The Peninsula
Local focus, Global vision





BUSINESS | 13
Al Kaabi meets US Secretary of Energy, Congress members

SPORT | 17
Mbappe's double ends Messi's World Cup dream





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Barwa launches QR105m Al Khor expansion project

THE PENINSULA

The project is an extension of Al Khor Recreation Facilities project which aims to raise the standard of living of the workforce in Qatar by providing them with integrated recreation and sports facilities. The implementation of the project is expected to be completed in 18 months.

DOHA: Barwa Real Estate Group, the leading real estate investment company in Qatar, announced yesterday the award of the construction of the project of the Expansion of Al Khor Sports Facilities to the Contractor "Al Bader Construction and Steel Works" for a value of QR105m.

The project is an extension of the project of Al Khor Recreation Facilities which aims to raise the standard of living of the workforce in Qatar by providing them with integrated recreation and sports facilities.

The implementation of the project is to be completed within a period of 18 months.

It will be constructed on a plot area of 69,757sqm, which will include a hypermarket with an area measuring 8,000sqm, in addition to a multipurpose hall measuring 300sqm.

The infrastructure work includes the construction of an electricity substation, internal roads and all services required such as water, electricity, sewage, irrigation, communications, surveillance cameras, internal roads, parking lots, pump rooms with tanks for water, fire and gas.

The project of Al Khor Recreation Facilities for workers is located in the Industrial Area of Al Khor City.

The recreational facilities of the project are used on several occasions by several government agencies and private companies. In addition, Barwa cooperated with the Ministry of Interior in order to create an annual program to cover all national and sporting events. The number of people who visited the project exceeded 500,000 during 2016.

Barwa Real Estate has many projects under its fold for labours and one of the major projects is construction of a new labour city.

In December last year, the company signed a contract with INSHA Company to construct a new labor city having 3,170 residential houses at Salwa Road with the contract value of QR1,295m.

The new labour city project in Salwa Road occupies an overall area of 994,567 sqm and includes 3170 residential houses, each comprising eight rooms, eight bathrooms, and a kitchen.

Additionally, the project includes retail shops and mosques with a total building area of 730,728sqm. Moreover, the construction will include all the infrastructure works consisting of 25 power substations, internal roads, and potable water, fire, irrigation and sewage networks as well as surveillance cameras.

Foreign Minister meets UN Secretary-General



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, H E Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, met on Friday with Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres. They discussed means to promote cooperation between the State of Qatar and the United Nations in addition to the latest regional and international developments.

HMC team replants severed arm

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Performing a complex surgery successfully, surgeons at Hamad Medical Corporation made a severed arm fully functional again through replantation.

Jose Mari Jay, a 55-year-old man, whose arm was severed just below the elbow after an accident has regained the full use of his arm and hand thanks to the quick actions of first responders and the highly-skilled surgical and rehabilitation teams at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC).

The complex surgery is thought to be the first of its kind performed in Qatar, said a release. Dr Mohamed Murshid Al Delaimi, Senior Consultant, Plastic and Hand Surgeon, said the surgery was a success because of the skill and experience of the involved first responders and medical teams, including the rehabilitation team at Rumailah Hospital.

"The patient was admitted to the operating room within seven hours of the accident occurring. The delicate re-attachment surgery was completed in nine hours," said Dr Al Delaimi, who led the surgical team.

He said the procedure was complex because of the requirement to repair muscles, tendons, arteries, nerves, and veins. Much of the surgery was performed using specialized instruments under a microscope.

"There are a number of steps in the replantation process. After the damaged tissue was removed and the bone stabilized, the surgical team connected the arteries, veins, nerves, and tissues of the amputated portion to the forearm using microscopic surgery. Through his efforts working with our rehabilitation team, the patient has been able to resume many of his normal daily activities," said Dr Al Delaimi.

→CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Number of public parks doubled in five years

SANAULLAH ATAULLAH
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The number of public parks in Qatar has doubled in the past five years across the country to accommodate growing number of visitors. According to a report of the Ministry of Municipality and Environment the total number of parks in the country has reached 94.

The Public Parks Department at the Ministry of Municipality and Environment built a total of 51 new modern parks and renovated the old ones during past five years, said a report posted on the website of the Ministry.

According to the report, public parks reached 40 — the highest number — in Doha Municipality, followed by Al Rayyan Municipality which has 20 public parks. There are seven public parks each in two municipalities — Al Khor-Al Zakhira and Al Daayen.

Al Wakra and Umm Salal Municipalities received six public parks each. Al Shamal Municipality got five public pParks. There are three public parks in Al Shihaniya.

New parks are part of a major project of the Ministry of Municipality and Environment to build modern public parks and upgrade old parks across the country to accommodate growing number of visitors.

→CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

FUEL PRICE

There will not be any hike in petrol and diesel prices in July. The price of premium grade petrol will remain the same, while super grade petrol price will see a slight dip from July 1, 2018 onwards, according to the new price list issued by Qatar Petroleum.

QR2.05
Price of super grade petrol for a litre.

QR2.00
Price of premium grade petrol for a litre.

QR2.05
Price of premium grade diesel for a litre.



Qatar's Samba scores a stunning victory at Diamond League

Qatar's Abderrahman Samba (right) leads British Virgin Islands' Kyron McMasters and Norway's Karsten Warholm during the men's 400M hurdles final at the Diamond League meet in the Charlety Stadium, Paris, yesterday. Samba won the 400M hurdles in a time of time of 46.98 seconds. This time is the second fastest in history.

→SEE ALSO PAGE 23

Cars make a beeline at Fahes centres before fee hike

SIDI MOHAMED
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Hundreds of cars queued yesterday at a number of Fahes centres for annual technical inspection to avoid paying the increase in inspection fee imposed by Woqod, which will come into effect from today.

Technical inspection fee for a private passenger car at the Fahes centre will be doubled from QR75 to QR150 from today (July 1).

The fee for motorcycle inspection will be QR100, which was earlier QR50. Many motorists considered the increase surprising and did not find time to get the inspection done, which resulted in the rush at Fahes centres yesterday.

"We were daily inspecting around 600 vehicles and today expecting the number to be doubled as only in the first few hours of the morning hundreds of vehicles have already lined up in the queue for check up," said a supervisor at Fahes centre in Al Wakra.

To a question regarding centre's capacity to inspect such a big number of vehicles, he replied that the centre had a capacity to inspect 1,000 vehicles daily, but the problem was that people come only by the last minute and we have to close it by 4.30pm.

"I don't expect to extend working hours for technical inspection because the centre's team has to shift to another area," he replied to another question whether there was any possibility to extend working hours to entertain all motorists.

→CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



TODAY'S MATCHES

SPAIN VS RUSSIA
5.00PM.
CROATIA VS DENMARK
9.00PM.

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

FRANCE 4-3 ARGENTINA
URUGUAY 2-1 PORTUGAL

MME's workshop on national strategy to combat desertification today

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Municipality and Environment (MME) will organise today a workshop on the preparation of the national strategy to combat desertification.

The workshop will be attended by the Ministry's Assistant Under-Secretary for Environment Affairs, Eng. Ahmed Mohammed Al Sada, an expert from the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and a number of experts in this field in addition to officials from the Ministry, said a release.

The three-day workshop will feature an awareness lecture on the United Nations Convention to



Combat Desertification, projects of rehabilitation of vegetation cover in Qatar and the water resources in Qatar. It will also focus on practical work on the data required for the seventh National Report on Combating Desertification, method of writing national reports on combating desertification and the standards and plan of action of the national strategy to combat desertification.

The Ministry of Municipality and Environment has adopted a number of important desertification-related projects and programmes aimed at developing land and grasslands in the Qatari environment, enhancing the revitalisation capacity of Qatari nurseries, utilising treated water in irrigation and planting trees and wild shrubs and distributing them to various nurseries in the country.



Qatar's Attorney-General H E Dr Ali bin Fetais Al Marri at the graduation ceremony of the first batch of Syrian students benefiting from the "Syrian Refugee Students" programme at the Sorbonne-Pantheon, Paris 1 University.

Number of public parks doubled

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The new public parks were built according to the international standards. Park facilities include modern play areas equipped with various varieties of games and rubber floor for the safety of the children.

Pergolas (shades) at the parks were designed specially giving touch of Qatari heritage to make the parks more beautiful. There are fountains and artificial waterfalls at public parks. Facilities of public parks were also equipped with free wifi connection and solar-powered mobile charging stations.

To make the public parks modern, safer and durable lamp posts have been set up at the parks. To protect the environment, lighting system are fitted with energy saving bulbs. Many solar-powered system were also installed.

Following the directive of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to encourage people for physical exercise, playgrounds for most popular games like football, basketball, volleyball were built and fitness equipment were installed at some public parks, Doha Corniche and other places which attracts big number of sport lovers, said the report.

MME said that special walkways were developed for joggers at public parks and separate lane was made for cyclists at places.

Qatar National Library offers diverse range of activities in July

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar National Library (QNL) will offer a wide variety of activities and events catering to children, young adults, and the general public throughout July.

A 'Creative Thinking Workshop' in Arabic will be held tomorrow and it will welcome young participants aged from 12-18 to the library to learn how to think differently, as they split into teams to solve a number of challenges using creative ideas and solutions. These interactive activities will enable them to acquire and develop various soft skills — such as team-building, problem-solving and time management — that contribute to preparing young students for university.

QNL will hold its Children's Library First Book Swap from July 13 – 19, where children can bring in books they have already read and exchange them for new titles. These books can be in any language and of any genre, including fiction, non-fiction, and graphic novels.

"We believe in lifelong learning, and therefore our events are diverse in nature and cater to all age groups," said Abeer Al Kuwari, Director of Research and Learning Services at QNL.

"It's essential that all members of our community enjoy and engage in activities that not only provide them with an opportunity to interact with people of similar interests, but also encourage them to learn new skills in an open and educational environment."

To commemorate World Population Day on July 11, QNL, in cooperation with the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, will host an open discussion on population growth in Qatar, its impact on various aspects to society, and viable solutions to the challenges it creates. This event is open to the public and will be in Arabic, with English interpretation provided.

For those with an interest in media content development, QNL will offer a number of public workshops in July. 'Content is King', on July 19, will highlight how to draft effective content for different social media channels, in order to efficiently communicate with target audiences and attract more followers.

As a QNL visitor you can also learn how to 'Convert Your Media', from analog to digital during a learning session on July 25, and about '3D Modelling' on July 31. The latter workshop will teach participants how to create 3D models using specialized software, and to prepare the files for 3D printing.

Meanwhile, young adults with musical interests can explore and nurture their talents by joining a 'Bass Guitar' session with an expert guitarist on July 14, while those who are curious about science can register for QNL's 'Snap Circuits' event on July 1, where they will have the opportunity to learn about the principles of electricity by creating different types of circuits.

For a full list of QNL's monthly events, please visit at www.qnl.qa/en/events.

Qatar's AG attends graduation ceremony of Syrian students at university in Paris

QNA

PARIS: Qatar's Attorney-General H E Dr Ali bin Fetais Al Marri attended the graduation ceremony of the first batch of Syrian students benefiting from the "Syrian Refugee Students" programme, which Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani has issued directives to assume its expenses, at the Sorbonne-Pantheon, Paris 1 University.

President of the University Georges Haddad handed over the certificates to the 111 graduating students in various disciplines.

The ceremony was attended by the European and International Affairs Team of the University as well as the University staff and faculty.

On the sidelines of the ceremony, Dr Ali ben Fetais Al Marri, met with Professor Georges Haddad, President of the Sorbonne Pantheon, Paris 1. During the meeting, they discussed the latest developments related to the programme, on which the university, for years, has accepted a number of Syrian refugee students in several disciplines , through a partnership agreement with the university presidency.

Cars make a beeline at Fahes centres before hike in fee

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Fahes, the company responsible for the annual and periodic inspection of all road traffic vehicles in Qatar, has revised the technical inspection fees for various services offered by them with effective from July 1.

The Woqod subsidiary announced their revised charges on twitter and it has already been reflected on their website and posted announcement at the centres also.

Also Musiameer Fahes centre witnessed more traffic compared to Al Wakrah and its officials expressed hope of inspecting more vehicles due to long working hours from 6am to 9pm while Al Wakra centre timings are from 7am to 4:30pm.

About the meaning of 'external inspection' whose fee will be QR250 for private passenger car while its fees at Fahes Centers will be QR150, he said: "The external inspection means the technical inspection that the centres provide to companies at their places instead to visit Fahes centres and it is mainly for companies."

The Peninsula visited a number of Fahes centres and spoke to many residents about this increase in prices of technical inspection. One of the residents, seeking not to be named, said: "Before coming to Al Wakrah centre, I visited Industrial Area centre and I found that only big vehicles were being inspected there which force me to come here."

"The problem is that all people want to inspect their vehicles before the new decision coming into effect. Woqod must extend the implementation time of new tariff so that people can know about the new decision," he added.

Khalifa International Stadium Fan Zone remains a crowd puller

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Aspire Zone Foundation continued to attract thousands of visitors to its Khalifa International Stadium Fan Zone, organised in collaboration with the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, with more than 40,000 football fans from all over Qatar attending since the Fan Zone opened last Friday.

Crucial matches between Brazil and Serbia, Argentina and Nigeria in addition to Tunisia and Panama, saw the highest number of attendees during the second week of the tournament, as the Fan Zone welcomed locals and expatriates in Qatar.

Prominent presence from the Ambassadors of Germany, Tunisia and Panama along with representatives of Umm Salal SC

On the second week, the Khalifa International Stadium Fan Zone also attracted a number of dignitaries, including Sheikh Tamim bin Mohammed Al Thani, Vice President of Umm Salal Sports Club, Hans-Udo Muzel, the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, Salah Al Salhi, the Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia to the State of Qatar, and Oreste Del Rio Sandoval, the Ambassador of the Republic of Panama to the State of Qatar.

On the sidelines of the Argentina vs Nigeria match, Sheikh Tamim bin Mohammed Al Thani, Vice President of Umm Salal Sports Club, said: "I'd like to extend my thanks to the organising committee for the great efforts they put in to make the Khalifa International Stadium a big success, as testified by the large number of attendees on a daily basis, which makes it one of the most fun places in Qatar from which to watch the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia matches."

Meanwhile, Hans-Udo Muzel, the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, said: "I'd like to extend my thanks to Aspire Zone Foundation for organising this great Fan Zone in Khalifa International Stadium. It's great to see so many people here watching and enjoying football, because sport brings people together. I look forward to the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar."

Salah Al Salhi, the Ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia to the State of Qatar praised the organising committee for the success of the Khalifa International Stadium Fan Zone, and extended his wishes to see Arab teams perform better at the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar tournament.



Football fans cheering at Khalifa International Stadium Fan Zone during a match.

Salhi was accompanied by Oreste Del Rio Sandoval, the Ambassador of the Republic of Panama to the State of Qatar for the Tunisia vs Panama match. Speaking from the sidelines, Sandoval remarked: "The Khalifa International Stadium Fan Zone is really great, thanks to Aspire Zone Foundation for organising it." Commenting on his country's performance at the tournament, Sandoval added: "This is Panama's first FIFA World Cup participation, and it has been a tremendous experience which will benefit us at upcoming tournaments."

Aspire Zone Foundation has also launched the 'Aspire Fan Zone Photography Competition'. The competition will run until the end of the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia tournament on July 15. Entrants can compete at the Competition by posting their photos on Instagram under the hashtag #AspireFanZone.

Winners will receive valuable prizes from the Khalifa International Stadium Fan Zone's sponsors and organisers, including a chance to enjoy the tournament's final matches from one of the Majlis seats free of charge.

Updated prices for Majlis and VIP Skyboxes booking at the Khalifa International Stadium starting from June 30. One of the key features of Fan Zone is the capacity to host thousands of football fans daily. Due to the growing number of fans attending, Aspire Zone Foundation has extended the number of spectator seats to more than 5,000 seats for football fans, organised in a variety of options.

Fans looking to watch the games in a more private setting can choose from 16 VIP skyboxes at an updated price of QR1,500 each from June 30 until July 14 and at a cost of QR2,000 on the final day of the tournament on July 15.

Fans can also choose from 24 Majlis with authentic designs inspired by Qatari culture, at an updated cost of QR650 each from June 30 until July 14 and a cost of QR1,000 on the final day of the tournament on July 15.

This year's Fan Zone is sponsored by the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (Main Partner) and Ooredoo (Main Sponsor), as well as Al Attiya Motors and Trading Co., Mannai Trading CO. WLL (CISCO), Witr Jewellery, Royal Air Maroc (RAM) and Pepsi.

QM announces 2nd Youth Summer Residency

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Museums (QM) announced the return of its Youth Summer Residency for budding artists, specifically those who were chosen based on their participation at the annual Ministry of Education art exhibition, which was hosted at the Fire Station.

Participants will work with local artists on developing their passion for art as well as get the chance to experience the burgeoning art scene in Qatar and hone their skills.

The mentor-ship is based on the Fire Station's Artist in Residency concept, which has proven so successful for the growing number of emerging artists, Qataris and residents, who have gone through the programme. The Youth Summer Residency aims to similarly encourage young artists to explore art and develop their artistic skills.

This year, the student mentor-ship will take place from today to August 30. The budding young student artists will receive mentor-ship and guidance on a daily basis, discuss art with established artists in the community and visit museums and galleries to reflect upon and take inspiration from other artists' work. Following the completion of the programme, participants will have a chance to exhibit their works during an exhibition hosted at the Fire Station, which will last until the end of the year.

To support the initiative, the Fire Station has called on artists from Qatar to become mentors for this year's talented group of students.

Commenting on the initiative, Director of the Fire Station Khalifa Al Obaidly, said:"As a hub for the country's young artists, the Fire Station aims to always be a source of support and inspiration for future generations of creative talent. The Youth Summer Residency is an abridged version of our prestigious Artist in Residence programme. Through it, Qatar's aspiring young artists will find inspiration, hone their skills and interact with peers in an enriching and creative space. We are looking forward to seeing the resulting exhibition of this year's edition."

The Fire Station is committed to supporting the next generation of passionate artists through initiatives like the Youth Summer Residency, which is just one of the various steps QM undertakes to nurture and develop the country's young creatives.

By identifying, developing and celebrating artistic talent so early in an artist's career, QM hopes to broaden the base of cultural talent in Qatar, contributing to its delivery of the cultural goals set out in the 2030 Qatar National Vision.



This file picture shows participants during the first Youth Summer Residency programme of Qatar Museums.



The Chairman of General Authority of Customs, Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Jamal, at the meeting.

GAC attends regional meeting of Directors General of Customs

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar's General Authority of Customs (GAC) took part in the 48th regional meeting of Directors General of Customs of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. GAC also participated in the 132nd session of the Customs Cooperation Council. The meeting was held in Brussels on Wednesday and Thursday.

The Chairman of General Authority of Customs, Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Jamal, headed Qatar's delegation to the meetings, said a release.

The 48th regional meeting of Directors General of Customs on North of Africa, Near and Middle East (MENA) region discussed many issues related to Customs work, mainly the results of the 79th session of the General Policy Committee of the World Customs Organization (WCO), the application of the Arab Union of Customs Executives to join the WCO in addition to the results of the second meeting of the working group on the use of additional languages and the report of the regional activities of the capacity building program.

The 132nd session of the Customs Cooperation Council dealt with the reports of technical committees on rules of origin, Customs valuation, the Harmonized System Committee and tax Customs cooperation, in addition to discussing a study on the use of additional languages in the WCO.

Ooredoo's Ramadan campaign a huge success with 2 million mark

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Ooredoo announced yesterday that its 2018 Ramadan campaign, 'Enjoy Ramadan's best moments with the Ooredoo Supernet', has been a huge success with nearly two million people taking advantage of the Ooredoo App daily giveaway and offers.

During the holy month, all Ooredoo users were able to give a host of free gifts and choose customised offers for Shahry and Hala lines via the Ooredoo App.

The giveaway and the customised offers were designed to share the spirit of giving this Ramadan and thousands of customers logged into the Ooredoo App daily to enjoy resulting in almost two million digital gifts and offers being enjoyed throughout the month.

Manar Khalifa Al Muraikhi, Ooredoo's Director of PR and Corporate Communications, said: "Our customers had the chance to send free data, international calling minutes, entertainment passes, Nojoom Points and enjoy a host of offers via the Ooredoo App. We wanted to celebrate the act of giving this Ramadan and encourage our customers to do something kind daily, by logging-in and gifting. We're so proud that so many of our customers did this and happy we could help gift to so many." The Ooredoo App, which was first launched in 2013, is available for iOS and Android users and has an average score rating of 4.3 on the iTunes store.



Silatech calls for empowering youth to combat terrorism at UN event



Officials during the event.

THE PENINSULA

NEW YORK: Silatech partook in a high-level panel of leading global policy-makers and practitioners, as well as civil society, private sector, and youth voices, to discuss best practices and initiatives that empower young women and men to fulfil their role as protagonists in preventing and countering violent extremism.

The event, "Youth as Protagonists in Preventing Violent Extremism", was organised by the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the UN and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, on June 28 2018 during the UN's Counter-Terrorism Week in New York City.

The panel offered various perspectives on how young people understand and work to prevent violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism, through activities based on community and social cohesion.

Sabah Al Haidoos, Chief Executive Officer, presented Silatech's innovative approach to combating extremism and terrorism by empowering young people and enabling them with jobs to lead decent lives, as well as the organisation's achievements in fragile communities and conflict-affected areas.

"We must work to protect youth from marginalisation, poverty and unemployment so they don't fall a prey to violent extremism and terrorism... Therefore, we must first ask ourselves how we can expect young people lacking peace, security and decent work to be positive and active participants in their communities.

"We advocate for youth and believe in their positive influence in the development of societies and the spread of peace, and this is what we do at Silatech, an international organisation that works to empower youth and positively engage them in their societies."

HMC team replants severed arm through complex surgery

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Dr. Al Delaimi added that the complex surgery was a team effort, noting that Dr. Mutasim Al Mahi, Orthopedic Surgery Specialist, and Dr. Fadi Bouri, Orthopedic Surgery Resident, were instrumental in stabilising the forearm bones.

"The goal of replantation surgery is to give the patient back as much use of the affected body part as possible. In order to allow the hand surgery team to focus on their work of reconnecting the blood vessels and to get blood flowing properly again, it was first necessary to create a strong foundation by repairing the damage to the bone," said Dr. Al Mahi.

In addition to the skill of the medical and surgical teams involved, the success of a reattachment surgery depends on a number of factors, including the patient's overall health and the damage to the affected body part. Getting the nerves to work again, restoring feeling, and stimulating new nerve growth is often the bigger challenge and can involve several months of rehabilitation.

"Two months after the surgery, the surgical and orthopedic team re-evaluated the fracture, replacing the external fixation device with an internal fixation device using wires, plates, and screws. This allowed the patient to move his arm uninhibited. We also checked to ensure the bone was healing well and that there was good blood flow," added Dr. Bouri.

Dr. Iqbal Rasoul, Plastic and Hand Surgery Specialist, credits the level of coordination between the involved care teams and the condition of the severed limb, which had been preserved in ice, as major factors in the successful outcome of the surgery. He said the speed with which the Ambulance Service responded and the skills of the emergency, surgery, and rehabilitation teams provided Mr. Jay with the best possible chance of recovery.

Dr. Mohammed Hassan Al Fahal, Orthopedic Consultant, Dr. Moeen Al Kildi, Specialist Anesthetist, Dr. Dhari Abdulateef Mohammed Almenshid, Resident Anesthetist, and Monica Liblan, Occupational Therapist, were also part of the care team involved in Mr. Jay's surgery and rehabilitation.

Jay, who was transported to Hamad General Hospital by the Ambulance Service's LifeFlight Service within minutes of the accident, said his recovery exceeded his own expectations. He underwent several months of rehabilitation after his reattachment surgery but says within three months of the accident he felt no pain in his arm. He expressed his gratitude towards his care teams and HMC, thanking all those who helped him on his recovery journey, including his colleagues.

While accidental limb amputations are not common, it is important for all members of the public to have some understanding of first-aid treatment for this type of injury. Medical experts recommend applying firm pressure to the impacted area, ideally using sterile gauze. The amputated limb should be preserved by wrapping it in damp, sterile gauze or fabric and sealing it in a plastic bag, free from air. The plastic bag should be placed on a bed of ice or water. Placing the severed limb directly on ice should be avoided as this can cause more damage and reduce the possibility of successful reattachment.



The multi-disciplinary care team which preformed the complex surgery with the patient.

Sanctions aim to turn Iranians against govt, says Khamenei

REUTERS



DUBAI: US economic pressure on Iran is intended to turn Iranians against their government, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (**pictured**) was quoted as saying yesterday by his website.

"They bring to bear economic pressure to separate the nation from the system... but six US presidents before him tried this and had to give up," Khamenei was quoted as saying by Khamenei.ir, referring to Trump. Speaking to graduating Revolutionary Guards officers, Khamenei accused the United States and some other countries that regard Shiah Muslim Iran as their main foe of trying to destabilise the government in Tehran.

"If America was able to act against Iran, it would not need to form coalitions with notorious and reactionary states in the region and ask their help in fomenting unrest and instability (in Iran)," Khamenei said in remarks carried by state TV.

Khamenei was speaking after three days of protests in Tehran and other cities in which hundreds of traders in the bazaar closed their shops to voice anger at the rial's plunge. Such merchants have mostly been loyal to the leadership since the 1979 Islamic Revolution overthrew the monarchy. Some of the graduating Guards officers had drawn the flag of Israel, Iran's arch-enemy, on the soles of their boots, pictures from the military ceremony carried by semi-official news agency Tasnim showed.

State news agency IRNA reported that top government officials including President Hassan Rouhani and the heads of parliament and the judiciary had met to discuss the prospective US sanctions.

"Various scenarios of threats to the Iranian economy by the US government were examined and appropriate measures were taken to prepare for any probable US sanctions, and to prevent their negative impact," IRNA said. The United States has told allies to cut all imports of Iranian oil from November and is unlikely to offer exemptions, a senior State Department official said on Tuesday as the Trump administration seeks to cut off funding to Iran.

"They bring to bear economic pressure to separate the nation from the system... but six US presidents before him tried this and had to give up," Khamenei was quoted as saying by Khamenei.ir, referring to Trump.



A Palestinians man holds Turkish flag and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's portrait in Gaza City, yesterday.

Two Palestinians dead in Gaza Strip explosion

ANATOLIA

PALESTINE: Two Palestinian civilians were killed and eight others injured in an explosion at an eastern neighbourhood of the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian Health Ministry said yesterday.

The incident took place in Shejaiya neighbourhood after fireworks exploded, said Ashraf Al Qidra, the ministry spokesman, in a statement. The situation has been tense across the Gaza fence amid rallies by Palestinians against Israeli occupation of their lands.

Since the rallies began on March 30, at least 132 Palestinians have been martyred — and thousands more injured — by Israeli army gunfire, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Protesters demand the "right of return" to their homes in historical Palestine from which they were driven in 1948 to make way for the new state of Israel.

They also demand an end to Israel's draconian blockade of the Gaza Strip, which for the last 11 years has gutted the coastal enclave's economy and deprived its 2 million inhabitants of many basic commodities.

Israel urged to release arrested Turkish woman

ANATOLIA

ISTANBUL: The family of young Turkish woman, who was arrested in Tel Aviv airport two weeks ago, urged Israeli authorities to release her immediately.

Israeli forces arrested 27-year-old Ebru Ozkan at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv on June 11 when she was returning to Turkey.

She has been accused of having links to a terrorist organisation. Ayten Ozkan, mother of Ebru, dismissed the allegations, saying her daughter, who had also been to Jerusalem two times previously, was arrested "unjustly." "My daughter loves Jerusalem so much. She loves people and children there," Ayten said. The family could not communicate with Ebru for 19 days, according to her mother.

"I hope my daughter will be a voice of Jerusalem and Al Aqsa mosque and will be a voice of heart-stricken mothers." Ebru's detention had been extended four times, Elif Ozkan, a sister of Ebru, noted. "It is a completely arbitrary arrest. They accuse her of [having links] to a terror organisation but they are not saying which terrorist organisation. They are all the groundless claims," Elif said.

She said Ebru had been to Jerusalem to spend the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

"While going there, she took souvenirs such as candies, balloons and colouring books for children. She was very happy to be able to give all the stuff to them." Ebru's family hopes that she will be released in the next hearing scheduled for July 1.

The family members will hold a news conference at 4.30pm in Taksim district of Istanbul today.

"We wait for everyone. For my sister's freedom, we want everyone and every institution to raise their voice on this [issue]," Elif said. Jerusalem remains at the core of the perennial Israel-Palestine conflict, as Palestinians want Israeli-occupied East Jerusalem as the capital of a future state.

Tension has mounted in the Palestinian territories since last December when US President announced his decision to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital. On May 14, the US relocated its Israel embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, drawing condemnation from across the Arab and Muslim world and further inflaming passions in the Palestinian territories.

Turkish historian Fuat Sezgin dies at age 95

ANATOLIA

ANKARA: World-renowned Turkish historian Fuat Sezgin died yesterday at the age of 95. Macit Cetinkaya, Chair of the Board of Research Foundation for the History of Science in Islam, said that Sezgin died in the hospital where he was treated for an unspecified illness.

"I am very saddened by the death of such a valued scientist, regardless of his age. He was a very distinguished scientist," Cetinkaya said. "He donated a priceless library and museum to Turkey."

Sezgin was born in eastern Bitlis province in 1924. He studied at Istanbul University's Faculty of Letters, where he also earned his PhD on Arabic language and literature. He continued his studies at Germany's Frankfurt University in 1960 following a military coup in Turkey. He devoted a considerable amount of time to studying and listing scientific contributions made by Muslim/Arabic scholars throughout history. He wrote numerous books and aritcles.

Sezgin founded the Research Foundation for the History of Science in Islam in 2010 to support activities of the Istanbul Museum of the History of Science and Technology in Islam.

West Libya in Haftar's sights after tightening grip on east

AFP

TRIPOLI: After tightening his grip on eastern Libya, military strongman Khalifa Haftar now wants to extend his influence across the west where the UN-backed unity government is based, experts say.

One of the most powerful players in the Libyan conflict, the 75-year-old field marshal heads the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) allied with a rival authority in the east.

He has been bolstered by a string of military victories in eastern parts of the country, which has been wracked by chaos since the 2011 uprising that toppled and killed long-time dictator Moamer Kadhafi. Barely a week after seizing key oil export terminals from a rival militia, his forces on Thursday announced the "liberation" of Derna, the last eastern city beyond his control, from radical Islamist militias.

"The LNA has once again proved its capability to operate on multiple fronts and achieve military success," said Mohamed Eljarh, chief executive of research firm Libya Outlook based in the country's east.

Haftar's enemies are ultimately his biggest advantage, he added.

"With their ill-informed and ill-organised military adventures, they make it easy for Haftar to justify the expansion of the LNA into the western and southern regions," Eljarh said.

Until 1963, Libya was a federal union divided into three administrative states — Cyrenaica in the east, Tripolitania in the west and Fezzan in the south — fault lines that remain to this day.

In recent years, Haftar — whose forces have been backed by Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Russia — has repeatedly vowed to "liberate the capital". But any push westwards is likely to face resistance particularly from armed groups in the western city of Misrata that are among the country's most powerful and hostile to Haftar.



Khalifa Haftar, the military commander who dominates eastern Libya, arriving to attend an international conference on Libya at the Elysee Palace in Paris, France.

Haftar's "triumphalist declarations on his supposed victory against terrorism suggest that he may be carried away by the recapture of Derna and underestimate the road ahead", said Karim Bitar, an expert at the Institute for International and Strategic Affairs in Paris. "Even the external powers that support him sometimes feel that Haftar overestimates his strengths and that nothing will be possible without a political rapprochement".

His relations with the authorities in Libya have always been complex.

Tenders and Bids of Government Organizations subordinate to the Law of Organizing Tenders and Bids no. 24 for the Year 2015

Logo	Organization	Tender No.	Subject	Tender Fees (QR)	Tender Bond Amount (QR)	Tender System	Closing Date
KAHRAMAA	Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation - Kahramaa	LTC-1337/2018	Two Years Price Agreement for Supply of Toner Cartridges, CDs, Wireless Key Boards, Mouses etc. Materials Department km.qa	500/-	50,000	Two Envelopes	12/08/2018
KAHRAMAA	Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation - Kahramaa	GTC/901/2018	THREE YEARS CONTRACT FOR CLEANING SERVICES ON ROUTINE & PRICE AGREEMENT BASIS FOR KAHRAMAA OFFICES & WATER NETWORKS (WNA) INSTALLATIONS BUILDINGS & PREMISES-STATE OF QATAR Purchase through Kahramaa website Km.qa	5,000	500,000	Two Envelopes	09/08/2018
Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy	Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy	40001473	Provision of Printing Services on Call-Off Basis for a period of four years. Interested tenderers is requested to send an expressions of interest (EOI) to the email r.shanavas@sc.qa. Last date of issuance of RFP is 10 July 2018.	500	70,000	Two envelopes (technical and commercial)	23 July 2018

For more details, please refer to the unified website of government procurement http://monaqasat.mof.gov.qa

Turkey sends new proof to US over key FETO suspect

ANATOLIA

ANKARA: The Turkish Justice Ministry has sent new evidence to the US showing that a key Fetullah Terrorist Organisation (FETO) suspect, Hakan Cicek, spoke directly to Fetullah Gulen during and before the defeated coup attempt of July 15, 2016, according to sources from the judiciary.

The new evidence compiled as part of a probe conducted by the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office shows that Cicek directly spoke to Gulen on a cellphone via a FETO member code-named "Eczaci Abdi" (translated Pharmacist Abdi).

According to the content of the calls, Gulen was permanently informed from 8pm Turkish time on July 15, 2016. Still according to the evidence compiled, Gulen also conveyed his instructions regarding the coup attempt.

The Turkish government says the Fetullah Terrorist Organisation (FETO) and its US-based leader Fetullah Gulen orchestrated the defeated coup of July 15, 2016, which left 251 people martyred and nearly 2,200 injured.

Ankara also accuses FETO of being behind a long-running campaign to overthrow the state through the infiltration of Turkish institutions, particularly the military, police, and judiciary.

According to the content of the calls, Gulen was permanently informed from 8pm Turkish time on July 15, 2016. Still according to the evidence compiled, Gulen also conveyed his instructions regarding the coup attempt.

Last week, Turkish security units had found cellphones dumped near an airbase in the capital Ankara which, they said, belonged to FETO second-in-command Kemal Batmaz and Hakan Cicek, mentioned above.

The investigation was linked to the Akinci airbase trial, a key trial over the coup attempt.

The report compiled this week by security forces says Cicek contacted the suspect "Eczaci Abdi (Pharmacist Abdi)" located in the US state of Pennsylvania immediately before the coup attempt, and spoke to him for three minutes and 51 seconds via the FaceTime application.

Syrian rebels lose southwest towns

REUTERS

BEIRUT: A string of Syrian rebel-held towns and villages accepted government rule yesterday as insurgent lines collapsed in parts of the southwest under an intense bombardment that the United Nations says has forced 160,000 people to flee.

The southwest was an early hotbed of the uprising against President Bashar Al Assad and defeat there would leave rebels with just one remaining stronghold — the area around Idlib province bordering Turkey in the northwest.

Rebels met Russian negotiators yesterday to seek peace terms for Daraa province, where most of their southwest territory is located, but said these failed. Moscow is Assad's strongest ally and its air power since 2015 has been crucial to his recapture of vast swathes of Syria.

Local groups in many towns seized by the army in recent days had negotiated their own surrender deals independently of the main rebel operations rooms after heavy air raids.

State television broadcast footage from inside the towns of Dael and Al Ghariya Al Gharbiya, where people were shown chanting pro-Assad slogans. A war monitor and a military media unit run by the government's ally Hezbollah said numerous other towns and villages had agreed to come back under Assad's rule.

Fierce battles were still roiling the area around Daraa city, near the Jordanian border, where the army was trying to capture a disused air base, rebels said, and the northwestern chunk of Daraa province remains in opposition hands.



People celebrate the Syrian army's arrival at Dael town in northwestern Daraa province, yesterday.

Air raids continued in the meantime, said the monitor, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, as displaced people flocked to the border areas least likely to be hit and the United Nations warned about a humanitarian catastrophe.

The army's offensive follows the capitulation of rebel enclaves near Homs and Damascus, including eastern Ghouta, which was recaptured after a scorched-earth assault that killed over a thousand civilians and laid waste to several towns.

Warfare in the southwest could risk a further escalation because of its proximity to Israel. The Israelis have already targeted Iran-backed militias fighting on Assad's side, which they have vowed to keep far from their country's borders.

The government's offensive so far has focused on Daraa province, which borders Jordan, but not Quneitra province abutting the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

The entire southwest is part of a "de-escalation zone" agreed last year by Russia, the United States and Jordan. Despite Washington's threats that it would respond to breaches of that arrangement, it has shown no sign of doing so, and the opposition's top negotiator on Thursday accused it of having struck a "malicious deal" to stay silent.

Insurgent negotiators had held meetings with Russia to try to agree a deal for all of Deraa province to come back under government sovereignty, but without the army or police entering the area.

The talks in the town of Bosra Al Sham, whose Roman citadel is listed as a Unesco world heritage site, collapsed yesterday, however, as the insurgents rejected Russia's proposed terms for their surrender, a rebel spokesman said.

Jordan has been facilitating talks between rebel factions and Moscow over a deal that would end the violence in exchange for the return of state rule in Daraa province on its border.

Russian negotiators have demanded rebels accept terms like those agreed for eastern Ghouta, where insurgents either left for opposition territory in the northwest along with their families or accepted the return of state rule, Jabawi said.

Iraq to begin manual recount of votes on Tuesday

REUTERS

BAGHDAD: Iraq will begin a manual recount of votes on Tuesday from a May parliamentary election clouded by allegations of fraud, a step towards the formation of a new parliament and government.

Only suspect ballots flagged in formal complaints or official reports on fraud will be recounted, a spokesman for the panel of judges conducting the recount said yesterday.

"The manual recount will be conducted in the presence of representatives from the United Nations, foreign embassies and political parties; as well as local and international observers, members of the media, and the Ministries of Defence and the Interior," Judge Laith Jabr Hamza said in a statement.

In seven provinces where many complaints of fraud were made — Kirkuk, Sulaimaniya, Erbil, Dohuk, Nineveh, Salahuddin and Anbar — the recount will be conducted by the local electoral offices, Hamza said.

Those ballot boxes which had already been transferred to Baghdad will be recounted in the capital. The recount has been a politically fraught issue with the leaders of winning blocs embroiled in negotiations for weeks over the formation of the next government.

Prime Minister Haider Al Abadi, whose electoral list came third in the poll marred by a historically low turnout, and the winner, cleric Moqtada Al Sadr, entered into an alliance last week, less than two weeks after Sadr announced a similar alliance with second-placed Iran ally Hadi Al Amiri's bloc, thus bringing the top three blocs together.The recount will exclude Baghdad where a storage site holding half of Baghdad's ballot boxes went up in flames earlier this month in an incident Prime Minister Haider Al Abadi described as a "plot to harm the nation and its democracy".

Overseas votes in Iran, Turkey, Britain, Lebanon, Jordan, the United States and Germany will also be recounted.

Latest ceasefire in South Sudan violated

AP

DUBLIN: South Sudan government troops violated the country's latest ceasefire just hours after it began at midnight, the armed opposition claimed yesterday, while a government spokesman accused the rebels of attacking instead.

The competing claims indicated a shaky start to the latest attempt at ending a devastating five-year civil war that has killed tens of thousands and created Africa's largest refugee crisis since the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Millions are near famine and aid delivery is often blocked in one of the world's most dangerous countries for humanitarian workers.

President Salva Kiir and rival Riek Machar, Kiir's former deputy, had agreed on the "permanent" cease-fire earlier in the week in neighbouring Sudan after their first face-to-face talks in nearly two years. They then ordered their supporters to observe it.

Opposition spokesman Lam Paul Gabriel said government forces and Sudanese rebel militias launched a "heavy joint attack" in Mboro, Wau County in the northwest around 7am yesterday, arriving in armoured personnel carriers, trucks and Land Cruisers.

"The fight is still ongoing as I write," Gabriel said, calling on the UN peacekeeping mission and cease-fire monitors to investigate. The opposition reserved the right to self-defence, he added.

"This is disappointing that even when their president and commander-in-chief Salva Kiir declares a cease-fire, the regime's forces still violate it," Gabriel said. "There is the possibility Salva Kiir is not in control of his forces or he doesn't want peace to come." South Sudan government spokesman Ateny Wek Ateny said that the opposition attacked instead.

"They have a loose leadership; they're not being controlled by anyone. The people of South Sudan should be given a chance to lead a peaceful life, and the army is observing the order of the president. It's very sad," Ateny said.

The previous cease-fire in December was violated within hours, prompting a new push by the international community to threaten UN and regional sanctions against those blocking the path to peace.

This time, Kiir and Machar had faced a possible UN arms embargo and sanctions if fighting didn't stop and a political deal wasn't reached.



Protesters chant during the women's march demanding police action to stop a spate of kidnappings and murders of women in Kampala, Uganda, yesterday.

Ugandans protest surge in violence against women

AFP

KAMPALA: Hundreds of protesters marched through the streets of Uganda's capital yesterday demanding police action to stop a spate of kidnappings and murders of women that have gripped the country.

"We demand action and accountability for the rampant kidnapping, brutalising and murder of women in this country," said Lydia Namubiru of the Women Protest Working Group, which organised the demonstration. At least 43 women have been murdered and others kidnapped for ransom in the East African nation since May 2017, according to police.

Rights activists have criticised what they say has been an inadequate police response focused on blaming the victims rather than solving the crimes.

Marchers wore T-shirts declaring "Women's Lives Matter" and held posters listing the names of murdered women.

US ambassador Deborah Malac and French envoy Stephanie Rivoal were among the marchers. "My staff members are scared. They're afraid to be out... because they don't know if they're going to be kidnapped or a victim of violence," Malac said.

Agatha Neema said she came to the protest "because I am a woman". "We live in fear yet our country is supposed to protect us. We demand security from the government," said the 32-year-old information scientist.

Turkey renovates school, hospitals in southern Africa

ANATOLIA

JOHANNESBURG: Turkey's state-run aid agency aims to continue its support to education and health sectors in southern African countries, an agency official said.

"We have installed a library for an educational institute in Johannesburg and are working closely with the Department of Basic Education of South Africa for further projects," said Mehmet Akif Sekerci, Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency's (TIKA) coordinator in South Africa.

Sekerci said the agency also aims to support the development of the health sector in South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland by renovating old hospitals, building new and provide them with equipment.

He said they will also provide training to local medical practitioners.

Sekerci said the agency has also completed renovation of the Mohau Child Center in Lesotho which take care of abandoned or HIV positive children.

"TIKA donated cutting-edge medical equipment to Lesotho Scott Hospital and renovated the building," he added. Since its founding in 1992, TIKA has been responsible for facilitating Turkey's official development assistance by providing help to developing countries.

Currently, TIKA is engaged in a variety of developmental cooperation activities in 150 countries through its 60 program coordination offices, including 20 in Africa.

Despite being in South Africa for just a few months, TIKA has embarked on many projects such as refurbishing homes for children for children whose parents died of HIV or have been abandoned.

UN: Terror groups operating in J&K; Naxalites recruiting kids

IANS

UNITED NATIONS: Terrorist groups operating in Kashmir and Naxalites are recruiting children, according to a report by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who urged the Indian government to act against those recruiting children.

Guterres' Children in Armed Conflict report covering 2017 identified Jaish-e-Mohammed and Hizbul Mujahideen as the groups using children in their armed campaign in Kashmir.

It said: "The United Nations continued to receive reports of the recruitment and use of children, including by the Naxalites, particularly in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. Naxalites reportedly resorted to the use of a lottery system to conscript children in Jharkhand."

It added: "In addition, three incidents of the recruitment and use of children were reported in Jammu and Kashmir in the context of clashes with national security forces. One case was attributed to Jaish-e-Mohammed and two to Hizbul Mujahideen."

However, the report presented by Guterres this week to the General Assembly also mentioned "unverified reports" that indicate national security forces use children as "informants and spies".

Guterres said he would "encourage the government to put in place measures to hold perpetrators of child recruitment and use to account and engage with the United Nations in view of ending and preventing violations against children".

Guterres said he would "encourage the government to put in place measures to hold perpetrators of child recruitment and use to account and engage with the United Nations in view of ending and preventing violations against children".

Overall in India, the report said, "Children continued to be affected by incidents of violence between armed groups and the government, particularly in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand and during tensions in Jammu and Kashmir."

"Children continued to be killed and injured in the context of operations of national security forces against armed groups," the report said.

It said that according to government data, 188 civilians were killed in Naxalite-affected regions but a break up of how many of them were children was not available.

In Kashmir, the report cited one case, that of a 15-year-old boy "killed by national security forces" during a clash with alleged Lashkar-e-Taiba elements in Padgampora village in Pulwama district.

Children were also affected in other ways by conflicts like the closure of schools because of actions both by Naxalites and by securiy forces, Guterres's report said.

"In Jharkhand, suspected Naxalites elements attacked one school in Khunti district, partially destroying it," the report said. "The occupation of over 20 schools was documented by the Central Reserve Police Force in Srinagar, Kashmir, in April," the report said.

Because of increased tensions in Kashmir, 65 schools in Rajouri district and 76 in Poonch were closed for varying periods, it added.

Guterres said he welcomed India signing the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention in June 2017.

The convention adopted by the International Labour Organisation in 1999, prohibits bonded labour of children and their trafficking, sexual exploitation and recruitment for armed conflict.



Vehicles drive along a flooded road after a heavy rainfall in Srinagar yesterday. Authorities issued a flood alert in central Kashmir for low-lying areas as intermittent rain continues.

Kashmir gears up to meet flood threat

IANS

SRINAGAR: Timely action by the authorities yesterday saved south Kashmir's Pampore town from being inundated as the flood situation continued to remain grim in the Kashmir Valley.

Police, roads and buildings department and the border roads organisation personnel plugged a breach in the embankment of River Jhelum in Pampore area saving the town.

Jammu and Kashmir Governor N N Vohra chaired a meeting of senior officials here to discuss the relief measures and the situation that has arisen due to the swelling water level in River Jhelum and its tributaries.

The flood control department has already declared an emergency in the Valley as the water level in the river crossed the danger mark at Sangam (Anantnag), Ram Munshibagh (Srinagar) and Asham (Bandipora) areas.

Authorities closed all schools and colleges in the Valley on Saturday.

Flood control rooms and helplines have been set up in all districts of the Valley where the concerned district magistrates are personally supervising the relief and rescue preparedness.

People living in low lying areas and along mountain streams have been advised to remain alert and not to venture near the swollen water bodies.

Volunteers of disaster management and state police are continuously monitoring the situation along the embankments of River Jhelum to ensure that any breach in the embankment is plugged in time.

'RSS-backed cow vigilante groups creating beef shortage in Goa'

IANS

PANAJI: Congress legislator Aleixo Reginaldo yesterday demanded police protection for beef importers, who have once again complained that cow vigilantes were stopping consignments of slaughtered beef from being brought into the state from neighbouring Karnataka.

"Even legally those who are legally importing beef, they are being harassed by cow vigilante groups and the government is promoting them," Reginaldo told a press conference here, amid a fresh spate of beef shortage in the state, where nearly one third of the 1.5 million population belong to beef-eating minority communities.

"All Hindus, Catholics, Muslims eat what they want. Why are such differences being created now? The beef shortage is being created by cow vigilante groups in Goa, who are backed by RSS elements," the Congress leader said.

Anwar Bepari, president of the All Goa Qureshi Meat Traders association on Friday had said cow-vigilantes were forcefully stopping beef consignments from being brought in the coastal state, giving rise of shortage of the red meat in Goa's markets.

"The cow protection groups are taking law in their hands and stopping our legally imported consignments. They have also beaten up some drivers, who are now scared to drive the trucks carrying slaughtered beef into Goa," Bepari said.

In January, beef traders in Goa went on strike alleging harassment by cow vigilante groups. The strike was called off after an assurance from the Chief Minister, who directed the police to crackdown on ow vigilantes.

Goa on an average consumes around 20-25 tons of beef every day, according to Bepari.

Nation must unite to protect children, says Rahul

IANS

NEW DELHI: Congress President Rahul Gandhi yesterday voiced his angst against the brutal gang rape and assault of an eight-year-old schoolgirl in Madhya Pradesh and said the nation must come together to protect the children.

"In Mandsaur an eight-year-old girl was kidnapped and gang raped, and is battling for her life.

"The brutality this young child was subjected to sickens me. As a nation, we must come together to protect our children and bring the attackers to speedy justice," Gandhi tweeted.

The child was abducted while she was waiting for her father outside her school on Tuesday. She was gang raped, her throat was slit and left to die. A day later, the Madhya Pradesh police arrested Irfan alias Bhaiyu, 20, a labourer, on the basis of CCTV footage.

On Friday, the police made another arrest of a construction worker, Asif, 24, after Irfan named him as an accomplice. Both were booked under relevant sections of the IPC and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act even as the probe continued.

Doctors treating the victim in Indore said she was "severely assaulted". She has started showing signs of improvement, they said, adding that the minor might be out of danger physically but her mental trauma would last longer.

Several political leaders and eminent personalities have reacted to the horrific incident on the social media.

Veteran actress Shabana Azmi said: "It's blood curdling. What's happening to this world? Culprits must be brought to book and given the strictest punishment."

AICC General Secretary and former Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot condemned the incident and said: "Such a horrific crime is a shame on humanity. We all are with the victim and her family members."

Commentator and right wing activist Rahul Easwar has applauded the Muslim community in Mandsaur for coming forward against the crime and asking for the strictest punishment to the accused.

"Applause and respect to our Muslim leaders in Mandsaur. No place for rape accused in Muslim community graveyard and no prayers will be offered to him on his death - Muslim community leaders on Irfan, the rape accused of Mandsaur," tweeted Easwar tagging a media report on the same.

The incident has sparked protests in different cities across the region in Madhya Pradesh demanding capital punishment for the accused.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday condemned the incident and said that rapists were a "burden on the earth" and his government will leave no stone unturned to ensure that the accused were hanged.



Star-studded trailer launch

Bollywood actors Deep Raj Rana (left) and Deepak Tijori during the trailer launch of the upcoming drama Hindi film 'Saheb, Biwi Aur Gangster 3' in Mumbai, yesterday.

Record number of Hajis despite subsidy removal

IANS

NEW DELHI: The year 2018 that began with the end of Haj subsidy has been marked by a record 175,025 Indians heading for Saudi Arabia and is also distinct for a record 47 percent women among the pilgrims including 1,308 without their 'mehram' (male companion).

"For the first time after the Independence, record 1,75,025 Muslims from India are going to Haj this year. These include record more than 47 per cent female pilgrims," Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said addressing an orientation cum training camp here.

Despite removal of Haj subsidy and various new taxes imposed in Saudi Arabia, a lot of Muslims from India are going to Haj this year that too without any additional financial burden, he said. In fact, the airlines will be getting Rs 57 crore less this year from the passengers.

"Even after ending the Haj subsidy, airlines will be paid Rs 57 crore less... Last year Rs 1,030 crore was paid to airlines as air fare for 1,24,852 Haj pilgrims and this year Rs 973 crore will be paid for 1,28,702 Haj pilgrims going through Haj Committee of India," Naqvi said.

For the first time, choice of embarkation points has been given to Haj pilgrims which has received overwhelming response.

Mumbai's Victorian Gothic and Art Deco on Unesco Heritage list

IANS

MUMBAI: The famed 'art district of south Mumbai' comprising Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles has been named as the latest entrant to the coveted World Heritage sites list, said an announcement by Unesco yesterday.

The decision came on yesterday morning at the ongoing 42nd session of Unesco World Heritage Committee, from June 24-July 4, currently underway in Bahrain.

"Just inscribed as @UNESCO #World Heritage Site: Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai, India. Congratulations," a UNESCO tweet said.

Maharashtra government had first submitted its formal nomination proposal for the UNESCO honour in 2012 for the 'Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai', but it was edged out by other major Indian landmarks.

It was supported by the Centre, the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation, Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority, several NGOs and art bodies, besides the Mumbai Heritage Conservation Committee.

The landmark cricketing ground, Oval Maidan and its neighbourhood are replete with two unique genres of architecture standing cheek-by-jowl, the 19th century Victorian Gothic and 20th century Art Deco style buildings, forming a distinct urban scenario.

Among the Victorian styles are iconic buildings like the Bombay High Court, University of Mumbai, the Maharashtra Police Headquarters building, ranked among the finest in the world.

Most of these buildings in stone were constructed during the late 19th century after demolishing the crumbling walls of the old Bombay Fort.

Pakistan vows to address AML compliance deficiencies

INTERNEWS

KARACHI: Pakistan has vowed to address the strategic deficiencies identified by the global financial system watchdog in the country's compliance with the standards of anti-money laundering (AML) and combating the financing of terrorism (CFT).

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) yesterday said Pakistan provided "a written high-level political commitment to address the identified deficiencies".

"The FATF calls on (Pakistan) to complete the implementation of action plan expeditiously and within the proposed timeframe," said the taskforce that works to identify the risks to the international financial system.

A Pakistani delegation attended the FATF six-day plenary meeting, which concluded yesterday, to submit its action plan to curb money laundering and terror financing. In February, the FATF decided to place the country on its grey list, but Pakistan managed to avert being placed on the black list.

The country was previously part of high risk jurisdictions (blacklist) in 2008 and 2012, while it was under jurisdictions that were making sufficient progress (grey list) in 2010 and 2014. Pakistan was removed from the grey list in 2015.

The FATF said it will closely monitor the implementation of the action plan put forward by Pakistan.

Pakistan vowed to effectively implement "targeted financial sanctions (supported by a comprehensive legal obligation) against all 1267 and 1373 designated terrorists and those acting for or on their behalf, including preventing the raising and moving of funds, identifying and freezing assets (movable and immovable), and prohibiting access to funds and financial services". The country will strengthen enforcement against violations of terror financing services, including administrative and criminal penalties.

Pakistan made a high-level political commitment to work with the FATF and its subgroup Asia Pacific Group to strengthen its AML/CFT regime and to address its strategic counter-terrorist financing-related deficiencies.

The country will demonstrate "that terror financing risks are properly identified, assessed and that supervision is applied on a risk-sensitive basis".

The country is cooperating and taking action to identify and take enforcement action against illegal money or value transfer services.

It is identifying cash couriers and enforcing controls on illicit movement of currency and understanding the risk of cash couriers being used for terror financing.

Pakistan vowed to effectively implement "targeted financial sanctions (supported by a comprehensive legal obligation) against all 1267 and 1373 designated terrorists and those acting for or on their behalf, including preventing the raising and moving of funds, identifying and freezing assets (movable and immovable), and prohibiting access to funds and financial services".

The country will strengthen enforcement against violations of terror financing services, including administrative and criminal penalties and provincial and federal authorities cooperating on enforcement cases.

"The FATF continues to identify additional jurisdictions, on an ongoing basis, that pose a risk to the international financial system," FATF said.

"The FATF and the FATF-style regional bodies (FSRBs) will continue to work with the jurisdictions and to report on the progress made in addressing the identified deficiencies."

Currently, FATF has officially designated 10 countries under high-risk jurisdictions (blacklist) and jurisdictions that are making sufficient progress (grey list).



Afghan President Ashraf Ghani speaks during a news conference in Kabul, yesterday.

Afghan forces resume offensive operations after govt truce ends

AFP

KABUL: Afghan security forces resumed offensive operations yesterday after President Ashraf Ghani declared an end to the government's unilateral ceasefire with the Taliban.

Ghani said the ceasefire, which lasted 18 days after it was extended once and overlapped with the Taliban's unilateral three-day truce for Eid, had been "98 percent successful". "The ceasefire is over. The Afghan security and defence forces are allowed to restart their military operations," Ghani told reporters.

The three days of no fighting were unprecedented in the nearly 17-year conflict and triggered jubilant scenes across the war-weary country.

Taliban fighters and security forces spontaneously celebrated the holiday that caps the holy month of Ramadan, hugging each other and taking selfies.

The militants were also mobbed by relieved civilians, who have borne the brunt of the war, raising hopes of a renewed push for peace talks.

Ghani said the ceasefire had shown that the majority of the insurgents wanted peace and it was the "Taliban's turn to give a positive response".

"I am ready to extend the ceasefire anytime when the Taliban are ready," he said at a press conference.

But the sight of its fighters openly mingling with security forces and civilians over Eid appeared to alarm the Taliban's leaders, who on Sunday ordered their men back to their posts.

The Taliban vowed Tuesday to continue their bloody fight against the government and their foreign backers, brushing aside rising civilian casualties.

The insurgents returned to the battlefield last week after refusing a government request to extend their ceasefire, launching attacks across the country that have seen scores killed or injured.

The renewed violence has poured cold water on hopes the truce would provide a clear path to peace talks, with the Taliban refusing to bow to pressure to lay down their arms until foreign forces withdraw from Afghanistan.

The truces did not extend to the Islamic State group, which has a relatively small but potent presence in Afghanistan, and launched two deadly attacks on ceasefire revellers during Eid.

Musharraf case proceedings likely to be delayed

INTERNEWS

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Lahore High Court Justice Yawar Ali, scheduled to hear the high treason case against former military ruler Pervez Musharraf, will be unable to attend the proceedings as he will be on an official foreign visit.

The LHC chief justice will be on an official visit from July 2 to July 20, postponing next week's hearing against former president Musharraf. Since Justice Yawar's return is days before the election, the delay in hearings is inevitable.

Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Mian Saqib Nisar has nominated Justice Yawar as head of a three-judge special court holding high treason trial of Musharraf on the charges of subverting the Constitution by imposing emergency on November 3, 2007.

According to sources, the CJP has also proposed the name of the Sindh High Court (SHC) Judge Nazar Akbar as a new member of the bench. The third member of the bench is Justice Tahira Safdar of the Balochistan High Court (BHC).

ECP allows extending polling time on election day

INTERNEWS

ISLAMABAD: While the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) yesterday announced extending polling time by an hour for the upcoming general elections, it warned the interim ministers who have not submitted details of their assets that they could be stopped from performing their duties.

The ECP has issued notices to the caretaker ministers, asking them why they should not be restrained from performing their functions for failing to comply with the mandatory legal requirement.

Although the interim prime minister, chief ministers and most members of the caretaker federal cabinet have submitted their statements of assets, defence minister retired Lt Gen Naeem Khalid Lodhi, textile minister Misbah-ur-Rahman and most provincial ministers have yet to file their statements.

Under the law, caretaker ministers, chief ministers and prime minister are required to submit statements of assets and liabilities, including those of their spouses and children, depicting the position as on June 30 last, within three days after assuming responsibilities.

According to the ECP, caretaker PM retired Justice Nasirul Mulk, Punjab CM Syed Hasan Askari Rizvi, Sindh CM Fazlur Rahman, KP CM retired Justice Dost Mohammad Khan, Balochistan CM Alauddin Marri, information minister Barrister Ali Zafar, interior minister Azam Khan, finance minister Shamshad Akhtar, foreign minister Abdullah Hussain Haroon, minister for human rights Roshan Khurshid Bharucha and education minister Mohammad Yusuf Sheikh have filed their statements of assets.

However, none of the ministers from KP and Balochistan interim set-ups have filed their statements of assets, while only one member of the Sindh cabinet and two members of the caretaker Punjab cabinet have submitted their statements of assets so far.

An ECP official said that under the Elections Act, the statements to be made on a specified form would be published in official gazette.



21st Hong Kong handover anniversary

People's Liberation Army soldiers attend a flag raising ceremony at an airbase in Hong Kong yesterday, during an event to mark the 21st anniversary of the Hong Kong handover to China.

Austrian mountaineer dies on Pakistan mountain

AP

ISLAMABAD: One member of a three-man mountaineering expedition has died in an avalanche on a more than 7,000-metre high peak in northern Pakistan, officials said yesterday.

Karrar Haidri, Secretary of Alpine Club of Pakistan, said Austrian mountaineer Christian Huber was killed when an avalanche hit the climbers' tent Friday night during a strong storm at a height of 5,900 metres on Ultar Sar Peak in the Hunza Valley.

Officials said the other two mountaineers in the group, Britons Bruce Normand and Timothy Miller, suffered injuries but were safe and helicopters were being sent to rescue them.

The three-member expedition started in late May and was permitted to go till the first week of July. The team was being managed by Higher Ground Expeditions, a tour operating company in Hunza Valley.

Higher Ground employee Abdul Karim Zouqi said a rescue helicopter will pick up the two survivors once the crew gets a weather clearance to do so. He said the body of the deceased mountaineer and his gear were found and would be brought back.

However, Zouqi said expedition leader Normand emailed him saying the weather was getting worse.

In January, volunteers rescued a French mountaineer stranded on a Himalayan peak but called off efforts to retrieve a Polish climber who was declared dead after a dramatic rescue effort.

Elisabeth Revol and Tomasz Mackiewicz were climbing Nanga Parbat, the ninth highest peak in the world at 8,126 meters (26,660 feet), but called for help.

Four volunteers from a separate Polish expedition set out to find them and managed to reach Revol, a renowned mountaineer who was suffering from frostbite on her feet and could not walk. Poor weather prevented the team from reaching Mackiewicz, who had snow blindness and altitude sickness.

Sri Lanka moves navy unit to Chinese-run port

AFP

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka will move its southern naval command to a port leased to a state-run Chinese firm but China will not use it for military purposes, the prime minister's office said yesterday.

Colombo's announcement will likely raise fresh concerns in New Delhi over China's military potentially getting a foothold in the Indian Ocean through the deep-sea port of Hambantota, which straddles a major east-west shipping route.

"The Sri Lanka navy is moving its Southern Command to Hambantota," Ranil Wickremesinghe's office said.

But it added: "There is no need to be frightened as security of the port will be under the control of the Sri Lanka Navy.

"Sri Lanka has also informed the Chinese that Hambantota cannot be used (by China) for military purposes," it said.

Sri Lanka owes China billions of dollars borrowed for major infrastructure projects, including the Hambantota port.

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CHAIRMAN
SHEIKH THANI BIN ABDULLAH AL THANI

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
DR. KHALID BIN MUBARAK AL-SHAFI
editorinchief@pen.com.qa

ACTING MANAGING EDITOR
MOHAMMED SALIM MOHAMED
m.salim@pen.com.qa

DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR
MOHAMMED OSMAN ALI
osman@pen.com.qa

EDITORIAL

Opec's decision

Opec and its allies' decision to boost oil production starting next month is expected to ease the anxiety of top oil importing countries. Oil prices hit $80 a barrel this year for the first time since 2014, prompting top consuming countries to raise concerns.

In the past week, Opec and its allies agreed on a "nominal" production increase of one million barrels a day. In reality, several ministers said the accord will add a smaller amount of oil to the market -- about 700,000 barrels a day-- because a number of countries are unable to raise their output.

The final communique from the group's meeting in Vienna left many unanswered questions about how the oil will flow to consumers. The document didn't mention the details of the production hike, instead pledged that the group would focus on rolling back the deeper-than-intended cuts from nations such as Venezuela, returning their curbs to the level originally agreed in 2016.

QNB analysts said yesterday that while details of the Opec and Russia (OPEC+) deal on production increase remains cloudy with no formal output targets provided, a supply increase of up to a 1 million barrels per day (bpd) over the next six months looks likely. Partly reflecting the agreement's lack of precision, spot oil prices have been volatile in the aftermath, they said.

In the past week, Opec and its allies agreed on a "nominal" production increase of one million barrels a day. In reality, several ministers said the accord will add a smaller amount of oil to the market -- about 700,000 barrels a day-- because a number of countries are unable to raise their output.

In the US, crude explorers scaled back drilling in the oil fields by the most in three months after the world's top exporters agreed to raise production. US working oil rigs fell by four this week to 858, according to data from Baker Hughes. It was the second straight weekly decline and the largest drop since March.

Kuwait yesterday announced it will raise oil output by 85,000 barrels per day (bpd)starting today, part of an agreement between Opec and non-Opec producers to increase production by one million bpd, Energy Minister Bakhit al-Rashidi told a local newspaper yesterday.

Meanwhile, analysts doubt the OPEC+ group's decision to raise output may not do much to help world's top importing countries. The 600,000 to 700,000 bpd increase can be easily absorbed by the market. Hence, it is unlikely to bring down crude oil prices significantly. If anything, Brent crude prices rose 2.56 percent to nearly $75 a barrel soon after the announcement, indicates that the market had discounted a 1mbpd raise in output and in output and had expected more.

QUOTE OF THE DAY



The ceasefire is over. The Afghan security and defence forces are allowed to restart their military operations. I am ready to extend the ceasefire anytime when the Taliban are ready.

Ashraf Ghani
Afghan President

The Korematsu moment for Muslim Americans



KHALED A BEYDOUN
AL JAZEERA



There have been definitive moments in recent history that have vividly marked what it means to be Muslim in the US today. These are moments when state action, in full candour and force, reveals that the faith practised by at least 3.5 million Americans and 1.8 billion people globally is more of a national security threat than a religion deserving of protection and respect.

June 26, 2018, will forever stand as one of those moments. On that day, with a 5-to-4 vote the United States Supreme Court issued its long-awaited ruling on President Donald Trump's so-called "travel ban", upholding the third rendition of his executive order restricting entry of nationals from seven countries, five of them Muslim-majority.

The majority decision, authored by Chief Justice John Roberts, found that the order was non-discriminatory because religion (Islam) was not explicitly mentioned in its text. Trump's incessant and virulent anti-Muslim rhetoric surrounding the order was ultimately deemed immaterial.

The Supreme Court has inferred religious discrimination (with facially neutral policy) when the target is Christians. This was recently illustrated in the opinion in Masterpiece Cakeshop v Colorado Civil Rights Commission.

The ruling will permanently stand as a living symbol, similar to the Dred Scott and Korematsu decisions holding black people to be property and Japanese Americans to be subversive threats, respectively.

But less than a month later, the court pivoted from that position when the subjects of religious hostility were Muslims, although the evidence of anti-Muslim animus coming from Trump was recurring and robust, and established an intent to discriminate.

Evidence of religious animus the court's majority "failed" to find in the text of the travel ban saturated the context that birthed it, lurid in the statements and slurs of its executive benefactor and the structure of the order that preceded it. Just one week after his inauguration, Trump signed an executive order restricting the entry of immigrants from seven countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. All of them are Muslim-majority countries. Sudan and Iraq subsequently removed from the list and replaced by Venezuela and North Korea, but that doesn't change the fact that the executive order echoed Trump's December 2015 proposal to ban Muslims.

Apart from his vow to impose a Muslim ban, Trump also declared "Islam hates us" on primetime television, re-tweeted anti-Muslim propaganda, and has repeatedly incited anti-Muslim sentiment through his rhetoric and policies.

Trump has never made an attempt to disavow or distance himself from his anti-Muslim pronouncements. Yet the court deemed none of that relevant to the case they were ruling on.

In his justification of the decision, Chief Justice Roberts adopted a textual approach that stripped the facially neutral language of the executive order from its virulently Islamophobic political context, in turn, leveraging textualism as a means to justify religious discrimination at US borders – but also, within them.

In her dissent, Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who voted against the ruling, rightly argued: "Despite several opportunities to do so, President Trump has never disavowed any of his prior invidious statements about Islam. Instead, he has continued to make remarks that a reasonable observer would view as an unrelenting attack on the Muslim religion."

The Supreme Court's ruling is a definitive moment for Muslims because it is far more than a decision impacting immigration policy or the scope of executive authority.

It has become not only a symbolic declaration from the highest court of the land that justifies religious discrimination on account of tenuous national security concerns, but also a decision affirming the conflation of Muslim identity with "terror threat".

As I have written elsewhere , "Dialectical Islamophobia is the process by which structural Islamophobia shapes, reshapes, and endorses views or attitudes about Islam and Muslims."

In this sense, the court's decision ultimately encourages private violence against Muslims. The scope of parties affected by the decision is more than Muslim immigrants travelling from the five Muslim-majority states, but also Muslim citizens and residents living in the United States, who will be made more vulnerable to hate violence and intimidation from Islamophobic elements emboldened by this Supreme Court ruling.

The ruling will permanently stand as a living symbol, similar to the Dred Scott and Korematsu decisions holding black people to be property and Japanese Americans to be subversive threats, respectively. It affirmed the fundamental tenet of Islamophobia: that Islam is inherently violent, alien, and inassimilable, driven by the belief that expressions of Muslim identity foreshadow terrorism.

For those who still claim that "Islamophobia isn't real" or a form of animus embellished by Muslims and their allies, this ruling from the highest court shows they were wrong.

And for Muslims, it will serve as a standing reminder that their religion will mark them, above all, as national security pariahs – whether immigrants travelling from Africa or the Middle East, or US citizens living in communities across the country.

An attack on journalism itself

THE WASHINGTON POST

Friday's Opinion section in the Capital consisted of only 56 words, centered around five names. It was a spare and eloquent – and heartbreaking – tribute to those lost in the tragedy that had befallen this storied newspaper the day before, and to the kind of journalism the newspaper embodies.

The five names were those of the dedicated professionals who came to the Capital's newsroom Thursday for the last time, their lives ended allegedly by a man police say had waged a long-running vendetta against the newspaper. The attacker fired buckshot through the Capital's glass doors, shattering lives in the most horrific assault on journalists in the United States in decades. If there is anything to be thankful for in this carnage, it is that the shooter did not have a gun with a high-capacity magazine that would have enabled him to murder many more.

The victims offered a cross-section of what makes a good local newspaper tick. Wendi Winters personified the local journalist, highlighting the good deeds of local teenagers, covering arts and culture in Anne Arundel County and showing up to local parades. Gerald Fischman was the mild-mannered yet passionate editorial page editor who sought the good argument rather than the easy one. Rob Hiaasen wrote offbeat reflections on life, drawing from decades in newspapering. John McNamara was the old-school veteran reporter who tutored younger generations in good journalism's timeless skills. And Rebecca Smith, a sales associate, helped keep the paper running so that the community would have its news.

These men and women are the face of American newspapering, because community papers are where so much original journalism actually happens. As Post media columnist Erik Wemple noted, there are only 600 journalists in the White House Correspondents' Association but 32,000 editorial jobs at newspapers across the country. The thousands get little credit, less glamour and generally paltry salaries as they cover football games, city council meetings and restaurant openings. But they do essential work.

Friday in Annapolis, like every other day in Maryland's capital, began with a fresh issue of the Capital circulating around town. Along with several pages on the shooting, it included an article on the induction of the U.S. Naval Academy's Class of 2022, a feature on the Meade boys basketball team's longtime coach and a guide to Anne Arundel County's Fourth of July festivities. The commitment to informing the public leaves no time for grief; when tragedy strikes, journalists stare it down and report what they see.

Murdering people for doing this valuable job is particularly despicable. And it came at a time when the president routinely vilifies reporters for doing their jobs. In the past, the country's leaders honored in word and deed the media's crucial role in American society. The final words of the Capital's Friday editorial aptly explain why the latter stance is more appropriate: "Tomorrow this page will return to its steady purpose of offering our readers informed opinion about the world around them, that they might be better citizens."

UN-Myanmar deal on Rohingya offers no guarantees on citizenship




POPPY MCPHERSON & ZEBA SIDDIQUI
REUTERS

Rohingya refugees returning to Myanmar will have no explicit guarantees of citizenship or freedom of movement throughout the country, under a secret agreement between the government and the United Nations seen by Reuters.

The UN struck an outline deal with Myanmar at the end of May aimed at eventually allowing hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims sheltering in Bangladesh to return safely and by choice, but did not make the details of the deal public.

Agencies reviewed a copy of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) agreed between the UN and Myanmar authorities. The draft also leaked out online.

Citizenship and rights of refugees who return to Myanmar were key points of contention during negotiations over the agreement to restore access to conflict-ravaged Rakhine state for UN agencies that have been barred since last August.

The MoU states "returnees will enjoy the same freedom of movement as all other Myanmar nationals in Rakhine State, in conformity with existing laws and regulations".

However, it does not guarantee freedom of movement beyond the borders of Rakhine or address the laws and regulations that currently prevent Rohingya from travelling freely, according to the text seen by Reuters.

Refugee leaders and human rights groups say the agreement fails to ensure basic rights for the Rohingya, some 700,000 of whom have fled a military crackdown some Western countries have called "ethnic cleansing".

"As it stands, returning Rohingya to Rakhine means returning them to an apartheid state – a place where they can't move around freely and struggle to access schools, hospitals and places they rely on for work," said Laura Haigh, Amnesty International's Myanmar researcher. "Nothing in this document provides any guarantees that this will change."

The UNHCR, the UN's refugee agency, has previously called the MoU a "first and necessary step to establish a framework for cooperation" with the government.

Myanmar government spokesman Zaw Htay and Social Welfare Minister Win Myat Aye did not answer multiple phone calls seeking comment. The director of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, and Population said he was not authorised to comment and directed enquiries to the permanent secretary, who did not answer the phone.

Reuters confirmed the contents of the MoU with sources at two international non-governmental organisations. The May 30 draft seen by Reuters was written a day before the deal was signed, but the phrasing of key sections was consistent with a background briefing by UNHCR for diplomats and NGOs also seen by Reuters, and a letter from UNHCR explaining the agreement delivered to refugees in Bangladesh.

Rights groups and aid agencies said the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the UN Development Programme, which spent months negotiating the deal, had not won strong concessions from the Myanmar government, especially on the key issues of citizenship and freedom of movement.

A UN spokeswoman said its policy was "not to comment on leaked documents".

"UNDP and UNHCR and the government of Myanmar continue the discussion about publicly releasing the text of the MoU," the spokeswoman said in an emailed statement.

Buddhist-majority Myanmar does not recognize the Rohingya as an indigenous ethnic group and so denies citizenship to most. The government refers to them as "Bengalis", a term they reject as it implies they are interlopers from Bangladesh even though many trace their roots in the country back generations.

The MoU, which does not refer to refugees as Rohingya, requires the government to "issue to all returnees the appropriate identification papers and ensure a clear and voluntary pathway to citizenship for those eligible".

But most Rohingya leaders say they will not return without guarantees of citizenship and reject the National Verification Card, an alternative identity document Myanmar has been pushing them to accept, saying it classifies life-long residents as new immigrants and does not allow free travel.

On Monday, Reuters reported a senior Myanmar official told Western diplomats that a proposal to review a citizenship law that effectively renders Rohingya stateless could not be implemented.

"We are very angry with this MoU," said Mohibullah, chairman of the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights, a Rohingya organisation based in the refugee camps in Bangladesh. "It does not mention the term Rohingya. Also it says free movement within Rakhine state, but that is very difficult for us."

He said Rohingya had been told by UNHCR officials that the agreement was solely about granting access to northern Rakhine for aid agencies. "We will not accept this MoU."





JOHN LLOYD
REUTERS

The politics of World Cup football fever

Would fans lay down their lives for football? Bill Shankly, the legendary football player and Liverpool manager, once famously said he was "disappointed" with the idea that the sport was a matter of life and death. "I can assure you," he said, "it is much, much more important than that." It was a Scotsman's dry wit, meant to both mock and at the same time recognise the passionate tribalism – for the club, for the national side – of many fans. If policy makers and commentators think tribalism is over, the millions – billions – of members of the huge world football community know it is not. For them, group identity is the stuff, and the staff, of life. And in the nearly 60 years since Shankly cracked the joke, it has only become more intense.

Tribalism, writes the Yale law professor Amy Chua, is grossly underrated in politics and international affairs. Analysts and politicians overlook the fact that, in many places, "the identities that matter most – the ones people will lay down their lives for – are not national but ethnic, regional, religious, sectarian, or clan-based." The World Cup is now being played across Russia's vast expanse, and already we know who will stay in for the second round, who will go. Germany is out. England, where the game was invented, has had a mostly thin time since beating West Germany, in 1966 – for its only tournament win – so far. This time, however, it has remained in.

And it did so triumphantly, achieving the so-far highest score of 6-1 over Panama. Back home, where football commentators had approached the Cup with un-illusioned, if patriotic, resignation, hope begins to spring that England could... who knows? (A 0-1 defeat on Thursday evening at the hands of Belgium has been discounted, since manager Gareth Southgate, secure in the knowledge that England would go on to the second round whatever the score, rested his best players.) And if the country does win, or even reaches the semi-finals, what boost would that give to an embattled Prime Minister Theresa May, now seeking to manage a cabinet at war with itself. And what joy was there when, already 5-0 down, Panama scored a lonely goal against England, the first Panama had ever scored in the World Cup. More than a compensation, it was an assertion of nobility in defeat.

Italians I know, not given to fancy, believe that the country's failure even to qualify for the Cup was a large – perhaps the largest – influence on the electorate's choice to humiliate the political establishment by voting for upstart populist parties, now in government. Italy, after all, had won the Cup four times. Commentators, with apparent seriousness, compared it to the huge slaughter of Italian troops by the Austro-Hungarian army at Caporetto, in World War One.

The only nation which has won more cups (5) than Italy is Germany; it is, still, the reigning champion, having beaten Argentina 1-0 in the dying minutes of the World Cup's 2014 final, bringing a weary-looking Chancellor Angela Merkel to her feet in joy – this after beating the hosts 7-1 in the semi-finals. Judge, then, the national horror when, on Wednesday, Germany was beaten 2-0 by South Korea, not, until now, one of football's great names.

No joy for the chancellor that day – and even less for the coach, Joachim Low, with whom she has a strong friendship. Both are outsiders, both strong-willed. But while Low can mourn, and consider his future (or have it considered for him) the chancellor had to turn up the next day for a summit of European Union leaders in Brussels.

There she had to face huge pressure from her Interior Minister, Horst Seehofer, to tighten Germany's refugee policies. From the other aside, she faces huge pressure from French President Emmanuel Macron to agree to a much more comprehensive plan for economic governance than she has so far been able to stomach, but towards which she is gradually moving – though many, many German economists believe the Macron plan to be dangerous. A deal on resettling refugees more equably across the Union to relieve the pressure on Italy was reached only at 5 am Thursday. For the moment, with few details known, it seems fragile.

Politicians at Merkel's level live on little sleep, on constant tension and need boosts of energy to remain in command. The German loss on Wednesday denied the chancellor such a boost. The Financial Times opined that Merkel's weariness, and the new sense of fragility around her, would be blamed on the World Cup debacle – while Theresa May "has much to gain" if England's squad acquits itself well.

Football is the most tribal of sports, fostering passionate adherence which, at extremes, can spill over into violence. In Glasgow, fights routinely break out between fans of Rangers and those of Celtic – most recently in March of this year. The feuds go back to the end of the 19th century, to the time when Catholic Irish workers came to Glasgow for work, and were seen as taking the jobs, or lowering the pay, of the largely Protestant indigenous workforce. Fueled by the Catholic-Protestant troubles in Northern Ireland, the hatred has proven hard to eradicate.

Yet at the same time the sport is the most universal of languages, spoken everywhere – with a major exception, till recently, being the United States. The academic Laurent Dubois writes that football is "life," "endless" and "sensual," his recent book a paean of praise which goes some way to underpinning Bill Shankly's joke that football is more important than life or death.

At the other end of the addiction to football is the growth of statistics and analytics of the game's moves and possibilities – so that, as the British journalist Leo Robson writes, "the game's store of inherited anecdotes and ingrained habits is gradually being replaced by data collection and the study of things like a player's "expected goals – moments that, based on the nature of the scoring opportunity, should have produced a goal but didn't."

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The Peninsula

D-RING ROAD
POST BOX: 3488
DOHA - QATAR
editor@pen.com.qa

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OFFICE
TEL: 4455 7741 / 767
FAX: +974 4455 7758

MANAGING EDITOR
TEL: 4462 7505

DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR
TEL: 4455 7769

LOCAL NEWS SECTION
TEL: 4455 7743

BUSINESS NEWS SECTION
TEL: 4462 7535

SPORT NEWS SECTION
TEL: 4455 7745

ONLINE SECTION
TEL: 4462 7501
info@pen.com.qa

PUBLIC RELATIONS
TEL: 4455 7613
pr@pen.com.qa

ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT
TEL: 4455 7837 / 780
FAX: 4455 7870
adv@pen.com.qa

CLASSIFIED DEPARTMENT
TEL: 4455 7857
adv@pen.com.qa

SUBSCRIPTION & DISTRIBUTION
TEL: 4455 7809 / 839
FAX: 44557819
info@tawseelqatar.com

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Divers progress in search for missing Thai children

AFP

MAE SAI, THAILAND: Rescue divers reached several kilometres inside a flooded cave yesterday where 12 boys and their football coach have been trapped for a week, offering a flicker of hope for the harrowing search.

There has been no contact with the boys, aged 11 to 16, and their coach since they went into the Tham Luang cave last weekend and were hemmed in by heavy rains that blocked the entrance.

The desperate, round-the-clock search for the team has been beset by torrential downpours that submerged tunnels near the entrance, blocking divers from going in.

But Navy SEAL divers reached a T-junction in the depths of the cave just two or three kilometres from where the boys are believed to be, Chiang Rai Governor Narongsak Osottanakorn said.

Divers reached the same spot earlier in the week but were forced back by rushing floodwaters.

This time, divers planted bottles of oxygen along the tunnel walls so swimmers navigating the muddy pools with almost no visibility could stay under for longer.

Navy SEAL divers reached a T-junction in the depths of the cave just two or three kilometres from where the boys are believed to be, Chiang Rai Governor Narongsak Osottanakorn said.

Water levels inside the complex labyrinth of tunnels finally dropped thanks to dozens of pumps set up to drain the floods even as heavy rain continued to pound the area near the Myanmar and Laos borders.

"The situation is better today than yesterday and the day before. Water has receded considerably and we are pumping out water in all chambers (near the entrance)," Narongsak told reporters.

As the search for the boys hit its seventh day, attention turned to their chances of survival inside the cave with little or no food and light.

The group likely has access to fresh water — either dripping in through rocks or rushing in through the entrance — but experts warned that runoff water from nearby farms could carry dangerous chemicals or bacteria.

"If they drink the water in the caves and it makes them sick it could hasten the problem that they are in, but if they don't drink it then they are also in trouble," Anmar Mirza, coordinator of the US National Cave Rescue Commission, said.

But even without food he said young, athletic boys could "easily live for a month or a month and a half" with the main challenge their mental resolve.

"The biggest issue that they are facing right now if they are alive is psychological because they don't know at what point they might get rescued," Mirza said by phone from the US state of Indiana.

he dramatic week-long rescue has galvanised the nation and prompted emotional outpourings online from well-wishers praying for their safe return.

Cartoon images of the smiling boys being found by divers circulated along with messages for the team: "Stay Strong, We are Coming" and "Don't Give Up".

Teams of foreign experts, including more than 30 US military personnel, have descended on the remote mountainous site to join some 1,000 Thai rescuers.

Australian, Chinese and Japanese experts also joined efforts. "We have the skills of cave rescue and rope rescue so we can try to do something for the children," James Wang, from China's Green Boat Emergency Rescue, said.

Several teams trekked into the thick jungle above the cave desperately looking for new openings that might lead to the trapped boys. One team was drilling into a 40-metre chimney that led to a muddy chamber, which the governor described as a "promising" lead.

But there was still no indication it linked to the main cave complex.

"We have been rotating our staff into the chimney since yesterday, they are inside... still searching and we are waiting for their findings," Surachai Thathes, chief of the parks ministry rescue team for northern Thailand, said.

Another chimney was discovered nearby and helicopters carrying food, water and medical supplies were dispatched to the area.

But the main priority was trying to reach the boys through the main entrance, Governor Narongsak said.

Earlier in the day medics and police staged practice drills to prepare for the quick and complex evacuations that will be required if and when the boys are found. Stone-faced relatives kept vigil under a makeshift tent near shrines where monks are leading prayers near shrines overflowing with offerings.



Soldiers and rescue workers carry out a simulated rescue operation during a drill, near the Tham Luang cave complex, as a search operation continues for members of an under-16 soccer team and their coach, in the northern province of Chiang Rai, Thailand, yesterday.

Cambodian strongman's son assumes powerful military roles

AFP

PHNOM PENH: The son of Cambodia's long-serving Prime Minister was promoted to two senior military posts yesterday as his father looks to widen his family's influence.

The move comes just weeks before elections that veteran Cambodian leader Hun Sen is expected to easily win given the main opposition party has been dissolved. Hun Sen, who has ruled for 33 years, is accused of trying to build a political dynasty by priming his three sons for top posts.

Yeserday his eldest son Lieutenant General Hun Manet was promoted to acting chief of joint staff and commander of the army headquarters, according to defense ministry spokesman Chhum Socheat.

The 40-year-old West Point trained officer will keep his current roles as head of the defence ministry's anti-terrorism unit and the deputy commander of Hun Sen's personal bodyguard unit.

He will soon be promoted to a four-star general, a required status for the jobs.

The defence spokesman said Hun Manet's promotion was merit-based and not because of his family name.

"There is nothing strange, his promotions have been made based on his qualifications and experience in the army," Chhum Socheat said yesterday.

Several others were moved in the military shuffle, including military police commander-in-chief Sao Sokha who was appointed acting supreme commander of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces.

Two others — Pol Saroeun and Kun Kim — stepped down from their senior military roles to run for parliament in the July 29 vote.

Both are close allies of Hun Sen and were among 12 generals accused in a Human Rights Watch report this week of carrying out rights abuses, war crimes and crimes against humanity for decades to prop up Hun Sen.

"These 12 men are the backbone of an abusive and authoritarian political regime over which an increasingly dictatorial Hun Sen rules," the reports said.

They were accused of "violations of human rights, war crimes, and crimes against humanity committed from the 1970s to the present," it said.

"Most of the 12 have been implicated in the use of unnecessary, excessive, and sometimes lethal force against protests about unfree and unfair elections, land confiscations, labour abuses, and low wages." The Cambodian ministry of defense denied the HRW's allegations, calling it a "deranged report".

Hun Sen's second son Hun Manit is the head of a powerful military intelligence unit and his youngest Hun Many is a parliamentarian who oversees the ruling party's far-reaching youth movement.

Malaysia considers amending human trafficking law after US report

REUTERS

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's new government said yesterday it is considering amending laws on human trafficking and migrant smuggling just days after the U S State Department reported a lack of progress in the country's efforts to counter trafficking in the past year.

The Home Ministry said proposals under discussion focused on protecting victims, by giving them more freedom of movement and work, and introducing stiffer penalties for traffickers.

On Thursday, the U S State Department released its annual Trafficking In Persons (TIP) report, in which downgraded Malaysia to the Tier 2 Watch List, a category denoting nations that deserve special scrutiny, noting that the Southeast Asian country had failed to demonstrate stronger efforts than the previous year.

The report said victim protection efforts by the government remained largely inadequate and that complicity among law enforcement officials hampered some anti-trafficking efforts.

"The Malaysian government... takes note of the report on human trafficking and is fully committed to eradicating human trafficking crimes," Home Ministry said.

A new government, led by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, was formed last month, as Malaysians voted for change after nearly ten years of being led by Najib Razak's scandal-tainted administration.

Malaysia has long been known as a destination for trafficking victims, including documented and undocumented workers.

It relies heavily on cheap foreign labour from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines, among other countries. It has nearly 2 million registered migrant workers, but there are millions more in the country without work permits.



Republican leader's salute

President of Les Republicains right-wing party Laurent Wauquiez waves during the national council of Republicains in "Palais de l'Europe" in Menton, southeastern France, yesterday.

Great white shark spotted off Spain in decades first

AFP

MADRID: A great white shark was spotted in waters off Spain's Balearic Islands this week in what is the first such sighting by scientists in at least 30 years, a marine conservation group said yesterday.

The Alnitak group captured footage of the shark, which it said was five metres (16 feet) long, on Thursday in the seas off Cabrera island and followed it for over an hour, it said on its Facebook page, posting a picture.

"In the past years there have been possible unconfirmed sightings and various rumours, but this is the first scientific verification of the presence of a Carcharodon (great white shark) in Spanish waters in at least 30 years," it wrote.

Alnitak said the shark was spotted as scientists were on a mission to get information on sea turtles, sperm whales, dolphins, manta rays and red tuna.

The team is also looking for the presence of tiny pieces of plastic debris in the sea.

Russian women fear later-life hardship from pension reform

AFP

MOSCOW: Russian government plans to raise the pension age have sparked a rare outpouring of anger, not least among women who say it will cause hardship at a stage of life when they already struggle to work.

On the day the first football fans descended on Russia for the World Cup, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev announced plans to increase the age by eight years to 63 for women and five years to 65 for men.

Critics immediately complained that with men's life expectancy at 66, many may not live long enough to get their pensions.

But Russian women are angry for another reason: once in middle age, they will struggle to find work to tide them over for the extra years without a pension.

"It's very hard to find a job as a woman over a certain age. Women are scared of being left without a pension or a job," said Muscovite Tatiana Volochkova, 57.

She receives a state pension of 17,000 rOubles ($269) but continues to work as an accountant.

Many women say the eight-year rise in their retirement age is disproportionate.

"A gradual reform is probably necessary but not with such a big difference (in the rise) between men and women," Volochkova said.

Valentina Zholkina, 44, has been unsuccessfully looking for a job in Moscow for two years.

The company she used to work for shut down while she was on maternity leave. Now she says employers are put off by her age.

"In private, they say that after a certain age, it's not right for women to sit behind a banking counter," she said.

Zholkina said that older men can take temporary physical work if they are short of money.

But older women struggle to get employed even in low-paid jobs. Receiving a pension at 55, she said, at least gave them a safety net.

Anna Nesterova, a 50 year-old Moscow-based designer, said the pension reform could also affect young families as Russian grandmothers play a larger role in bringing up children than in the West.

Spanish boat saves 60 migrants but Italy locks its ports

AP

MADRID: A Spanish rescue boat plucked 60 migrants yesterday from a patched-up rubber dinghy in the Mediterranean Sea near Libya, igniting another political row between Italy and Malta over who should let the aid boat dock.

The vessel, Open Arms, run by Spanish aid group Proactiva Open Arms, said it rescued the migrants – including five women, a nine-year-old child and three teenagers — after it spotted a rubber boat patched with duct tape floating in the sea. All the migrants appeared in good health.

Italy's right-wing Interior Minister Matteo Salvini quickly declared that the rescue boat "can forget about arriving in an Italian port" and claimed the boat should go to Malta, the nearest port.

But Malta swiftly pushed back, with its interior minister contending that the tiny Italian island of Lampedusa, south of Sicily, was closer to the boat.

The Open Arms is the third rescue ship operated by humanitarian groups in the central Mediterranean to come into the crosshairs of Salvini's crackdown in the last three weeks.

Even though the number of migrants arriving in Europe is sharply down this year from 2017, the topic of migration has deepened political divisions in the European Union, fuelled in part by the demands of anti-migrant nationalist parties.

The vessel, Open Arms, run by Spanish aid group Proactiva Open Arms, said it rescued the migrants. But Italy's right-wing Interior Minister Matteo Salvini quickly declared that the rescue boat "can forget about arriving in an Italian port" and claimed the boat should go to Malta.

Salvini has vowed that no more humanitarian groups' rescue boats will dock in Italy, where in recent years, private rescue vessels have brought many of the hundreds of thousands of migrants saved from smugglers' boats.

But cracks have started showing between the two parties in Italy's new populist coalition government over Salvini's hard-line approach.

Roberto Fico, president of Parliament's lower chamber and a leading figure in the 5-Star Movement, the ruling coalition's senior partner, told reporters after inspecting a migrant reception center in a Sicilian port town that "I wouldn't close the ports." Fico told reporters that Libya now "isn't a place with security" and its coast guard "needs the support of the Italian navy and coast guard and also from some NGO boats."

He urged more solidarity toward the migrants, who he said have "dramatic stories that touch the heart." Salvini contended Saturday on Twitter that the Open Arms had taken on the migrants before a Libyan boat in Libya's search-and-rescue zone could intervene.

But the Open Arms' captain, Marco Martinez, said he told the Rome-based Maritime Rescue Coordination Center about the migrants and was instructed to call Libyan maritime authorities, who didn't answer either by phone or by radio. The captain said officials in Rome then told him it was up to him to decide whether to carry out the rescue.

A journalist aboard a nearby rescue vessel, the Astral, when the dinghy was spotted reported that a Libya coast guard vessel approached the Open Arms, but just as it neared the rescue, it made a U-turn and left, ordering the Open Arms to return to Spain.

Malta's Interior Minister, Michael Farrugia, tweeted a sharp retort to Salvini.

"Quit spreading incorrect news, dragging Malta into it for no reason," he wrote, attaching a map that he said indicated the rescue occurred in Libya's search-and-rescue area and in waters between Libya and the Italian island of Lampedusa.

A day earlier, a Spanish aid boat reported that it was called off rescuing a boat in trouble by Italy's coordination center, which said the Libyan coast guard would handle it. The Libyan coast guard rescued 16 people, but another 100 migrants were reported missing and feared dead at sea.

While politicians bickered, those rescued by the Open Arms were jubilant, jumping, chanting and hugging their rescuers.

A 9-year-old boy's eyes sparkled when the Open Arms crew referred to him as "captain" after he was allowed to sit in the captain's seat on the bridge for a few minutes. Krisley Dokouada from Central African Republic was rescued along with his parents.

Others rescued yesterday included six Libyans and people from Mali, Eritrea, Egypt, Bangladesh, South Sudan and Guinea.



Migrants intercepted aboard two dinghies off the coast in the Strait of Gibraltar, rest after arriving on a rescue boat at the port of Tarifa, southern Spain, yesterday.

Bavarian CSU welcomes Merkel's migration deals

REUTERS

BERLIN: Bavaria's premier welcomed deals on migration brought back from Brussels by Angela Merkel, giving the clearest signal yet that his party was prepared to back down in a standoff with the German chancellor that has risked bringing down her government.

In a document sent to the leaders of her coalition partners, Merkel listed 14 EU countries, including some of those most outspoken in their opposition to her open-door refugee policy, which had indicated they were prepared to take back migrants.

A separate deal was struck with Spain and Greece.

"It goes in absolutely the right direction," Bavarian premier Markus Soeder said on Saturday, taking credit for keeping up the pressure for a deal.

The leadership of Bavaria's CSU conservatives, working to claw back voters lost to a far-right party before regional elections in October, is meeting on Sunday to decide whether to accept the concessions Merkel secured.

A refusal to do so could rupture the party's 70-year alliance with Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU), depriving her of a majority in Europe's economic powerhouse.

The dispute over how to handle migration has plunged Merkel's three-month-old "grand coalition" into crisis and weakened the conservative leader, who has served for nearly 13 years, forcing German officials to scramble to try to reach deals with individual EU members.

The agreements, hammered out during through-the-night talks at an EU summit in Brussels, would speed up the process of repatriating refugees whose presence in the EU was first recorded in those 14 countries.

Under the separate deal with Greece and Spain, Berlin agreed to take refugees in the two countries who wanted to be reunited with family members already in Germany. In return, the two countries will take from Germany some people regarded as migrants, not refugees.

The document also proposed establishing reception centres in Germany for refugees arriving at the border with Austria who had earlier been recorded entering another European country, allowing them to be subjected to an accelerated asylum assessment process.

The country by country agreements or statements of intent are separate from the broader summit conclusion to share out refugees arriving in the bloc on a voluntary basis and create "controlled centres" inside the EU to process asylum requests.

But substantial confusion remained over what the 14 countries had agreed to, with Hungary's government spokesman Zoltan Kovacs denying that any agreement had been made with Budapest.

"No such deal has been reached," Kovacs said when asked about the document, which says the 14 countries have "consented on a political level" to making such an agreement.

Under the EU's Dublin convention, largely overlooked since Merkel's 2015 decision to open Germany's borders, asylum seekers must lodge their requests in the first EU country they set foot in

Moorland fire in north England spreads, major incident declared

REUTERS

LONDON: Fires on moorland outside the northern English city of Manchester intensified yesterday, prompting authorities to declare a major incident.

Hot weather and wind over the last week have sparked fires in parts of the northern English countryside — unprecedented in recent times in an area better known for its rainy weather.

"A major incident has been declared as the fires on Winter Hill and Scout Road near Bolton have merged," Greater Manchester Police said in a statement, referring to an area roughly 12 miles northwest of the city.

"We strongly urge motorists and pedestrians to adhere to all road closure signs as they are there for your safety."

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service said it had around 120 personnel battling wildfires in seven areas between Tameside to the east of the city, and the Winter Hill area to the northwest.

There have been no reports of casualties.

Earlier in the week the army was called in to help battle another fire on Saddleworth Moor, which spans the area between Manchester and Yorkshire.



Demonstrators hold placards during a march in support of the National Health Service, in central London, yesterday.

Crowds fill London streets for NHS anniversary demo

AFP

LONDON: Thousands of people braved hot weather yesterday to march through London to "celebrate and demonstrate" over Britain's National Health Service (NHS) ahead of its 70th anniversary next week.

Protesters gathered from noon in the capital's West End district before walking to Westminster, the country's political heart, demanding more investment in public healthcare and better working conditions for staff.

Under blazing sunshine, wielding banners and placards reading "health over wealth" and "NHS SOS," they also railed against the privatisation of some services under the Conservative government of Prime Minister Theresa May. As temperatures hit nearly 83 degrees Fahrenheit and the marchers passed Downing Street, loud boos rang out.

Happy birthday songs dedicated to the NHS could be heard at other points. The march, coordinated by various groups including trade unions, was held to mark the 70th anniversary of the NHS's founding on July 5.

Valerie Bossman-Quarshie, a Labour Party activist, said she wanted to give the NHS a "really good cheer" as she held a birthday card for staff to be signed by passing demonstrators.

Belgium names square after Congo independence hero Lumumba

AFP

BRUSSELS: Brussels inaugurated a square named after assassinated Congolese independence hero Patrice Lumumba yesterday in what campaigners called Belgium's first major step towards tackling its dark colonial legacy.

Hundreds of supporters cheered as campaigners and officials unveiled a blue plaque bearing Lumumba's name in the square, which is at the entrance to the Belgian capital's largely Congolese Matonge area.

It is the first public area in the former colonial power to honour Lumumba, who was killed in 1961 in an incident in which Belgium itself was implicated along with the CIA and British intelligence.

"Today, in the heart of Brussels, by inaugurating Patrice Lumumba Square, we are starting to write our own history," Brussels mayor Philippe Close, who had backed the campaign for a formal honour for Lumumba, told the crowd. "I want this to be an illustrious day that you will keep in your hearts," the socialist mayor said.

After a rousing series of speeches at an inauguration ceremony attended by Lumumba's family members under blazing hot sun, live music played throughout the afternoon in celebration.

Campaigner Leslie Makoso hailed the "noble and just battle" for a square to honour Lumumba and said it was a victory for "multiculturalism and pluralism".

But she also railed against the exploitation of the Democratic Republic of Congo's rich natural resources by "neocolonialism".

Several speakers criticised the fact that statues to Belgium's King Leopold II are still visible everywhere in Brussels, despite the horrors of his brutal rule over the Congo in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Other statues to colonialist figures in Brussels still honour the "heroes" who "brought civilisation to the Congo".

The Congolese community in Brussels has been campaigning for years for some kind of memorial to Lumumba.

The gesture comes on the 60th anniversary of the 1958 Brussels Expo, which included a "Congolese village" — effectively a human zoo — that was meant to show Belgium's colonial power.

Lumumba became the first democratically-elected prime minister of the former Belgian Congo after it won independence in 1960 Popular at home, he was considered too pro-Soviet by the Americans and was assassinated on January 17, 1961, at the age of 35, with the alleged complicity of the CIA, Britain's MI6, and Belgian intelligence.





Immigration activists hold signs against family separation during a rally to protest against the Trump Administration's immigration policy, outside the White House in Washington, yesterday. RIGHT: Demonstrators carrying signs, including one reading "Save America", march during the "Families Belong Together" rally in Boston, Massachusetts.

Thousands in US march against immigration policy

AFP

WASHINGTON: Thousands of demonstrators, baking in the heat and boiling mad against US immigration policy, marched across the country yesterday to protest the separation of families under President Donald Trump's hardline policy.

Dubbed "Families Belong Together," the demonstration in Washington began at Lafayette Square where crowds gathered directly across from the White House before a planned march toward the Capitol.

In New York, families, young people, children and the elderly — both recent arrivals and long-time citizens — all stood under a burning sun as part of a protest which a police officer said already numbered "a couple of thousand". "Say it loud, say it clear, refugees are welcome here," they chanted, also declaring a welcome for Muslims.

A band of drummers whipped up the fervor of a crowd carrying signs including, "Our New York is Immigrant New York", and "No Cages, No Ban, No Wall". "Abolish ICE", said another sign, reflecting growing calls by activists for abolition of the country's frontline immigration enforcement agency.

Starting in early May, in an attempt to staunch the flow of tens of thousands of migrants to the southern US border every month, Trump ordered the arrest of adults crossing the boundary illegally, including those seeking asylum.

Many trying to cross the US-Mexico frontier are destitute people fleeing gang violence and other turmoil in Central America. As a result of Trump's crackdown, distraught children were separated from their families and, according to widely broadcast pictures, held in chain-link enclosures, a practice that sparked domestic and global outrage.

Trump later signed an order ending the separation of families but immigration lawyers say the process of reuniting children and their parents will be long and chaotic. About 2,000 children remain split from their parents, according to official figures released last weekend.

A band of drummers whipped up the fervor of a crowd carrying signs including, "Our New York is Immigrant New York", and "No Cages, No Ban, No Wall". "Abolish ICE", said another sign, reflecting growing calls by activists for abolition of the country's frontline immigration enforcement agency.

Yesterday's protests also come after the US Supreme Court on Tuesday handed Trump a major victory by upholding his ban that mostly applied to travelers from five primarily Muslim nations. Julia Lam, 58, joined the New York protest with two friends and their young children in strollers.

Lam is a mother and a retired fashion designer who emigrated from Hong Kong in the 1980s. "I think it's really cruel to separate kids," she said. "I am angry. I'm very sad already with what is going on with our country. I just don't see how a human being would do such a thing." Courtney Malloy, 34, a lawyer, said it was important to show support for immigrants and that administration policies are "not America".

"This is not what we stand for and this is not OK, and we will not stand here and watch our country be torn apart and watch babies be torn from their mothers," she said, holding a sign that said, "The Only Baby Who Belongs in a Cage is Donald Trump".

More than 500 women, including a member of Congress, were arrested on Thursday in the US Capitol complex protesting Trump's immigration policy. Yesterday's demonstrations were expected to be the biggest yet. Trump has made fighting immigration — both illegal and legal — a major plank of his "America First" policy agenda.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) makes arrests and otherwise enforces the administration's immigration crackdown, but an emerging coalition of politicians, activists and pro-immigrant protesters has begun calling for the dismantling of ICE.

Critics say the agency has treated some would-be immigrants cruelly and unfairly. "Occupy ICE" camps have been set up in several US states. One of the first voices to call for the abolition of ICE was New York Democratic gubernatorial candidate Cynthia Nixon. She has since been joined by New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, who told radio station WYNC, "You need some kind of agency to deal with immigration, but ICE is not that"; and by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, also of New York, who in a tweet called ICE "a cruel deportation force".

Yesterday morning Trump tweeted support for ICE, saying "radical left Dems want you out. Next it will be all police. Zero chance, it will never happen!" The political backlash against ICE is so intense that members of the agency's criminal investigative division have asked Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen to split them off as a separate agency, The Washington Post reported on Thursday.

The Post said the request came from the majority of special agents in charge of the Homeland Security Investigative Division, which handles transnational investigations related to counterterrorism, narcotics and human trafficking.

Trump to announce Supreme Court pick on July 9

AFP

BEDMINSTER: President Donald Trump has said that he will announce his nominee to be the next US Supreme Court justice on July 9, a decision with momentous implications for the country's future.

"I've got it narrowed to about five" candidates, including two women, Trump told reporters traveling with him on Air Force One as he headed to New Jersey. "I like them all," Trump said.

A slot on the nine-member bench is opening after Justice Anthony Kennedy announced his retirement this week.

For years, the conservative has served as the tie-breaking vote on some of the country's biggest cases, siding with liberals on issues such as abortion, gay rights and granting constitutional rights to terror suspects held at Guantanamo Bay.

In nominating his successor, Trump has the opportunity to shift the high court decisively to the right for decades to come, and a monumental battle over the process is already brewing. And Kennedy was not the eldest member of the court — liberal stalwart Ruth Bader Ginsburg is 85, and has indicated she has no intention of retiring.

Experts and lawmakers alike have said the fate of American women's rights might be at stake, with a conservative new justice potentially providing enough support to overturn the landmark 1973 court ruling upholding abortion rights.

But Trump said he would not directly probe the candidates about their position on the Roe v. Wade decision.

"I'm not going to ask them that question," Trump said. But during the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump had vowed to seek to place a "pro-life justice on the court." Three women currently serve on the bench: Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan. All were appointed by Democratic presidents. A fourth woman on the court would be a US record.

Trump has said he will pick Kennedy's successor from a list of 25 people, many of whom are young judges in their 40s or 50s. Six women are on the list, including Seventh Circuit Judge Amy Barrett, age 46, and 10th Circuit Judge Allison Eid, 53. Both were being closely vetted, Politico said, citing a person familiar with White House thinking on the nomination.

Choosing a female justice might help soothe concerns among the two most moderate Republicans in the senate, both of whom are women. Republicans hold a narrow 51-49 majority in the chamber and Trump can ill afford any defections. One possible nominee who is not a judge is Senator Mike Lee, a 47-year-old conservative Republican who earlier worked in private legal practice and as an assistant US attorney.

Should Trump announce his pick as advertised, it would mark just 13 days since Kennedy's announcement. By contrast, then-president Barack Obama took more than a month after the February 2016 death of conservative justice Antonin Scalia to nominate a replacement, Merrick Garland. A confirmation vote for Garland was never held, as Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell determined it was too close to the presidential election.



Policemen patrol the streets of Mexico City ahead of presidential election today.

Mexico votes today amid fears, warnings of possible fraud

AP

MEXICO CITY: The specter of possible fraud rears its head in Mexico each electoral campaign, both in the popular imagination and among candidates on the ballot. This year has been no exception.

With leftist candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador holding a wide lead in most polls, his allies are warning even before today's presidential vote that there better not be any funny business.

"They shouldn't dare commit a fraud, because if they do they will meet the devil," Yeidckol Polevnsky, president of the candidate's Morena party, said this week. "We will not accept it." This is Lopez Obrador's third try for the nation's top office, and he alleged fraud twice before after losses in 2006 and 2012. After his first race, which was decided by just 0.56 percent and went to conservative Felipe Calderon, Lopez Obrador's supporters mounted a protest camp that snarled traffic and hurt businesses for months along a 5km stretch of road in the heart of the capital.

This time around some supporters again fear that dirty tricks could be employed to keep him from office, even as authorities and outside observers say the possibility is remote. "The chances of not winning exist because of the system that has in place for years," said Antonio Lopez, a street vendor in Mexico City and Lopez Obrador supporter.

Such fears have a basis in history. For most of the 20th century, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, dominated virtually all aspects of politics and held the presidency uninterruptedly for seven decades until 2000, and then regained it in 2012. Dead people voting, vote-buying, theft or burning of ballots, threats of violence, rigged counting, particularly in remote areas – over the years it's all been seen.

In recent weeks, officials confirmed armed assaults to steal ballots in three southern states, while a coalition of non-governmental groups monitoring the campaign said vote-buying schemes and threats to cut off social programs have targeted entire communities.

The groups said all the political parties have been guilty, but that most of the activity was on behalf of the PRI. On Tuesday, police in Mexico City seized the equivalent about $1m in pesos from two men who were allegedly delivering the cash to PRI headquarters.

Maryland capital mourns victims of newspaper shooting

AFP

ANNAPOLIS: Flowers, a notebook, a newspaper tied with white ribbon: These are some of the items placed at a makeshift memorial near the newsroom where a gunman shot dead five people in the US city of Annapolis.

The shooting rocked Annapolis — the capital of Maryland — a city of less than 40,000 residents where employees of the small local newspaper are known to many. "The people who worked here are our friends, our neighbours, our colleagues, so it's sort of like a part of us has been taken with their death as well," said Christine Feldmann.

"This paper represented everything great about this country: Democracy and community. And to think someone would try to stop that and murder five innocent people is just horrific and makes me feel very hopeless, unfortunately." She placed flowers on the memorial in a commercial area and a lingering police presence following the shooting.

On Thursday, a gunman armed with a shotgun and smoke grenades blasted through the door of the Capital Gazette, then killed four journalists and a sales assistant.

The suspect has been identified as Jarrod Ramos, who had a long-standing grudge against the paper over a 2011 article about a criminal harassment case brought against him by a former high school classmate.

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Qatar's foreign investment law could be a 'game changer'

MOHAMMAD SHOEB
THE PENINSULA

The draft-law, which has already received Cabinet approval early this year, aims at accelerating economic development and industrial diversification as part of Qatar's long term vision.

DOHA: The draft-law on foreign investment which will allow non-Qatari businesses to have 100 percent capital in companies in all sectors of the economy is set be a "game changer" for the Qatari economy. The most awaited piece of law, which aims to boost FDI inflow, has already started evoking huge response from the potential foreign investors.

Interviews and enquiries with several Doha-based businesses leaders, investors and experts representing different countries from Asia, Europe and North America suggest that investors are anxiously waiting to know more about the new law. Before finalising their investment decisions they are keen to understand the exact details of the draft-law after its final nod.

The draft-law, which has already received Cabinet approval early this year, aims at accelerating economic development and industrial diversification as part of Qatar's long term vision.

"The draft-law opening the Qatari economy for 100 percent non-Qatari capital is going to be a game-changer for the local economy as well as the entire region. Within weeks after the Qatari government announced about the law we started receiving calls from Mexican companies and investors asking more details about the upcoming law," Juan Cepeda, Director of ProMexico (Middle East), the trade and investment promotion arm of the Ministry of Economy told *The Peninsula*.

Cepeda added: "The investors are very keen to understand the impact of the new law on the local economy. It's been just a few weeks since the economy minister announced about the law, and we at the embassy are getting enquiries and calls from potential investors."



FROM LEFT: Gustaf Hannerz, Deputy Head of Mission at Swedish Embassy in Qatar; Juan Cepeda, Director of ProMexico (Middle East), Mexican Embassy in Qatar; and KM Varghese, President of the Indian Business & Professional Council (IBPC).

The draft-law regulating foreign investment came in line with the directives of the Amir HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to attract foreign capital by 100 percent in all activities and economic and commercial sectors.

A top official of a Doha-based flagship forum of Indian businessmen and professionals which also actively works in promoting and facilitating trade and economic relations between Qatar and India, echoed similar views.

"The decision of Qatar Government to allow 100 percent FDI in all sectors of the economy will no doubt prove to be a boon for the Qatari economy."

→ CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Al Kaabi meets US Secretary of Energy, Congress members

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Petroleum President & CEO Saad Sherida Al Kaabi met in Washington with US Secretary of Energy Rick Perry.

Discussions during the meeting centred on various aspects of bilateral energy cooperation between the United States of America and the State of Qatar, particularly in the LNG industry.

Al Kaabi and the accompanying delegation also held talks with the Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Energy Resources, Francis R. Fannon, which tackled energy cooperation between Qatar and the United States.

Qatar Petroleum's CEO held similar talks, on the sidelines of his participation in the World Gas Conference, with a number of Representatives in the US Congress and their assistants, who included member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee Rep. Joe Barton, member of the House Ways and Means Committee Rep. John Larson, member of the House Armed Services Committee and House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Rep. Rick Larsen, member of the House Agriculture Committee and House Education and the Workforce Committee Rep. Rick Allen, and member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and House Veterans' Affairs Committee Rep. Gus Bilirakis.

Similar meetings were held with the Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee Rep. Greg Walden, and member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee Rep. Richard Hudson.

Al Kaabi also met with member of the House Appropriations Committee and its subcommittees on Defense and Homeland Security Rep. Henry Cuellar, and member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and its subcommittees on Energy and Health Rep. Kurt Schrader.

Discussions during the meetings centered on issues of mutual concern, foremost of which was the energy industry and Qatar's partnerships with American companies in the fields of exploration and natural gas production.

Al Kaabi also met in Washington with Paik Ungyu, the Minister of Trade, Industry and Energy in the Republic of Korea and senior officials at the ministry for a wide-ranging discussion of bilateral cooperation in the field of energy.



Qatar Petroleum President and CEO Saad Sherida Al Kaabi with US Secretary of Energy Rick Perry.

Al Kaabi's meetings in the American capital also included a number of discussions with Presidents and CEOs of leading American energy companies, including ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips, and Occidental Petroleum.

Kuwait to raise oil output by 85,000bpd from today

REUTERS

RIYADH: Kuwait will raise oil output by 85,000 barrels per day (bpd)starting today, part of an agreement between Opec and non-Opec producers to increase production by one million bpd, Energy Minister Bakhit Al Rashidi told a local newspaper yesterday.

"Kuwait will raise its oil production from tomorrow to 2.785 million barrels, a daily increase of 85,000 compared to May, based on last week's production cut agreement," Al Rashidi told Arabic-language daily Al Rai.

Opec agreed with Russia and other oil-producing allies this month to raise output from July by about 1 million bpd. Saudi Arabia plans to pump up to 11 million bpd in July, and Russia has said it could increase output by more than 200,000 bpd.

Oil prices hit $80 a barrel this year for the first time since 2014, prompting consumers like the United States to raise concerns.

The output increases come as the US has urged some Opec members to raise output to compensate for supply losses caused by renewed US sanctions on Iran.

US President Donald Trump said in a tweet yesterday that Saudi Arabia's King Salman had agreed to his request to increase oil production.

Iran urges foreign firms to resist US sanctions 'threats'

AFP

TEHRAN: Iran yesterday urged foreign firms working in Iran to resist US "threats" of sanctions, adding it was in talks with French car makers about staying on in the country.

"All (foreign) companies working in Iran should not be intimidated by US threats and should continue their activities in Iran," Industry Minister Mohammad Shariatmadari **(pictured)** told a news conference in Tehran. "All those who do not do this, we will replace them. There are others who will invest in Iran," he said.



When asked specifically about the case of French vehicle manufacturers PSA, maker of Peugeot, Citroen and DS; and Renault, Shariatmadari said: "Until now, they have not told us that they are not continuing" their business in Iran.

"They are continuing their cooperation. So far, we are talking (with these groups) and there is nothing new," he said.

US President Donald Trump announced on May 8 that Washington was withdrawing from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, effectively starting a countdown for the reimposition of sanctions lifted under the accord.

Sanctions on the automobile sector are set to be reinstated on August 6.

PSA, through its automotive equipment subsidiary Faurecia, and Renault, through its alliance with Japanese manufacturer Nissan, could take a heavy hit from the reimposed penalties.

Between the two, Renault and PSA sell nearly half of all new cars registered in Iran.

With the deadline looming, the two French groups have adopted different communication strategies.

Renault has ambiguously said it would not abandon its activities in Iran, but would "sharply reduce operations" in the country without endangering the company's "interests".

QIB launches 'Absher Rewards Program'

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB) has announced the launch of its new comprehensive 'Absher Rewards Program'. Under this programme, all QIB customers will earn Absher points as an appreciation of their banking relationship with QIB.

All QIB customers will earn Absher points when they transfer their salaries, open fixed deposit accounts, use their QIB Debit and Credit cards, and QIB Mobile App and Internet Banking. Absher points will be instantly redeemable through QIB Absher online portal where customers can choose to book their flight tickets from over 900 airlines, book a room from over 450,000 hotels and rent a car from more than 150,000 car rental offices in 150 cities worldwide.

They will also have access to the online shopping store "infishop" specialised in redeeming points with thousands of products across different categories, such as electronic items, books, sports and household items from leading brands. Products will be home delivered anywhere in Qatar.

Additionally, the QIB Absher Rewards program will not have any blackout dates or restrictions, which means that QIB customers can redeem their points and enjoy all the benefits at their preferred season and time.

"At QIB, we put the customer at the heart of everything we do. The Absher Program is our way of celebrating this relationship and rewarding them for their trust and loyalty," said D Anand, QIB's General Manager, Personal Banking Group.



"This programme is an ongoing proposition that will be regularly updated with new partners and benefits responding to our customers' evolving needs and preferences."

With the new programme, QIB customers will gain access, through an easy and simple registration process, to an online portal created specifically to view and redeem the points they have earned.

The redemption process is completely automated online.

MarketWatch

QSE	FTSE100	DOW	BRENT
9,024.03	7,636.93	24,468.16	$74.17
+95.29 PTS	+21.30 PTS	+252.11 PTS	+0.72
1.07%	0.28%	1.04%	Dow & Brent before going to press

Novartis plans spinoff of Alcon division, $5bn share buyback

AFP



GENEVA: Swiss pharmaceutical giant Novartis said it planned to cut loose its Alcon eye care division, and aimed to buy back $5bn of its own shares by the end of 2019.

Novartis said that by spinning off Alcon, it would be able to better focus on its pharmaceutical business.

At the same time, Alcon "would become a publicly traded global medtech leader based here in Switzerland," Novartis chairman Joerg Reinhardt **(pictured)** said in a statement.

"Our strategic review examined all options for Alcon ranging from retention, sale, IPO to spinoff," he explained.

"The review concluded that a spinoff would be in the best interests of Novartis shareholders," he said, adding that the Novartis board planned to seek shareholder approval at its 2019 general assembly.

The deal will also need the approval of competition authorities.

When Novartis snapped up Alcon in 2011, the eye care firm comprised of three divisions: surgery, vision care and ophthalmic pharmaceuticals.

But two years ago, Novartis transferred Alcon's ophthalmic pharmaceuticals unit in-house. That business, which last year raked in sales of $4.6bn, will remain part of the Swiss giant going forward.

"The Alcon Division is now fully focused on surgical and vision care, and continues to be the global leader in eye care devices," Novartis said.

The Swiss company meanwhile said it planned to start buying back $5bn in shares.

It said the purchase would be largely funded through proceeds of its divestment to GlaxoSmithKline of their consumer health joint venture, which was announced in March and is expected to rake in $13bn.

Following the announcement, Novartis saw its share price soar 3.18 percent to 74.72 Swiss francs a piece in mid-morning trading, as the Swiss stock exchange's main SMI index rose 1.44 percent.

China factory activity slows in June

AFP

BEIJING: Chinese factory activity slowed in June, dropping from an eight-month high the previous month official data showed yesterday, missing expectations as the world's second largest economy faces the prospect of a trade war with the US.

The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), a key gauge of factory conditions, came in at 51.5 in June, decelerating from 51.9 in May, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said.

Although the numbers indicate a slowdown, they held comfortably above the 50-point mark that separates expansion from contraction and were higher than the NBS's average reading of 51.3 for the first half of the year.

The declining figures come as trade tensions with the US have cast a shadow on China's export-oriented manufacturing sector, with both sides threatening potentially damaging tariffs on billions of dollars worth of goods.

While large-scale enterprises continued to expand in June, small and medium-sized businesses are experiencing contraction, NBS analyst Zhao Qinghe noted, with both groups dropping below the 50 point mark.

Activity at small and medium-sized businesses dropped 0.2 to 49.8 and 1.1 points to 49.9 respectively.

Qatar's foreign investment law could be a 'game changer'

→ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

"It's in line with the very pragmatic approach the leadership of this country had been taking recently on many fronts", said KM Varghese, the President of the Indian Business & Professional Council (IBPC).

Varghese added: "As far as the Indian business community is concerned, we being the largest and most resourceful, this openness will a boost for a lot of Indian businessmen operating already in Qatar. IBPC would definitely use this opportunity to attract more Indian companies, technocrats and investors from India to Qatar."

The IBPC, which works in close cooperation with the Indian embassy in Doha, and India's largest industry chambers, such as FICCI and CII, also noted that Indian businesses look forward to necessary regulations to safeguard interests of the investors to be in place quickly.

"A fair and balanced business ecosystem where all stake holders would get a level playing field, which ultimately would spur the economic growth of our beloved host country, Qatar is what I would look forward to," said the IPBC president.

Gustaf Hannerz, Deputy Head of Mission at Swedish Embassy in Qatar said that Sweden are positive to allow foreign investors to have 100 percent capital in more sectors in the Qatari local economy for several reasons.

"First of all we truly think such a reform would be beneficial for the development of Qatar's economy. Sweden is ranked 7 in the world in 'competitiveness' and second in 'innovation'. We wouldn't have reached this position without meeting international competition. Second of all Sweden is strong proponent of free and fair trade and we see an open economy as important part of that. Trade and investment links countries together", Hannerz told this newspaper.

He added that Sweden has established a Chamber of Commerce in Qatar and one of its main purposes is to build upon the steadily growing business and investment ties between Sweden and Qatar. "A more open Qatari economy is of course something the chamber and its members can benefit from together with their Qatari key business partner."

US tariffs on EU cars may hit investment there: BMW

REUTERS

BERLIN: US tariffs on imported cars could lead BMW to reduce investment and cut jobs in the United States due to the large number of cars it exports from its South Carolina plant, the German carmaker has warned.

President Trump's administration last month launched an investigation into whether auto imports posed a national security threat and Trump has threatened to impose a 20 percent tariff on all imports of EU-assembled cars.

"The domestic manufacture of automobiles has no apparent correlation with US national security," BMW wrote in a letter to US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross this week, adding that imposing duties would not increase US growth and competitiveness.

The BMW plant in South Carolina is its largest globally and ships more than 70 percent of its annual production to other export markets, the company said. Chinese tariffs on US passenger cars, imposed in retaliation for US duties on Chinese goods, have already hiked up the cost of exporting to China, BMW said.

Any US tariffs would likely lead to further retaliatory measures from China and the European Union.

In addition, higher tariffs on components imported to the United States would make other production locations outside the country more competitive.

"All of these factors would substantially increase the costs of exporting passenger cars to these markets from the United States and deteriorate the market access for BMW in these jurisdictions, potentially leading to strongly reduced export volumes and negative effects on investment and employment in the United States," BMW said in the letter.

Two major auto trade groups, one representing BMW among others, had earlier this week said that imposing up to 25 percent tariffs on imported vehicles would cost hundreds of thousands of jobs, dramatically hike prices on vehicles and threaten industry spending on self-driving cars.

"By insulating the United States from foreign competition, there is less incentive for American companies to strive to raise their productivity and look for ways and means of producing ever better goods (and services) ever more cheaply," BMW said.

Indonesia central bank aggressively raises rates by 50bps to defend rupiah

REUTERS

JAKARTA: Indonesia's central bank on Friday raised its benchmark rate by twice as much as the market expected, becoming the most hawkish Asian central bank as it ramps up efforts to defend the volatile rupiah and stem a sell-off washing across emerging markets.

Bank Indonesia (BI) hiked the 7-day reverse repo rate by 50 basis points (bps) to 5.25 percent. A Reuters poll projected a 25 bps increase.

Friday's hike was Indonesia's third in six weeks and comes as more vulnerable markets saw a sell-off intensify this week on a range of factors from rising oil prices to a trade war embroiling China, the United States and other leading economies.

"The decision on interest rates is a continuation of BI's pre-emptive and front-loading in keeping the competitiveness of the domestic financial market," said Governor Perry Warjiyo.



Bank Indonesia Governor Perry Warjiyo reacts before media briefing at Bank Indonesia headquarters in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The Governor of BI, which has now outpaced the two hikes by the Philippines and one by India, also said he expected the 50 bps increase "will attract inflows, especially in fixed income. The inflow through government bonds should raise dollar supply and support rupiah stability." Still, Warjiyo said, the central bank will continue to intervene in forex and bond markets to help prop up the rupiah.

Gareth Leather of Capital Economics said the rate increase is unlikely to be the last as "the two main factors responsible for the slide in the rupiah – rising risk aversion and treasury yields – look set to continue for a while longer".

In ANZ's view, "whether the aggressive decision will be enough depends on the broader global environment. At this point, BI will likely remain highly responsive to market volatility." In 2016 and 2017, BI cut its benchmark rate a total of 200 bps in a bid to boost sluggish lending and economic growth.

It has now raised the benchmark rate 1 percentage point in six weeks. After the second of two May hikes, the rupiah recovered to 13,830 rupiah per dollar, but then fell again. On Friday, just before the BI announcement, the currency was at 14,410 - a 2-1/2 year low - and it strengthened to 14,300 afterward. The rupiah has been rattled by expectations of higher US interest rates and oil prices, plus worries about global trade and growth. The currency is among the worst performers among Asian units this year, after the Indian rupee and Philippine peso, losing around 5.8 percent against the dollar.

After Friday's increase, 10-year government bond yields remained quoted at 7.816 percent, around the lowest since January 2017. In April and May, Southeast Asia's largest economy saw about $1.75bn leave its sovereign bond markets as foreign investors reviewed exposure to higher-yielding emerging markets. There was an inflow of about $36m this month, as foreign ownership of government debt dipped to around 38 percent from nearly 40 percent.

In the stock market, foreigners have been net sellers of nearly $3.5bn of Indonesian shares this year. Also on Friday, in a bid to spur more lending for housing, BI eased downpayment requirements for mortgage loans.

The central bank will remove the roughly 15 percent downpayment it required for first-time homebuyers, as well as ease a rule preventing the use of bank loans to fund partially-built houses.

"Property is one of the leading sectors that can support the economy, and has a multiplier effect," said Warjiyo.

David Sumual, an economist at Bank Central Asia, said the move help meet demand for real estate that is there "as long as the purchasing power is maintained. But it takes time. The effect will be seen at the end of this year."

Opec deal looks to maintain oil's sweet spot: QNB

THE PENINSULA

With global GDP growth approaching a 7-year high of close to 4% this year, global oil demand is gaining at an annual rate of around 1.4 millionbpd.

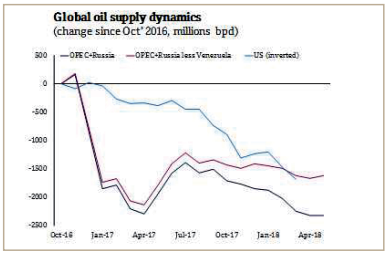
DOHA: While details of just-concluded Opec and Russia (Opec+) deal on production increase remains cloudy with no formal output targets provided, a supply increase of up to a 1 million barrels per day (bpd) over the next six months looks likely. Partly reflecting the agreement's lack of precision, spot oil prices have been volatile in the aftermath, QNB's noted in its weekly 'economic commentary', yesterday.

The background to the decision to lift production is, of course, Opec's agreement to reduce and then freeze its output by 1.2 million bpd from October 2016 levels with several non-Opec members (primarily Russia) weighing in with a further 600k bpd of cuts. These reductions were spurred by the cocktail of then sluggish global demand and surging US shale supply which was leaving to a supply glut, surging inventories and benchmark prices tumbling below $40/b.

Fast forward 18 months and the output cuts, which were extended to mid-2018, have helped restore balance to the oil market, QNB analysts said. OECD inventories have pulled back towards longer-run norms and spot prices are back above $70/b. In fact, with Brent crude recently briefly touching $80/b, prices are in danger hitting levels that could crimp global demand and spur a global capex wave that could reignite severe downside risks over the longer haul. The desire to keep oil prices relatively stable around current levels, which are close to a sweet spot, therefore underpins Opec's decision to relax its output curbs.

But while the 'Opec+' deal has certainly played a role in returning the oil market to health, it has not been decisive. Over the period of the deal, US oil output has continued to surge. In fact since October 2016, US supply has surged by almost 1.7 million bpd to over 10.4 million bpd; a close to 20 percent increase.

The US's supply surge would have completely nullified the impact of the 'Opec+' deal had the cuts in reality not been substantially deeper than intended.



Rather than the combined 1.8 million bpd agreed reduction, the group's output has actually fallen by over 2.3 million bpd vs. October 2016. The key driver of 'over-compliance' has been the collapse of Venezuelan output which has slumped by some 700k bpd; more than 600k bpd than its agreed commitment! Even with the unprecedented slump in Venezuelan output and Opec's resulting 'over-compliance', supply factors have not been decisive in the oil market's recovery. Key has been booming global demand. With global GDP growth approaching a 7-year high of close to 4 percent this year, global oil demand is gaining at an annual rate of around 1.4 million bpd.

Opec and Russia's willingness to increase production would seem to reflect confidence that at least two of these three key factors: buoyant global oil demand and further short-run supply disruptions will remain in place. Venezuelan output could easily fall further, risking a spike in spot prices north of $80/b unless other Opec members pump more. In its recent 2019 forecast, the authoritative International Energy Agency (IEA) warned that Venezuelan output could still plunge by a further 550k bpd.

The other potential supply disruption facing Opec, according to QNB, is the risk of renewed US sanctions removing Iranian barrels from the market. The IEA also estimates that Iranian output could be curbed as much as 900k bpd based on the impact of previous sanctions. While the IEA's estimates should probably be treated as a worst-case scenarios, the spectre of Venezuela and Iran supply disruptions looks to have been key to Opec's decision to try to lift aggregate production back to agreed levels and heading off the risk of even greater 'over-compliance'.

While short-run supply dynamics are a clear upside risk, demand prospects are becoming more uncertain. While booming US GDP growth shows little sign of slowing for now, euro-zone growth momentum has palpably cooled off in recent months. China too is showing clear signs of slowdown with recent retail sales and industrial data disappointing. And the rising threat of a global trade war increases downside risks to the world economy in 2019.

Lastly, the third and final defining feature of the global oil market of recent years – booming US shale supply – looks set to remain in force. Average breakeven rates for shale producers continue to drift towards $50 per barrel; well below spot WTI prices. The surge in 'drilled but uncompleted wells' over the last year attests to the potential for further hefty output increases.

The Permian basin in Texas and New Mexico is the region delivering the most explosive supply gains and with the greatest future potential. But in the short-term, production bottle-necks, particularly a lack of pipeline capacity, are limiting the flow out of the region. New pipeline projects are under way but a decisive increase in the Permian's 'takeaway' capacity looks unlikely until 2019H2, suggesting a lag before the next wave of US shale supply hits global markets.

The outlook for oil prices remains highly uncertain reflecting the interplay of short-run supply disruptions, still firm but slowing global demand and booming US supply. Opec's historic decision to lift production would seem to prioritise the first factor and damping short-term upside risks.

But, with global demand now cooling and supply bottlenecks in the Permian basin eventually easing, downside risks still dominate on a longer-term horizon. Accordingly, QNB's oil price assumptions continue to target Brent crude averaging $69/b in 2018, slipping to a $66/b average in 2019.

Ontario Premier Ford chooses Fedeli for Finance Minister

BLOOMBERG



TORONTO: Doug Ford, sworn in as premier of Ontario on Friday, picked a former advertising executive and long-time politician to be finance minister of Canada's most populous province. Victor Fedeli **(pictured)** will run a department charged with reining debt in the province that's projected to reach C$325bn ($247bn) in fiscal 2018-19, or 37.6 percent of gross domestic product. T

The province's debt ballooned from about 27 percent in 2003 when the Liberal Party took power and now ranks among the largest for a sub-sovereign borrower in the world.

Ford's Progressive Conservatives won a majority in an election earlier this month, ending 15 years of Liberal Party rule.

Fedeli, who ran his own advertising firm and was previously mayor of North Bay in northern Ontario, was the Conservative's shadow finance minister in opposition. Other cabinet ministers include Christine Elliott for health and long-term care and deputy premier, Peter Bethlenfalvy as president of the Treasury Board and Greg Rickford, minister of energy, northern development, mines and Indigenous affairs.

BREAK TIME

CROSSWORD

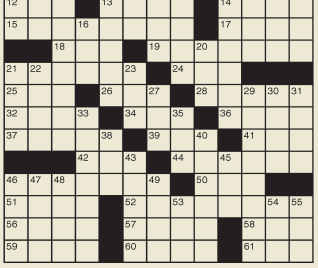
ACROSS
1 — -la-la
4 Red-tag event
8 Pealed
12 Entanglement
13 Goatee's spot
14 Country singer Jackson
15 Adams and Van Buren
17 Lady of Spain
18 Neither mate
19 IRS examiner
21 Clan-related
24 Historic time
25 Plopped down
26 Vagrant
28 Trite
32 N. Mex. neighbor
34 Understood
36 Online auction site
37 Lubricate anew
39 Zing
41 Luau instrument
42 Royal insomnia cause
44 Radio components
46 Violent storm
50 — -di-dah
51 Screenwriter James
52 Cabbage variety
56 Afrikaner
57 Wry Bombeck
58 Fluffy neckpiece
59 Bygone fliers
60 Entryway
61 Hostel

DOWN
1 Former Delta rival
2 Civil War soldier
3 From the start (Lat.)
4 Ornamental beetle
5 Sashimi fish
6 Oscar-winner Kedrova
7 Follow
8 Give off, as heat
9 Oodles
10 iPod variety
11 Growl
16 Sailor
20 Hosp. workers
21 Despot
22 Scarce
23 Schlep
27 Clear the deck?
29 Middle Eastern capital
30 Huron, for one
31 Spuds' buds
33 Sleeping bag closers
35 Slugger Williams
38 Shelter
40 Column
43 Queried
45 Crew tool
46 Bar bills
47 Swelled heads
48 Bump into
49 Matador's foe
53 Med. plan option
54 "— voyage!" Author Fleming
55

Solution time: 24 mins.

S	K	I	■	R	O	A	M	■	S	O	A	R
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A	L	A	■	P	R	I	M	A	R	I	L	Y
M	O	X	I	E	■	■	E	B	B	■	■	■
■	■	■	C	A	P	S	■	C	E	D	E	D
M	I	G	H	T	I	L	Y	■	T	E	T	E
O	N	A	■	S	T	E	E	D	■	B	A	N
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T	A	L	E	S	■	T	R	Y	A	■	■	■
■	■	■	C	O	O	■	■	E	B	E	R	T
U	N	C	A	N	N	I	L	Y	■	L	O	O
Z	A	N	Y	■	E	L	E	E	■	B	O	O
I	N	N	S	■	S	K	I	D	■	E	M	T

Yesterday's answer 6-28



NOVO Pearl Qatar

Ocean's Eight (2D/Thriller) 10:00am, 12:15, 02:30, 04:45, 07:00, 09:30, 11:45, 8:00, 10:15, & 12:20am
Sicario 2: Day Of The Soldado (2D/Action) 11:00am 01:30, 04:00, 06:30, 09:00 & 11:30pm; **The Incredibles (2D/)** 10:00am, 12:30, 3:00 & 5:30pm; **Leilet Hana Wa Srour (Arabic)** 10:00am 2:00, 6:00, 10:00 & 11:59pm; **Abla Tamtam (2D/Arabic)** 12:00, 04:00 & 8:00pm; **Book Club (2D/Thriller)** 11:00am, 04:00, 09:00pm; **Deadpool 2 (2D/Action)** 1:15, 6:15 & 11:15pm; **Sgt. Stubby: An American Hero (2D/Animation)** 10:00am, 12:00, 2:00 & 4:00pm **Blood Money (2D/Thriller)** 6:00, 8:00, 10:00 & 11:59pm **Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom (2D/Action)** 10:00am 2:45, 7:30, & 11:59pm; **Adrift (2D/Action)** 12:45, 5:30 & 10:10pm **Escape Plan 2: Hades (2D/Action)** 10:00am 12:10, 2:20, 4:30, 6:40, 8:50 & 11:00pm; **The Incredibles (2D/IMAX)** 10:00am & 6:00pm; **Deadpool 2 (2D/IMAX)** 12:30pm & 8:30pm.

MALL

Asuravadham (Tamil) 2:30; **The Incredibles 2 (2D/Animation)** 4:45pm; **Sanju (2D/Hindi)** 2:00, 4:30 & 9:00pm; **Sgt. Stubby: An American Hero (2D/Animation)** 3:00pm;**Kuttan Pillayude Sivarathri (2D/Malayalam)** 4:45 & 11:30pm; **Karma (2D/Arabic)** 7:00 & 9:00pm; **Ocean's Eight (2D/Thriller)** 7:00, 9:00 & 11:45pm. **Escape Plan 2: Hades (2D/Action)** 7:15pm; **Sicario 2: Day Of The Soldado (2D/Action)** 9:30pm.

LANDMARK

The Incredibles 2 (2D/Animation) 2:15 & 5:00pm; **Sanju (2D/Hindi)** 4:30, 6:00 & 11:15pm; **Kuttan Pillayude Sivarathri (2D/Malayalam)** 2:30 & 11:30pm; **Sgt. Stubby: An American Hero (2D/Animation)** 3:00 & 4:30pm; **Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom (2D/Action)** 4:45pm; **Escape Plan 2: Hades (2D/Action)** 7:15pm; **Ocean's Eight (2D/Thriller)** 7:15 & 9:15pm. **Karma (2D/Arabic)** 8:45pm; **Sicario 2: Day Of The Soldado (2D/Action)** 9:00pm; **Blood Money (2D/Thriller)** 11:15pm

FLIK Mirqab

Dead Pool 2 (2D/Action) 2:40, 5:05, 9:30 & 7:35; 07:05 pm; 12:20 am **Incredibles 2** 11:00, 1:30, 4:00, 6:30 & 7:00pm **Jurrasic World: Fallen Kingdom (2D/Action)** 12:35, 3:10, 5:45, 6:30; 8:20, 11:00, 11:30; **Karma** 3:55 & 10:00pm; **Kuttan Pillayude Sivarathri (2D/Malayalam)** 10:35, 1:10, 3:45, 6:20, 8:55 & 11:30pm; **Maya The Bee** 11:20am; **Ocean's Eight (2D/Thriller)** 10:50, 1:05, 10:00, 9:05,11:20pm; **Sanju (2D/Hindi)** 5:10pm

6-28 CRYPTOQUIP

VSKC N HYZKX GKNRL VNR RSDMKB UCLD N VDDBKC GDF, RDOKGDBJ KFHXNUOKB "JDZ'MK HYNLKB N ODCRLKY!"

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals M

ROYAL PLAZA

Sanju (2D/Hindi) 2:00 & 11:30pm; **Sgt. Stubby: An American Hero (2D/Animation)** 2:15 & 3:45pm; **The Incredibles 2 (2D/Animation)** 2:30 & 5:15pm; **Karma (2D/Arabic)** 4:45 & 9:00pm; **Russia vs Spain (Live)** 5:00; **A Woman In The Time Of Blockade - Qatari (2D)** 7:15pm **Ocean's Eight (2D/Thriller)** 7:30 & 11:30pm; **Escape Plan 2: Hades (2D/Action)** 7:15 & 9:30pm; **Croatia vs Denmark (Live)** 9:00; **Sicario 2: Day Of The Soldado (2D/Action)** 11:30pm; **Kuttan Pillayude Sivarathri (2D/Malayalam)** 11:30pm

ASIAN TOWN

Sanju (2D/Hindi) 1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 10:00, 10:30pm
Abraham's Santhathikal (2D/Malayalam) 12:30, 3:00, 5:30, 8:00, 10:30pm; **Kuttan Pillayude Sivarathri (2D/Malayalam)** 1:00, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 11:00pm **Asuravadham (Tamil)** 12:30, 3:00, 8:00pm & 1:15am; **Tik Tik Tik (Tamil)** 5:30pm

ROXY

Escape Plan 2: Hades (2D/Action) 8:30, 5:30; 3:00;
Karma (2D/Arabic) 9:40; **The Incredibles 2 (2D/Animation)** 3:00;
Kuttan Pillayude Sivarathri (2D/Malayalam) 3:40;
Ocean's Eight (2D/Thriller) 3:00pm 1; **Sanju (2D/Hindi)** 8:00pm

AL KHOR

Sanju (2D/Hindi) 6:00, 9:00 & 12:00am
The Incredibles 2 (2D/Animation) 1:00 & 3:30pm
Asuravadham (Tamil) 1:00; 6:15 & 11:30pm
Escape Plan 2: Hades (2D/Action) 4:30 & 11:45pm
Kuttan Pillayude Sivarathri (2D/Malayalam) 3:45 & 9:00pm;
Sicario 2: Day Of The Soldado (2D/Action) 2:00 & 9:15pm.

Note: Programme is subject to change without prior notice.



Asuravadham (English: Demon vanquishing) is a Tamil action drama thriller film based on rural areas written and directed by Maruthupandian and produced by Leela Lalitkumar.

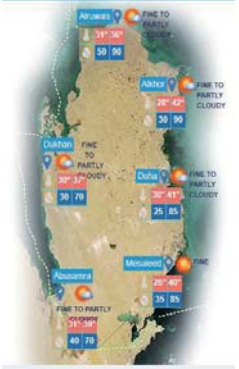
VILLAGGIO & CITY CENTER



PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR	03. 18 AM		
SHOROOK	04. 47 AM		
ZUHR	11. 38 AM	MAGHRIB	06. 30 PM
ASR	03. 01 PM	ISHA	08. 00 PM

WEATHER TODAY

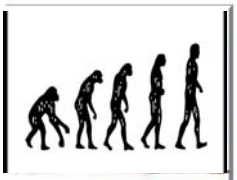


31°C Minimum | **40°C** Maximum

Misty to foggy at places at first becomes hot daytime with some clouds and humid by night.

HIGH TIDE 05:45 - 19:30 LOW TIDE 02:30 - 11:30

Courtesy: Qatar Meteorology Department



Today in History

July 1, 1858

▲ Charles Darwin's theory of evolution was first presented in public when his papers were read at a meeting of the Linnean Society in London

1991: East European leaders met in Prague to dissolve the Warsaw Pact

2000: The Øresund crossing linked Sweden and Denmark for the first time since the Ice Age

2004: Saddam Hussein appeared in an Iraqi court charged with crimes including the gas attacks on the Kurdish village of Halabja in 1988

2010: China's Huning Intercity High-Speed Railway opened between Shanghai and Nanjing

Picture: Newscom © GRAPHIC NEWS





Defence Minister patronises mass marriage ceremony in Darfur

Under the patronage of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs, H E Dr Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah, a mass marriage ceremony for 2,000 couples was celebrated at Darfur, under an initiative which is a part of the peace process, stability and voluntary repatriation programmes. The initiative is supported by Qatar and Sudan. The ceremony was attended by the Chief of Colleges and Institutes Authority, Major General Hamad bin Ahmed Al Nuaimi, Assistant of Sudan President, Dr Faisal Hassan Ibrahim, and Governor of South Darfur State, Engineer Adam Al Faki.

Do you know what your kid's doing on that smartphone?

AP

CHICAGO: Ayrial Miller is clearly annoyed. Her mother is sitting with her on the couch in their Chicago apartment, scrolling through the teen's contacts on social media.

"Who's this?" asks Jennea Bivens, aka Mom.

It's a friend of a friend, Ayrial says, and they haven't talked in a while. "Delete it," her mom says. The 13-year-old's eyes narrow to a surly squint. "I hate this! I hate this! I hate this!" she shouts.

Yes, Bivens is one of "those moms," she says. The type who walks into her daughter's bedroom without knocking; the kind who tightly monitors her daughter's phone. She makes no apology. Nor should she, says a retired cybercrimes detective who spoke to her and other parents in early June at Nathan Hale Elementary School in Chicago.

"There is no such thing as privacy for children," Rich Wistocki told them. Other tech experts might disagree. But even they worry about the secret digital lives many teens are leading, and the dreadful array of consequences – including harassment and occasional suicides – that can result.

Today's kids are meeting strangers, some of them adults, on a variety of apps. They range from the seemingly innocuous Musical.ly – which lets users share lip-syncing videos – to WhatsApp and, more recently, Houseparty, a group video chat service. Teens are storing risque photos in disguised vault apps, and then trading those photos like baseball cards. Some even have secret "burner" phones to avoid parental monitoring, or share passwords with friends who can post on their accounts when privileges are taken away. It's difficult to say how many kids are pushing digital boundaries this way, not least because the whole point is to escape adult detection. Social media accounts are easy to establish and discard. Particular apps also rise and fall out of favour among teens with lightning speed, making them a moving target for researchers. Parents are clearly outmatched. Exposed to tablets and smartphones at an increasingly early age, kids are correspondingly savvier about using them and easily share tips with friends. Parents, by contrast, are both overwhelmed and often naive about what kids can do with sophisticated devices, says Wistocki, whose packed schedule has him crisscrossing the country to speak to parents and young people.

Tech experts agree that monitoring makes sense for younger kids. But Pam Wisniewski, a computer-science professor, is among those who suggest a gradual loosening of the strings as teens prove they can be trusted.



A police officer in the village of Carrbrook wearing a face-mask to protect him from the smoke caused by a huge moor fire near Stalybridge, north west England.

Air pollution plays key role in diabetes

AFP

PARIS: Air pollution caused one in seven new cases of diabetes in 2016, according to a US study, which found even low levels raised the chances of developing the chronic disease.

Diabetes has primarily been associated with lifestyle factors like diet and a sedentary lifestyle, but research by the Washington University School of Medicine in St Louis said pollution also plays a major role.

The study estimated that pollution contributed to 3.2 million new diabetes cases globally in 2016 — or around 14 percent of all new diabetes cases globally that year.

"Our research shows a significant link between air pollution and diabetes globally," said Ziyad Al Aly, the study's senior author.

Pollution is thought to reduce the body's insulin production, "preventing the body from converting blood glucose into energy that the body needs to maintain health," according to the research. Al-Aly said the research, published in the Lancet Planetary Health, found an increased risk even with levels of air pollution currently considered safe by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The scientists found the risk of developing diabetes "exhibited a strong link to air pollution".

They then devised a model to gauge diabetes risks over different pollution levels and used data from the annual worldwide Global Burden of Disease study, to estimate the prevalence of diabetes caused by bad air.

Study: Human lifespan may not have peaked after all

AFP

TAMPA: Has the maximum lifespan for a human already been reached? Maybe not, said a study of Italian centenarians that found human longevity is slowly increasing.

Scientists have long debated whether or not the ultimate lifespan in people has been attained. A 2016 study in the journal Nature argued that it has, in 1997, when Frenchwoman Jeanne Calmant died at the record-breaking age of 122.

But the new findings in the journal Science point to the possibility for extended human longevity, and that our species' lifespans may increase over time. Based on data from more than 3,800 centenarians in Italy, researchers found the risk of death slows, and even plateaus, above age 105.

"As we age, our health and risks of death get worse faster and faster. But at extreme ages, they stop getting worse," said co-author Kenneth Wachter, a professor of statistics at the University of California, Berkeley.

"They don't get better, but they stop getting worse. They level out — it's called a plateau," he said. Researchers studied data on all inhabitants of Italy aged 105 and older between 2009 and 2015 — those born between 1896 and 1910, for a total of 3,836 documented cases, said the study.

Focusing on mortality among people born in the same years, over time they found slight declines in mortality rate.

This suggests as time went on, people were living a bit longer than those born in prior years. "The slow but distinct improvements over time that we see in the level of the plateau beyond age 105 give hope that a fixed limit to lifespan is not currently in view," explained Wachter.

Socioeconomic factors and improved medical care could be factors in the lengthening human lifespan. But "similar mortality plateau patterns in extreme age are observed in other species, hinting at common structural and evolutionary explanations," said the report. If the research is confirmed by other studies, that could mean the limit of the human lifespan has yet to be reached.

Pink bullet train debuts in Japan

AP

TOKYO: A Hello Kitty-themed "shinkansen" bullet train has debuted in Japan. Adorned with the cartoon icon inside and out, it's a dream ride for fans of the internationally popular character.

The special shinkansen had its inaugural round trip yesterday between Osaka and Fukuoka, connecting Japan's west and south. It will run through September.

The stylish, eight-car train is painted pink and white, showcasing Hello Kitty images and trademark ribbons from flooring to seat covers and windows.

In one car, a life-size Hello Kitty doll donning a train crew uniform and a hat - decorated with a pink bow, of course - greets passengers, offering a chance for selfies.

Hours later yesterday in Osaka, the train's final stop, hundreds of fans waited for the arrival of the first Hello Kitty shinkansen, cheering and taking photos during its 16-minute stopover before it headed back to Fukuoka, according to Japanese media reports.

Hello Kitty, created in 1974 by the Japanese company Sanrio Co., is a global icon with fans of all ages.



A Shinkansen bullet train featuring Hello Kitty during the press preview ahead of its debut, yesterday, at Nakagawa Town in Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan.

New algorithm predicts your intelligence

IANS

NEW YORK: Be careful if you lie about your IQ as researchers have developed a machine-learning algorithm that may tell how smart you are by looking at a scan of your brain.

The study showed that the new computing tool can predict a person's intelligence from functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans of their resting state brain activity. The fMRI develops a map of brain activity by detecting changes in blood flow to specific brain regions.

"We found if we just have people lie in the scanner and do nothing while we measure the pattern of activity in their brain, we can use the data to predict their intelligence," said co-author Ralph Adolphs from the California Institute of Technology (Caltech).

To train their algorithm on the complex patterns of activity in brain, the researchers downloaded the scans and intelligence scores from 900 individuals.