfect 12-0 and joins Petra Kvitová as the only player to have won the tournament twice.

"I can't believe that I defended this title. I couldn't even imagine that I would be able to do this," she said. In a rematch of their final in Shenzhen last January, Sabalenka utilised her power game once again to overcome Riske in 114 minutes in front of a 13,000-strong centre court crowd. She unleashed 18 aces and won 79 percent of her first-serve points. Sabalenka was emotional during the trophy ceremony as she addressed her coach Dmitry Tursunov, after the duo briefly split following her second round exit in the US Open. "Special thanks to my team, this year has been really tough for us, and I think because of Wuhan, because I was really afraid of this title and I defended," she said.

Both players have enjoyed their greatest success at Chinese tournaments, with Sabalenka lifting her first Premier-level trophy in Wuhan 12 months ago — one of two titles she had previously won in China — and Riske reaching six of her nine career finals in the country.

Sabalenka had the better start, racing to a 5-1 lead before Riske slowed her down, breaking the Belarusian as she was serving for the opening set. But the number nine seed was unfazed, and converted on her third set point with a smooth volley winner to snatch the first set in 35 minutes.

She survived a 13-minute eight-deuce game to hold for 1-1 in the second, but dropped serve in game six to hand Riske a 4-2 advantage. It was all the 29-year-old needed to draw level and force a decider. Sabalenka broke early in the final set and raced to a 5-0 lead and soon wrapped up the win to secure a fourth career WTA crown.

The world number 14 heads to Beijing next, where she faces either Daria Kasatkina or Peng Shuai in her opening match. Meanwhile, Riske, who is set to break the top 30 for the first time on Monday, rued her missed opportunities in the Wuhan final.

"I'm really disappointed in my mentality in the third set. I think I could have brought more out of myself. Still moving forward, I think that's something I have to work on." — AFP



**WUHAN:** Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus holds the trophy after her victory in the women's singles final match against Alison Riske of the US at the Wuhan Open tennis tournament in Wuhan yesterday. — AFP