

Aeuphoric Lewis Hamilton extended his world championship lead to 73 points yesterday when he rode his luck to claim a strategic victory for Mercedes in a roller-coaster Russian Grand Prix. **P16**



Elle Fanning: Women expected to be jealous in Hollywood

14 CELEBS

WORLD 5 Fire strikes Saudi high-speed train station

A unique Children's Plan
 TALEEM
 PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PLAN OF LIC INTERNATIONAL
 IN BAHRAIN FOR 30 YEARS
 39935618
 baah.lic@licinternational.com
 www.licinternational.com

'No reason to probe Bidens'
 Kiev

A Ukrainian ex-prosecutor general has told the BBC there is no reason for his country to investigate President Donald Trump's political rival Joe Biden.

Yuriy Lutsenko said any investigation into Mr Biden and his son would have to start in the US.

"I don't know any reason to investigate Joe Biden or Hunter Biden according to Ukrainian law," he said.

Mr Trump's efforts to have Ukraine investigate the pair prompted an impeachment inquiry by the Democrats.

210 fils (includes VAT)



Foreign Minister holds talk with Kuwaiti Amir



HH the Amir receives Shaikh Khalid.

Washington

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa has conveyed the greetings of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and those of His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa and HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait Shaikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah.

He also conveyed the leadership's congratulations on the success of HH the Amir's medical checkup, asking Al-

mighty God to grant him continued good health and bless the brotherly people of Kuwait with further prosperity and progress.

This came as His Highness Amir of the State of Kuwait Shaikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al-Sabah received Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa at his residence in the United States.

Also present were His Highness Shaikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates and Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

Anti-graft protest

Demonstrations surge in Lebanon's capital over worsening economic crisis

Protesters blamed Lebanese political leaders for the widespread mismanagement and corruption.

Beirut

Hundreds of Lebanese protested yesterday in the country's capital and other areas over an economic crisis that worsened over the past two weeks, with worries over dollar-reliant Lebanon's local currency losing value for the first time in more than two decades.

Lebanon is facing a deep-running fiscal crisis as it staggers under one of the highest debt ratios in the world, at \$86 billion or more than 150 per cent of the country's gross domestic product.

Many of Sunday's protesters in downtown Beirut blamed Lebanese political leaders for the widespread mismanagement and corruption.

The protesters gathered shortly before noon in the



Lebanese anti-government protesters clash with riot policemen as they try to cross to the government house during a demonstration, in Beirut.

86

billion American dollars is the total debt owed by Lebanon.

police were deployed.

"The people want to bring down the regime," some of the protesters chanted as riot police stopped them from marching toward the government headquarters.

Other protesters chanted "peaceful" and tried to stop the young men who clashed with security forces.

Later in the day, dozens of protesters closed major roads in the capital with burning tires and barriers causing traffic jams.

central Martyrs Square, then marched toward the government headquarters where riot



OYSTER PERPETUAL SUBMARINER DATE



Modern Art Studio

Rolex Boutique - Bahrain City Centre



His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa underlined the government's keenness to encourage investments and diversify sources of revenues to fast-track development and ensure stability and sustainable growth of the national economy. He pointed out the government's efforts to carry out more services projects that support sustainable development and contribute to optimising citizen-oriented services. HRH the Premier was speaking as he received at Gudaibiyah Palace yesterday members of the royal family and senior officials. He discussed with them local and international issues, lauding the one-family spirit characterising the Bahraini community as well as the sense of patriotism to serve the nation and enhance the kingdom's status regionally and internationally.



His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander, and First Deputy Prime Minister, yesterday received the newly-appointed Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to the Kingdom of Bahrain, Mustapha Benkhayti, at Riffa Palace. During the meeting, HRH the Crown Prince highlighted the steady advancement of Bahrain-Morocco relations across all fields, and noted the importance of further enhancing bilateral cooperation to benefit both countries and their people. HRH the Crown Prince then extended his congratulations to Benkhayti for his appointment, and wished him success in his new diplomatic role.



His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister yesterday met the newly-appointed Ambassador of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to the Kingdom of Bahrain, Pradeepa Saram, at Riffa Palace. During the meeting, HRH the Crown Prince highlighted the importance of further strengthening relations and co-operation with Sri Lanka across various sectors. HRH the Crown Prince welcomed the newly appointed Ambassador to Bahrain, and wished Ms Saram success in her new diplomatic role. HRH the Crown Prince and Ms Saram discussed regional and international issues of common interest.

New York

Amidst a big presence of political, international and diplomatic figures, the second session of the "Bahrain Visions Forum: Shared Visions for a Successful Future", organised by His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa's Court for the second year, convened this year under the theme "Values Required to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals".

The forum serves a reaffirmation of the Kingdom of Bahrain's commitment to support the efforts of the international community towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are considered as an important foundation for building a better future in which the people of the world enjoy a secure and stable life.

Present at the event were Mohammed Al Mutawa, Minister of Cabinet Affairs, Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Hussam bin Isa Al Khalifa, President of HRH Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa Award for Sustainable Development, and Dr Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa, President of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA), Peter Zegarto, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Hungary, Dr Anwar Gargash, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, and UAE Minister of Happiness, Ohood Al Roumi.

The forum was also attended by Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, and Dr Abdullatif Al Zayani, Secretary-General of the Gulf Co-operation Council, with the participation of a large number of officials and diplomatic corps and officials of the United Nations, the press and media.

Jonathan Granov, President of the Institute for Global Security, delivered the opening speech of the forum, in which he praised the unanimous adoption by the General Assembly of the initiative of His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, the



The poster of Bahrain Visions Forum.

Prime Minister to declare April 5 an International Day of Conscience.

He praised the partnership between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Global Security Institute in organising the forum, to be a platform for leaders to exchange views and leading ideas to face global challenges, pointing out the importance of the forum this year in highlighting issues related to sustainable development.

On behalf of His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, Mr Al Mutawa, delivered a speech at the forum, in which he called on the international community to adopt the values derived from human conscience and develop them into integrated mechanisms so that they make a reference for every effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and support the steps of states and peoples

towards human well-being everywhere.

HRH the Premier also called on the international community to be more positive and strong in confronting and addressing the causes of insecurity and instability, and that the system of collective action be able to lay the foundations of a lasting peace that would provide the conditions for countries to continue their development in the interest of their peoples.

The Prime Minister affirmed the commitment of the Kingdom of Bahrain, under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, to support the efforts of the international community to move forward towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, as an important foundation for building a better future in which the peoples of the world enjoy the requirements of a safe and stable life.

SDGs 'crucial' in building a better future for people

HRH the Premier urges the world communities to lay the foundations for lasting peace



A session in progress at the forum.

The system of collective action be able to lay the foundations of a lasting peace that would provide the conditions for countries to continue their development in the interest of their peoples.

HRH THE PREMIER

HRH Premier expressed his hope that the International Conscience Day on April 5 of each year, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in response to his initiative, will be a new, constructive, systematic and consistent way to mobilise the international community's efforts to promote peace for the security of peoples and communities and achieve sustain-

able development goals.

Then, Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, Minister of Foreign Affairs, delivered a speech in which he affirmed Bahrain's strong commitment to sustainable development goals and working with its partners to raise the standard of living in the region and provide a safe environment for future generations.

He stressed that the Kingdom of Bahrain, under the directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, Prime Minister, and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the First Deputy Prime Minister, set SDGs at the forefront of its national strategy and has made them the cornerstone of Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030.

Professor Jeffrey Sachs of Co-

lumbia University, President of the Centre for Sustainable Development in the United States of America and a keynote speaker thanked, in his speech, the Kingdom of Bahrain for its inspiration to 192 member states of the United Nations to take the agenda of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals seriously as a guide for the common collective future, despite the challenges experienced by the region.

The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, Dr. Anwar Gargash, expressed his thanks to the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain for the good initiative to establish this forum, pointing out that Bahrain has long been considered a leading country in the region, and one of the first countries to introduce modern management, and the first to introduce education and health care.

Woman MP rapped for appearing on social media in 'home clothes'

Public Prosecution urged to revoke MP's parliamentary immunity

● The MP is known for her activities on social media networks even before she was elected last year.

● She has over 25,000 followers on Instagram alone.

TDT | Manama

A Bahraini lawyer yesterday announced that she has filed a lawsuit against a female MP for appearing in videos on social media in "home

clothes" and in an "inappropriate" manner that doesn't fit a parliamentarian, Tribune has learnt.

The lawyer demanded the Public Prosecution to revoke the MP's parliamentary immunity and to take the necessary legal procedures against her.

This came as lawyer Fatima Al Hawaj announced in a post she shared on Twitter yesterday that she had filed a complaint against the MP, accusing the latter of causing inconvenience to others by misusing telecommunication networks, a crime that is punishable by imprisonment as per the provisions of Article 290 of the Kingdom's Penal Code.

Article 290 states: "A punishment of imprisonment for a pe-

The MP has posted contents on Instagram and Snapchat that degrade and affect the dignity of Bahraini people.

MS AL HAWAJ

riod not exceeding six months or a fine not exceeding BD50 shall be inflicted upon any person who deliberately causes inconvenience to others by misusing telecommunications networks."

The lawyer shared pictures of the complaint papers that she

said she had submitted yesterday to the Public Prosecution.

The papers mentioned that the MP shared footage of herself speaking about the benefits of narcotic substances, stating that she, the MP, "appeared as if she was inciting the society to use it".

The lawyer also mentioned in her complaint that the MP appeared in "home clothes" and in an "inappropriate" manner for a parliamentarian.

Ms Al Hawaj said that the complaint comes as "the MP's actions are not appropriate for the Bahraini parliament and the Bahraini people, who chose her to represent them and defend their rights".

The lawyer added that the MP posted contents on Instagram and Snapchat which "degrades and affects the dignity of the people of Bahrain", in addition to "speaking about people with disabilities in an inappropriate manner that carried mockery of their suffering".

The MP is known for her activities on social media networks even before she was elected last year.

She usually posts highlights of her social activities on Instagram and Snapchat and uses these channels to directly engage with her followers, who are more than 25,000 on Instagram alone.

The MP didn't comment on Ms Al Hawaj's complaint.

A'ali fake bombers sentenced

TDT | Manama

The High Criminal Court has sentenced two men to three years behind bars each for planting a fake bomb in A'ali village.

Court files said that the defendant along with another one - fugitive in Iran - placed an object that looks similar to an explosive device in A'ali, with an aim of spreading fear and terror among citizens and residents.

It was initially thought that the bomb was real but explosive experts were called to come and examine it. And they declared it was a fake bomb.

We placed the fake bomb with the intention to trigger panic in the area.

FIRST DEFENDANT

Investigations found the two defendants were implicated in the incident after their fingerprints were extracted from the scene.

One of the two was arrested and admitted to their involvement in the case, but his co-suspect is still at large and was held guilty in absentia.

"I met the fugitive person along with my friend in Shahrakan and we decided to plant a fake bomb.

"We placed it on June 12, 2016, with the intention to trigger panic in the area," the arrested man told prosecutors.

BAC honours employees



Bahrain Airport Company (BAC), the operator and managing body of Bahrain International Airport (BIA), honoured 10 hardworking team members with the Employee Excellence Award in recognition of their important contributions to the company's overall success. In attendance at the award ceremony were BAC senior management, including BAC Chief Executive Officer, Mohamed Youssef Al Binfalah, who presented the awards.

iGA committee reviews BD9m ICT projects



Mr AlQaed chairs the meeting.

Manama

The Information and Communication Technology Governance Committee (ICTGC) held its 29th meeting, chaired by Information and eGovernment Authority (IGA) Chief Executive, Mohamed Ali AlQaed, and attended by several Committee members representing different government entities.

The periodic meetings are aimed at unifying ICT standards throughout the government's various entities and supporting national initiatives.

During the meeting, the Committee reviewed Ministerial Committee decisions and other relevant initiatives, and discussed the progress of various projects including decisions adopted during previous meetings.

Discussed were a number of strategic government ICT projects totalling more than BD 9 million in budget.

The most important of these included iGA's national appointment booking system for government service centres, the Ministry of Finance's budget e-system project, improvements to the Tender Board's eTendering System, and other projects the Committee is looking to implement at the lowest possible cost in accordance with the policies, standards and best practices of the Kingdom of Bahrain's ICT sector.

The Committee also discussed the implementation of decisions taken by the Ministerial Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs and Fiscal Balance, including initiatives to improve government efficiency and optimise operating expenditure.



ICTGC was established in 2011 through a resolution issued by Deputy Premier.

The most important of these include the development of a policy for the purchase and use of printing devices and technical standards for the purchase of computers.

The aim is to reduce printing paper costs by reducing the number of devices, papers, and consumables in use, as well as

creating "green environments" at the workplaces of government entities, and enhancing the privacy and confidentiality of government data and information.

ICTGC was established in 2011 through a resolution issued by His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the Higher Committee for Information and Communication Technology.

The committee is responsible for setting standards for optimal and efficient use of ICT projects by government entities, reviewing project strategies and costs, and working with ministries and government institutions to improve IT competence.

The committee also follows up on all the tasks assigned to it by the Higher Committee for Information and Communication Technology.

Labour Ministry 'offering platform for private sector jobseekers'



Mr Humaidan holds talk with Mr Al Saleh.

Manama

The Labour Minister yesterday highlighted his ministry's efforts to help jobseekers obtain appropriate jobs in the private sector.

This came as Labour and Social Development Minister and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), Jameel Humaidan, received MP Mamdooh Abbas Al Saleh.

They discussed ways to enhance Legislature-Executive co-operation to further serve the development march and increase national resources.

The minister informed the lawmaker about the Labour Ministry's efforts regarding the development of the mechanisms to employ national job-seekers in the private sector,

including the holding of general and specialised career expos to integrate national competencies in the labour market.

Mr Humaidan also highlighted the latest developments regarding the Labour Ministry's programmes to consolidate social protection and provide integrated care services for all segments and groups of the Bahraini society.

MP Al Saleh stressed the importance of co-operation between the legislative and executive branches in enhancing the social protection system and improving the quality of the services delivered by the Labour and Social Development Ministry to the citizens to achieve the aspired for sustainable development goals.

Bahrain makes global security call at UNGA

Shaikh Khalid highlights Iran's support for terror in the region

Manama

Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa reiterated Bahrain's firm stances, led by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, regarding key regional and international issues.

Addressing the 74th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) session in New York, the minister stressed the necessity of achieving global security and peace and combating terrorism in the region and the world.

"The close and growing partnership continues between the Kingdom and the United Nations and all its specialised bodies and agencies. This is mirrored in the measures and initiatives taken by the Kingdom to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, including the signing of the Strategic Partnership Framework between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United Nations Agencies, the first of its kind in the region.

"The honouring of His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa by the World Health Organisation last May as an international leader was the first of its kind in the history of the organisation. It came to underline the high status of His Royal Highness and to reflect the international recognition of the Bahraini role in the achievement of the goals of the organisation.

"We would also like to express our pleasure at the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly, in its Resolu-



Shaikh Khalid addresses the UN General Assembly.

tion 73/329, of the initiative of His Royal Highness the Prime Minister, to declare April 5 as the International Day of Conscience.

"We are proud of the achievements of the Bahraini woman over the decades, the latest of which was the election of Ms Fawziya Zainal as the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, becoming the first woman in the history of the Kingdom of Bahrain to occupy such high position, following parliamentary elections that had a participation turnout of 67 per cent, coming as a result of the reform approach of His Majesty the King, reflecting a solid democratic experience, a strong popular will, a high community awareness and keenness to perform the national duty.

Speaking on the dangerous spread of terrorist network, Shaikh Khalid said the main

ing or destroying state institutions, worsening the problem of migration and refugees, providing an environment for the emergence of different terrorist organisations, whether those backed by states or others, threatening the security of the region and the stability of its people.

"We also assert our support for the brotherly Republic of Sudan, to all the steps and measures taken to achieve development and prosperity and to protect internal security and stability. We welcome the formation of the transitional government, led by the Prime Minister, Dr Abdullah Hamdok, and we support the calls regarding the removal of Sudan from the State Sponsors of Terrorism List, in order to enable it to cooperate with international economic institutions, and to overcome this serious and delicate phase of its history."

Shaikh Khalid said Iran has been continuing its attempts to cause chaos and sedition, and by interfering in the internal affairs of many countries in the region, including the Kingdom.

"This is also seen in its unjust occupation of the three islands of the United Arab Emirates, (Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa) and the direct threat resulting from this continued occupation."

"In this regard, we affirm our solidarity with our brothers in the Arab Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen, led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and we will continue our efforts to save Yemen and restore its security and stability."

"The unrest these states have gone through led to weaken-

"We are all now convinced that the incidents that take place in any part of the world will inevitably affect us all."

SHAIKH KHALID

concerns of the international community, and in our discussion here and at this stage, are the "achievement of peace" and "eliminating terrorism".

"We are all now convinced that the incidents that take place in any part of the world will inevitably affect us all. We have seen this following the crises some countries went through, including the Arab Republic of Syria, the Republic of Yemen and the State of Libya.

"The unrest these states have gone through led to weaken-

'Ideathon 2019' planned to create digital solutions

Riyadh

The National Health Information Centre (NHIC) in association with the Saudi Health Council (SHC) organised Ideathon 2019 on Saturday in order to set a benchmark in emerging health care technology, Arab News reported.

Organised under the patronage of Health Minister Dr Tawfiq Al Rabiah, who is also the chairman of the SHC, the objective was to enable the brightest national minds to create digital solutions through emerging technologies in an innovative ecosystem to enhance the quality of health care services in the Kingdom.

Speaking at the opening session, Hashem Abu Baker, general director of the NHIC, presented an overview of Ideathon 2019, an intensive and brainstorming event to help young talents generate fresh solutions to existing challenges in their communities.

According to the organizers the overall objective is to explore insights on health innovation by sharing international and local best practices to improve patient health outcomes and understand the impact of innovation on quality and cost of health care services.

The purpose is to create platform to brainstorm and

The purpose is to create platform to brainstorm and share innovative ideas, market and promote the creation of the National Lab for Emerging Technology.

MR AL OLYAN

share innovative ideas, market and promote the creation of the National Lab for Emerging Technology, engage potential stakeholders from academia, government and private sector in the lab ecosystem, raise awareness of emerging technologies and their impact on the health care sector and offer a fun and exciting way for young talent to get involved in their communities.

Participants at the event worked in teams to brainstorm on possible solutions.

Speaking to Arab News, Abeer Al Olyan, co-founder and CEO of health care start-up Liven, said: "Our project is about chronic disease — it is very important to collect data to enhance the health care system in the Kingdom."

Praising the event she said: "We have had health care hackathons, but Ideathon is being held for the first time."

'Customs systems developed in line with latest global practices'

Manama

President of Customs, Shaikh Ahmed bin Hamad Al Khalifa handed the Authorised Economic Operator Certificate to the Mondelez Bahrain after fulfilling the accreditation requirements.

The President highlighted the dedication of Customs Affairs to develop its systems according to the latest inter-

national practices and the government Action Plan to ensure sustainability of economic development in the public and private sectors.

The Economic Operator Programme aims to support the international trade and customs supervisory role.

It provides various privileges and services for the operators through facilitating the exports and import operations.



The lion cub 'that was offered for sale'.

Authorities probe 'lion cub sale'

TDT | Manama

Authorities have launched a probe into the allegations of a Bahraini man selling a lion cub for BD2,500.

The Bahrain Society for Prevention of Cruelty towards Animals (BSPCA) is co-ordinating with the probing authorities to nab the suspect, who is suspected to be in Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

BSPCA President Mahmoud Faraj told our sister paper Al Ayam that he alerted the

authorities the moment he came to know about the incident.

"I have also alerted the Supreme Council for Environment chairman Dr Mohamed Bin Dinah and Khalid Ahmed, Undersecretary for Livestock at the Ministry of Works after coming to know about the incident."

It is learnt that an advertisement seeking a buyer for a lion cub was posted by the suspect on his Instagram page.

Mr Faraj stressed that

the concerned authorities are currently proceeding to refer the suspect to the Public Prosecution and cybercrime for investigation in accordance with the law to prevent the promotion and trading of wild animals in Bahrain.

He praised the speedy action and the follow-up of the topic by the Chief Executive of the Supreme Council for the Environment and the Animal Wealth Agency, praising their co-operation in the field of animal welfare.

SCW's role in empowering women stressed

Manama

Undersecretary of the Information Affairs Ministry, Dr Abdulrahman Mohammed Bahar, has affirmed the pivotal role played by the Supreme Council for Women (SCW), Presided over by Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Wife of HM the King, to strengthen the concepts of equal opportunities between men and women across the kingdom's state departments, including the government.

Dr Bahar underlined the Information Ministry's keenness, based on the constant directives of the Minister, Ali Al Romaihi, to ensure equal opportunities at the Ministry, empower competencies and support the SCW to disseminate its mission through various media platforms.

The undersecretary was speaking on the sidelines of a workshop organised by the SCW, in co-operation with the Equal Opportunities Unit at the Information Affairs Ministry, under the theme "Gender Balance: Efforts, Mechanisms and National Legislation".

Onam event held



Kollam Pravasi Community (KPC) Bahrain held an event under the title Ponnongam 2019 at Al Hilal Hospital, Salmabad. Bahrain Indian School Chairman Prince Natarajan, K T Salim, Francis Kaitharath and other dignitaries attended. A grand Onam feast was served to the attendees. A free health check-up was also held.

world

Fire strikes Saudi high-speed train station

- Civil defence were fighting the fire with air support
- Five people were transported to hospital with injuries
- Plumes of smoke were seen rising from the roof of the station
- Haramain Railway suspended the train service until further notice

Agencies | Dubai

A fire broke out in the Haramain high-speed rail station in Saudi Arabia's coastal city of Jeddah, injuring at least five people, the authorities said yesterday.

Plumes of black smoke were still rising from the roof of the station at least four hours after the fire broke out at 12.35 p.m. (0935 GMT), Al-Ekhbariya state television footage showed.

It said civil defence were fighting the fire with air support and many sections of the blaze were under control.

A video uploaded on Twitter by the Mecca provincial government showed plumes of grey smoke rising from what looked like the inside of the complex.



A firefighting helicopter sprays water on a fire at the Haramain high-speed rail station in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (Courtesy of AP)

Five injured people were transferred to the hospital due to the fire in the Haramain high-speed rail station in Jeddah. 16 medical teams are working on the site of the fire

THE MECCA REGION OFFICIAL TWITTER ACCOUNT TWEETED.

Five people were transported to hospital with injuries, the official Twitter account of Mecca region reported. It said 16 medical teams were working at the

scene.

"Five injured people were transferred to the hospital due to the fire in the Haramain high-speed rail station in Jeddah. 16

medical teams are working on the site of the fire," the Mecca region official Twitter account tweeted.

Al-Ekhbariya said four people were treated on site and traffic on the railway line had been suspended until further notice for safety reasons.

The 450-km (280-mile) Haramain Railway linking the two holiest cities in Islam, Mecca and Medina, with the Red Sea city of Jeddah, was opened in 2018 and cost 6.7 billion euros (£5.96 billion).



The Haramain High Speed Rail system opened to the public in October last year, transporting passengers between Saudi Arabia's holy sites of Mecca and Medina (Courtesy of AFP)

The system is capable of transporting passengers 450 kilometres (280 miles) via the Red Sea port of Jeddah at speeds of up to 300 kilometres per hour.

The station is part of efforts to boost tourism revenue as the country seeks to shed its dependence on oil exports.

Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz inaugurated the railway in September 2018. Officials described it as the biggest transportation project in the region.

In 2011, the kingdom signed a deal for a Spanish consorti-

um to build the rail track, supply 35 high-speed trains and handle a 12-year maintenance contract.

The kingdom is boosting its infrastructure spending and expanding its railways -- including a \$22.5 billion metro system under construction in the capital Riyadh -- as it seeks to diversify its oil-dependent economy.

The operator of the Haramain Railway said it suspended the train service until further notice for the safety of passengers.

Bodyguard of Saudi king killed in shooting

- Major General Abdelaziz al-Fagham's death triggered an outpouring of emotion on Twitter
- The gunman was shot dead by security forces
- The incident was triggered by a "personal dispute"

AFP, Al Arabiya | Riyadh

A prominent bodyguard of Saudi Arabia's King Salman has been shot and killed at a friend's house in what has been described as a personal dispute, according to state media.

Major General Abdelaziz al-Fagham's death triggered an outpouring of emotion on Twitter, with some condemning the killing of the Saudi ruler's "guardian angel".

Fagham, who was frequently seen by the king's side, died Saturday evening in the western city of Jeddah, police in Mecca said in a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA). A spokesman said that the gunman was shot dead by security forces, but that five officers were wounded in the melee that has shocked the kingdom, where



General Abdel Aziz al-Fagham (R) was well known in Saudi Arabia as the personal bodyguard of Saudi King (AFP)

The conversation between Fagham and Ali escalated... Ali left the home, came back carrying a gun and fired at Fagham, injuring two others in the household, a Filipino worker and the brother of the house's owner

SPOKESMAN

gun violence is rare.

Police said the trouble broke out when Fagham was visiting a friend who was receiving guests at his home in Jeddah, the port city in western Saudi Arabia.

An acquaintance, Mamdouh al-Ali, entered the residence and an argument ensued.

"The conversation between Fagham and Ali escalated... Ali left the home, came back carrying a gun and fired at Fagham, injuring two others in the household, a Filipino worker and the brother of the house's owner," it said.

Ali "refused to surrender" and barricaded himself into the

house, exchanging shots with security forces before he was ultimately killed, it said.

The incident was triggered by a "personal dispute", Al-Ekhbariya state television reported without giving further details.

It added that Fagham died in hospital from his injuries and that an investigation into the shooting had been launched.

The bodyguard, with his tall, slender bearing, was well known among Saudis and often pictured attending closely to the king.

He also guarded the late King Abdullah, taking after his father who served under the former

ruler for three decades.

The Okaz newspaper said the public took a liking to Fagham from the days when he guarded King Abdullah.

"With this, he gained the leadership's trust and the love of the Saudis," the paper said.

"News of the killing has come as a thunderbolt for Saudis, who were deeply saddened by his death," it said.

Okaz described him as "the most famous of all the royal guards" and said he was known for his vigilance and tact.

It said that he accompanied the king on all his travels, inside and outside of the kingdom.

Al-Fagham's family mourned his death in the early hours of Sunday, and Saudi Twitter was filled with reactions to the news of his death in Jeddah, making his name in Arabic the number one worldwide trend on the social media platform.

"God bless my uncle, General Abdulaziz Baddah al-Fagham, after he was killed in his friend's house by a third friend (treacherously)," Baddah al-Fagham tweeted.

"May you rest in peace, hero ... I have seen nothing but good and loyalty from you for ten years... I can't comprehend that I won't be seeing you anymore," Chairman of the General Entertainment Authority Turki al-Al-sheikh tweeted.

Rains kill another 42 people in India



Boys stand by an autorickshaw in a flooded street in Prayagraj, in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh

AP | New Delhi

Monsoon rains continue to batter parts of India, with at least 42 more people dying in the past 24 hours, officials said yesterday.

At least 35 people died from rain-related causes in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh and seven died in the eastern state of Bihar, officials said.

The latest toll came days after reports of at least 59 fatalities in the past week amid forecasts that heavy rains would continue until Monday.

Sandhaya Kureel, a spokeswoman for the Disaster Management and Relief Department in Uttar Pradesh, said Sunday that 17 people in the state were injured and being treated in hospitals. At least 29 houses collapsed because of heavy rain, she said.

Intense clashes ahead of China's anniversary

AFP | Hong Kong

Fierce clashes broke out between protesters and riot police in Hong Kong yesterday as thousands marched through the strife-torn city, during a day of global protests aimed at casting a shadow over communist China's upcoming 70th birthday.

Beijing is preparing for huge, tightly-choreographed festivities from Tuesday to mark the founding of the People's Republic of China, including a huge military parade that will revel in the country's emergence as a global superpower.

But ongoing unrest in Hong Kong threatens to upstage those celebrations as the semi-autonomous city boils with public anger over the erosion of its special freedoms under Beijing's rule.

Democracy activists in the financial hub had vowed to ramp up their nearly four-month-long campaign ahead of Tuesday's National Day celebrations, which Hong Kong protesters have dubbed a "Day of Grief".

Yesterday witnessed the most intense clashes in weeks as police used tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons at multiple locations during running battles with hardcore protesters hurling rocks and petrol bombs.

Using online forums and social media, protesters had called for "anti-totalitarian" rallies to be held around the globe. Marches were held in Australia and Taiwan, with more planned in some 40 locations across Europe and North America later in the day.

Clashes broke out before Hong Kong's unsanctioned march had begun after angry crowds in the shopping district of Causeway Bay surrounded and heckled officers who were conducting stop and searches.

But the tear gas fired by police only emboldened the crowds who then began walking through the streets in their thousands.



Sunday witnessed the most intense clashes in weeks as police used sustained rounds of tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannon at multiple locations

Running battles

Some hardcore activists vandalised subway stations, tore down banners proclaiming the upcoming 70th anniversary celebrations and set fire to makeshift barricades.

Many marchers were holding so-called "Chinazi flags", a version of the Chinese flag with yellow stars arranged in the shape of a swastika.

Police spent hours firing tear gas and rubber bullets at different locations across the city centre and were seen making multiple arrests throughout the day.

A reporter witnessed masked men repeatedly beating pro-democracy protesters in the dis-

trict of Wanchai using long sticks.

It was not clear if the men were police dressed as protesters, a tactic used by the force with increased frequency.

A member of the media was also attended to by volunteer medics after being hit in the face with a police projectile.

Hong Kong's protesters have stepped up their international lobbying in recent weeks.

A 20-year-old student, who gave his first name as Tony, was waving a Ukrainian flag.

Many of Hong Kong's more hardcore protesters have taken inspiration from the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution which ousted a pro-Russian president. "We are hoping that if we

connect to different parts of the world and fight against Chinese communism, we will win this movement," he said.

A 62-year-old protester, who gave his surname as Man, said he felt people's livelihoods and freedoms had deteriorated since Hong Kong was handed back to China by Britain in 1997.

"I don't want to topple the regime, but it definitely needs to be changed," he told AFP. "It needs to seek a reconciliation with the people."

Months of unrest

Over the last 17 weeks, Hong Kong has witnessed the worst political unrest since its handover to China in 1997 with huge pro-democracy rallies as well



Police charge and make arrests in Hong Kong



Hong Kong democrat activist Denise Ho was attacked with red paint in Taipei

as increasingly intense clashes between police and a minority of violent protesters.

The city's summer of discontent was first triggered by an extradition bill to the mainland that has now been shelved.

But the movement has since morphed into a call for free elections and less intervention from Beijing.

On Friday and Saturday night, tens of thousands of people turned out for two peaceful rallies.

But there were brief clashes on Saturday night when police used water cannon and tear gas to beat back small groups of protesters hurling bricks and petrol bombs at a government building. Students are planning a one-

day strike on Monday while activists have called for people to dress in black on Tuesday.

Under the policy of "one country, two systems", China has offered tiny Hong Kong certain liberties denied to citizens on the mainland -- including freedom of expression, unfettered access to the internet and an independent judiciary.

But the arrangement is due to expire in 2047 and many accuse Beijing of eroding some of those freedoms in recent years.

Protesters are calling for an independent inquiry into the police, an amnesty for those arrested and the right to elect their leaders -- demands repeatedly dismissed by Beijing and city leader Carrie Lam.

SpaceX's Elon Musk unveils new Mars rocket prototype

● A three-legged prototype of the rocket named Starhopper has test launched twice since July

● Musk's mission to the moon aligns with NASA's goal of sending humans there by 2024

● Boca Chica village, a few miles north of the Mexican border, is ground zero for SpaceX

Reuters

Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk has unveiled the latest iteration of his space company's newly assembled Starship, outlining a speedy development timeline for the centerpiece vehicle of SpaceX's quest to launch humans to the moon and Mars.

Musk showed a crowd of space enthusiasts and reporters at SpaceX's rocket development site late on Saturday in the remote village of Boca Chica, Texas, animations of Starship



Elon Musk



A prototype of SpaceX's starship spacecraft is seen before SpaceX

landing on the moon and Mars and predicted that the rocket's first orbital flight could come in the next six months, followed by missions to space with humans aboard the next year.

"This is basically the holy grail of space," Musk said, standing between a towering, newly assembled Starship rocket and

Falcon 1 — the company's first vehicle whose debut orbital mission was celebrated by SpaceX 11 years ago.

"The critical breakthrough that's needed for us to become a space-faring civilization is to make space travel like air travel," said Musk, who is also the chief

executive of electric carmaker Tesla Inc.

Starship, a shiny steel rocketship designed to ferry dozens of humans to the moon and Mars, is the top half of Musk's colossal interplanetary rocket system that stands 387 feet tall (118 meters) as the latest addition

to SpaceX's lineup of reusable launch vehicles. Musk named Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa as Starship's first private passenger in 2018.

The Boca Chica village, a few miles north of the Mexican border, is ground zero for SpaceX's three-year experimental test

program for Starship, whose rocket engine tests have rattled the nerves of residents living in a remote hamlet of roughly two dozen homes a mile away.

"I think the actual danger to the Boca Chica village is low but it's not tiny," Musk said during a question and answer session. "So probably over time it'd be better to buy out the villages, and we've made an offer to that effect."

Some residents have rejected SpaceX's non-negotiable offer to buyout their homes for three times the market value.

A three-legged prototype of the rocket named Starhopper has test launched in the village twice since July, most recently flying as high as 500 feet (152 meters) and landing on an adjacent slab of concrete to trial Musk's next generation rocket engine dubbed Raptor.

Musk's mission to the moon aligns with NASA's goal of sending humans there by 2024 under its Artemis programme, an accelerated deep-space initiative spurred by the Trump administration in March that aims to work with a handful of U.S. space companies in building a long-term presence on the lunar surface before eventually colonizing Mars.

13 dead in Thailand after truck carrying students flips over

Bangkok

Thirteen people, most of them students, were killed when a pick-up truck flipped over while trying to change lanes yesterday in the Thai capital, police said.

Graphic CCTV footage shows passengers riding in the back being hurled out of the vehicle onto the road in Bangkok's suburbs.

"Twelve people died instant-

ly and one later died at the hospital," police officer Samran Chaytao told AFP, adding that nine of them were college-age students finished mechanical training for a local company.

A total of 18 people were in the truck, which was coming from an evening out with students and company officials celebrating the end of their training, Samran said.

Two of the five survivors had severe injuries.

At least 36 killed, 36 hurt in China road crash

Beijing

At least 36 people died and 36 others were injured in east China when a packed coach with a flat tyre collided with a truck, authorities said yesterday.

The bus was carrying 69 people -- its maximum capacity -- when it crossed into oncoming traffic and hit the freight truck on an expressway in eastern Jiangsu province on

Saturday morning, the Yixing public security bureau said.

A preliminary investigation determined that the accident was caused by a flat tyre on the left front wheel of the bus, the bureau said in a statement.

Nine people were seriously injured, 26 were slightly hurt and one was discharged from hospital.

The Changchun-Shenzhen expressway reopened after eight hours of rescue work.

Harry visits Malawi college

Reuters | Johannesburg

Britain's Prince Harry began his first official visit to Malawi yesterday, with wife Meghan joining him on a college visit via video call after she had met a group of female activists in Cape Town the previous day.

The Duke of Sussex had left the duchess and their four-month-old son Archie - who stole the spotlight when he sat on his mother's lap while his parents chatted with Nobel Peace Prize laureate Desmond Tutu in Cape Town - to visit Botswana, Angola and Malawi.

Though Harry has visited Malawi several times privately, this trip is his first visit in an official capacity, marking the final leg of his solo tour across southern Africa before rejoining his family in Johannesburg.

The college visit was to allow the Duke of Sussex to meet young women whose education is partially supported by The Queen's Commonwealth Trust (QCT), of which Harry and Meghan are president and vice



Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex poses with the Cama choir during his visit to the Nalikule College of Education

president respectively.

Harry was greeted by a line of students waving UK and Malawi flags before entering the college, where Meghan joined proceedings via Skype while, she said, Archie took a nap.

A post on the couple's official Instagram said the project was changing the lives of many

young women.

"As president and vice president of the QCT, the Duke and Duchess both believe in the power of education to empower young girls, and change society as a whole," the post said.

Harry will next see President Peter Mutharika, who he has met on a number of occasions,

and attend a reception hosted by the British High Commissioner.

It was announced on Sunday that Meghan had met a group of female leaders and activists the previous day. The women included Sophia Williams-De Bruyn, who in 1956 led 20,000 women in an anti-apartheid march on the seat of government in Pretoria when she was only 18 years old.

"I was recently reminded that the first one up the mountain often gets knocked down the hardest but makes way for everyone behind them," a statement quoted Meghan as saying to the women. Today Harry will fly to Liwonde National Park in Malawi, where he will join an anti-poaching patrol with local park rangers and witness an anti-poaching demonstration conducted by local rangers and the UK military.

The next day he will visit a health centre, pharmacy and youth reproductive health outreach program before rejoining his family in South Africa for another township visit, this time in Johannesburg.

Ukraine must investigate Joe Biden's son, says ex-Ukrainian PM

Reuters | Moscow/Kiev

Ukraine must investigate the activities of US presidential candidate Joe Biden's son to establish whether his role in a Ukrainian gas company complied with the country's laws, Mykola Azarov, Ukraine's former prime minister, said in an interview.

Azarov did not specify to which Ukrainian laws he was referring.

Hunter Biden's role in the company, Burisma Holdings Limited, is in focus after the White House released a memo showing US President Donald Trump asked his Ukrainian



Mykola Azarov, Ukraine's former prime minister

counterpart, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in a July phone call to get prosecutors to look into his activities. Zelenskyy agreed.

"It's a fact (his directorship

and fees) and not made up. It should be investigated so that the 'i's can be dotted and the 't's crossed," Azarov said.

A spokesperson for Joe Biden's campaign declined to comment on Azarov's investigation call.

Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau said on Friday it was investigating activity at Burisma between 2010-2012, but that it was not looking into changes to its board in 2014, when Hunter Biden joined.

Hunter Biden was a director on Burisma's board from 2014 until at least 2018, according to

documents filed by the company in Cyprus, where it is registered.

Azarov, who was prime minister from 2010-2014, is himself wanted by Ukrainian authorities for alleged abuse of power. An Interpol red notice issued in 2015 at the request of Ukrainian authorities said he was wanted on accusations of charges including embezzlement and misappropriation.

Azarov said he was not aware of any evidence suggesting wrongdoing on Hunter Biden's part, but said it was in the Ukrainian public interest to ascertain the legality of his activities.

Death toll in east Indonesia quake rises to 30, many still in shelters

Reuters | Jakarta

The death toll from a strong earthquake in Indonesia's eastern province of Maluku has risen to 30 people, the national disaster mitigation agency (BNBP) said yesterday, and hundreds of thousands of people remain in evacuation shelters.

The 6.5 magnitude quake hit early on Thursday, damaging hundreds of houses and dozens of public facilities and infrastructure, including the main bridge in the city of Ambon.

Officials on Thursday had



Residents receive treatment at a temporary shelter

put the death toll at 20 people. Many were killed by falling rubble.

More than 150 people were injured, BNBP spokesman Agus Wibowo said in a statement on Sunday, and over 200,000 remain in shelters.

Supercars seized from Guinea V.Prez net \$27 million at auction



A Koenigsegg One:1, a Ferrari LaFerrari (2015) and a Bugatti Veyron EB 16.4 Coupe (2010) during auction preview



A McLaren P1 Coupe (2014)



A Ferraro Enzo (2003) during an auction preview

● A 2014 white Lamborghini Veneno Roadster sold for 8.28 million francs

Reuters | Geneva

A collection of 25 supercars seized from Equatorial Guinea's vice president as part of a Swiss money-laundering probe fetched nearly 27 million Swiss francs (\$27 million) at an auction held by Bonhams yesterday.

A 2014 white Lamborghini Veneno Roadster sold for 8.28 million francs including com-

mission, about 50% more than its pre-sale estimate, in heavy three-way bidding.

"The top lot of the collection and rarest of all, one of only nine built and introduced for the 50th anniversary of Lamborghini," said James Knight, group chairman of Bonhams Motoring Department, as he opened bidding.

The buyer was anonymous, but the saleroom burst into applause as the hammer came down at the event in a 12th-century abbey in the grounds of Bonmont golf and country club in the village of Chesham, 30 km (19 miles) from Geneva.

Geneva prosecutors said in February that they had closed

an inquiry into Teodoro Nguema Obiang for money laundering and misappropriation of public assets with an arrangement to sell the cars to fund social programs in west African state.

Known as Teodorin, he is the son of President Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mbasogo, who has ruled Equatorial Guinea for 40 years. Rights groups label his administration as one of the world's most corrupt.

A tally of official hammer prices, VAT and 15 per cent commission, showed a total of 26.93 million francs.

A 2011 Aston Martin One-77 Coupe, which Knight described as an "absolute rocket ship",

went for 1.55 million francs.

"Proceeds are for charity," he said.

A black 2015 Koenigsegg One-1 fetched 4.6 million francs.

A Swiss bidder said that an agent for a collector in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, had

bought several supercars.

A grey armoured 1998 Rolls Royce Silver Spur in need of repair - and described by Knight as "perfect for someone who doesn't have any friends or has enemies" - went for 86,250 francs.

A 1956 Aston Martin Lagonda, owned by the late Claude Nobs, founder of the Montreux Jazz Festival, was among 50 other cars that found new owners.

The Rolling Stones, Petula Clark, Aretha Franklin, Nina Simone, David Bowie and Freddie Mercury rode in the vintage vehicle, the catalog said.

Thierry Amsallem, Nob's partner and heir, attended the sale and bought a white 2007 Bentley Azure Decapotable from Obiang's collection for 112,125 francs.

"It is like new, just 843 miles on it. We'll use it to drive around performers," Amsallem, chair of the Claude Nobs Foundation, said.

The top lot of the collection and rarest of all, one of only nine built and introduced for the 50th anniversary of Lamborghini

JAMES KNIGHT, GROUP CHAIRMAN OF BONHAMS MOTORING DEPARTMENT, SAID AS HE OPENED BIDDING

Jacques Chirac: a flawed giant of

Combative and charismatic, the politician who died last Thursday was a statesman

Colin Randall

When France re-elected Jacques Chirac as president in 2002, left and centrist voters joked that they had to wear nose pegs as their sole motivation was to keep the far-right rabble-rouser Jean-Marie Le Pen out of the Elysee Palace.

With or without the pegs, the tactical voting by Chirac-loathing voters worked a treat. Chirac, representing the mainstream right, was handed a second term with a whopping 82 per cent share of the poll.

When the former president died on Thursday, aged 86, Mr Le Pen was gracious enough to say "even enemies deserve respect in death".

But the notion that Chirac owed success to a lesser-of-two-evils choice, with voters reluctantly favouring a conventional right-winger to block a sinister populist with repugnant views, overlooks a quirk of French politics.

Many conservatives in France – and Chirac was one of them – would have slotted comfortably into what was then Tony Blair's "new Labour" UK government, a far cry from the more radical outlook of a party now led by Jeremy Corbyn.

It is improbable that the French mainstream centre-right under Chirac would have been reduced to the marginal status it has now under current president Emmanuel Macron.

Chirac was a statesman of many contradictions. As a student, he briefly courted the far left, selling the Communist Party newspaper L'Humanite on the streets of Paris.

As he drifted to the right and rose in political life, he proved himself to be passionate about France, with a steely resolve to promote the nation's best interests. Notably, he opposed the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, a stance that brought him intense US and British criticism at the time.

He was also a man of considerable personal charm. His speeches and televised addresses were models of clarity and warmth, a valuable learning tool for foreigners like myself settling in France and trying to grasp the language of Moliere. With the charisma came substance, a level of statesmanship more accomplished heads of state often lack.

But there was also more than a hint of mischief in his approach to both his political and personal life. The man who enthusiastically collected artefacts from eastern

and African cultures and loved Japanese sumo wrestling was not above resorting to irregular and even criminal means.

When he made way for Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007, after 12 years in office, he found himself stripped of the constitutional immunity that had protected him from investigation. His name had cropped up in several cases of alleged misuse of public funds but he was able to argue that testifying was incompatible with his presidential functions.

Finally, the past caught up with him. Four years after leaving office, he was tried in the notorious affair of fictitious city hall jobs created for cronies when he was mayor of Paris.

French justice is becoming less indulgent when dealing with corrupt politicians. But Chirac's failing health, as well as his record of public service, saved him from jail; he received a two-year suspended sentence.

Far from turning their backs on a disgraced ex-president, the French public rallied in support, polls showing a far greater approval rating than when he was in office.

This popularity owed much to his common touch. He got on well



UAE president Sheikh Khalifa and then foreign minister Sheikh Hamdan ben Zayed are greeted by the late French president Jacques Chirac at the Elysee palace in Paris, in 2003.

with the provincial and predominantly farming communities of la France profonde, people who felt remote from Paris and saw in him

a kindred spirit. Chirac had a combative streak. He distrusted the British, repeatedly clashing with Westminster

over international policy on Europe and beyond. In 2003, he was pilloried by the tabloid British newspaper The Sun; spoo

Iran's leaders think they can continue their provocat

Tehran has only managed to increase its isolation and frustrate

RAGHIDA DERGHAM

This week the world will see how Tehran responds to the messages received at the UN General Assembly summit in New York. It was made clear that the US, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Gulf nations do not want war but a diplomatic process that would induce Iran to change its behaviour in return for a progressive adjustment in sanctions.

So far, sources say the Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps see this message as an opportunity to further unshackle their hands by contemplating more attacks against vital installations in Saudi Arabia. In their view, countries seeking to avoid war will not respond while in Washington, the US president has made it clear that his policy is to respond to Iranian escalation solely by stepping up sanctions, unless the IRGC crosses a red line and targets US soldiers. For now, the IRGC will veer clear of this line, given the cost and that its main goal is a show of strength to the Gulf countries and not weakness where Washington is concerned.

It is likely, therefore, that the IRGC will engage in new provocations that could go beyond Saudi Arabia. The sources said IRGC commanders want to provoke a response but also want to

be certain it will not be a serious one. In other words, as long as the US refrains from responding militarily, the Iranian leadership feels it can continue its bullying without paying a price.

Regime leaders are viewing Mr Trump's position through the prism of the Carter Doctrine, offering US protection of Arab Gulf countries since the time of former president Jimmy Carter. The current US president is not as willing to defend allies from aggression from their neighbours, as former president George Bush did following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. In Tehran's view, Mr Trump's position exposes a structural weakness in the security alliance between the US and Saudi Arabia in particular. Regime leaders think he is unlikely to go to war with Iran to defend Gulf allies.

While Mr Trump has made it clear that he will not be lured into war, it is also true that sanctions remain a powerful weapon and the cornerstone of the US administration's strategy. While economic strangulation has not yet reined in the IRGC and might have initially even prodded it into vengeful strategic recklessness, the consistency of the sanctions will eventually force Tehran to pursue one of two options: either to adjust its behaviour to protect the supreme interests of Iran and



Iranian President Hassan Rouhani with Vice President Eshagh Jahangiri, second left, and Ali Akbar Velayati, right, senior adviser to Iran's supreme leader on international affairs, returning from UNGA in New York.

her people, or risk self-destruction. Betting on continued US reluctance to engage in a military confrontation is precarious and costly and Mr Trump has proven to be a man of surprises.

The attack on Saudi Aramco oil facilities has produced the opposite of what Iranian diplomacy was seeking to achieve, es-

pecially with regards to European powers. For a long period now, Iran has been trying to drive a wedge between Nato member states, hoping EU nations would be able to find a mechanism for Iran to sell its oil and circumvent US sanctions.

Following the attacks on Saudi Aramco, European reactions have

caused a real setback for Tehran's grand designs. A statement was issued by France, Britain and Germany last week, blaming Iran for the attacks and urging Tehran to engage in dialogue and refrain from provocation and escalation. The attacks also prompted Britain to break away from the European consensus on maintaining the

existing 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran, with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson saying the time had come to negotiate a new deal, all but endorsing Mr Trump's position.

What is more, the attacks have invited new US sanctions on Iran's central bank and other entities making it very difficult to exe

1927

Babe Ruth becomes the first baseball player to hit 60 home runs in a season.

1931

Start of "Die Voortrekkers" youth movement for Afrikaners in Bloemfontein, South Africa.

1935

The Hoover Dam, astride the border between the U.S. states of Arizona and Nevada, is dedicated.

1938

Britain, France, Germany and Italy sign the Munich Agreement, whereby Germany annexes the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia.

French politics

man of many contradictions

Chirac regarded himself as a friend of the Middle East in general and made it a key aim to restore French influence in the region. He paid a number of visits to the UAE and met both the Founding Father, Sheikh Zayed, and UAE President Sheikh Khalifa.

cow disease?

I was among British correspondents invited to the Elysee on the eve of a state visit to Britain, when he talked with some affection of the "amour violent" – the turbulent love affair – of fractious neighbours who nevertheless respected and sometimes liked each other.

He undoubtedly had an edge. A staunch, if sometimes lonely, champion of the French language, he theatrically stormed out of a 2002 Brussels summit when a business leader delivered a speech in English.

He fell out bitterly with Mr Blair and not only on the war against Saddam Hussein. But on his death, the former British prime minister told France 24 television that they eventually "established a good relationship".

A capacity to forge warm relationships in unexpected places was exemplified by his close bond with the former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri.

Shortly before his assassination in Beirut in 2005, Hariri told a colleague: "Jacques Chirac is my best friend." Chirac, then still president, together with his wife Bernadette, were among the first world leaders to fly to Beirut to

comfort Hariri's widow Nazek.

Chirac regarded himself as a friend of the Middle East in general and made it a key aim to restore French influence in the region. He paid a number of visits to the UAE and met both the Founding Father, Sheikh Zayed, and UAE President Sheikh Khalifa.

He was also the first French president to acknowledge the role of the French state in the deportation and extermination of Jews during the Second World War.

On pressing domestic issues, Chirac was weak, unwilling – unlike Mr Macron today – to brave the turmoil of street protests and see through difficult reforms.

History might not remember him as a great president, but as a flawed giant of French politics.

As France prepares to hold a national day of mourning on Monday, one word springs over and again from the lips of friends and former colleagues: empathy.

Mr Macron, whose own politics are closer to Chirac's than the socialist government he served before launching his centrist La Republique En Marche party, spoke for many compatriots when he said in his televised tribute: "We have lost a statesman whom we loved as much as he loved us."

Iran without paying a price

and its allies

To succeed, any collective diplomatic effort seeking to avoid war and step out of the failed nuclear deal must include international and European confrontation of this terrible flaw in the regime's logic.

nese partners, and its European friends, as a reckless state, especially after it targeted oil facilities. Ultimately, Mr Trump is benefiting because he appears to be the one refusing to take military action as long as his maximum pressure policy is working.

Iran's leaders could benefit from the US self-restraint, which should not be confused for cowardice. Rather, it is a cunning policy that Iran would be unwise to dismiss, because each escalation will invite further devastating sanctions and bring Europeans ever closer to the US.

Iran's leaders must admit to their people that all talk of preserving the nuclear deal is a fallacy. There is division between European powers about the merits of the deal and now, there is little choice but to negotiate a new agreement with Mr Trump that addresses the flaws in his predecessor Barack Obama's deal with Iran.

Iran's leaders must tell their people frankly that all European efforts and initiatives are dead in the water, with no other options but to engage in new negotiations, which cannot realistically be held under Iran's preconditions of lifting sanctions first. If Iran really wants to avoid war and internal collapse, it has to reconsider its position and be ready for dialogue.

This brings us back to the logic of the regime born in Tehran four decades ago. This regime engaged in regional, sectarian and religious wars and today is in dire need of reform. Iran is the only state in the world that wants the world to respect and accept its founding, funding and training of extraterritorial, irregular armies and proxies in sovereign countries such as Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and Syria, believing this to be a legitimate right.

To succeed, any collective diplomatic effort seeking to avoid war and step out of the failed nuclear deal must include international and European confrontation of this terrible flaw in the regime's logic, and demand reform to uphold the sovereignty of states as per the UN charter. It is futile to continue turning a blind eye to this problem in the name of realpolitik and the present situation affords an opportunity to end devastating wars and impose much-needed legitimate reform.

The decision is in the hands of both the leaders and the people of Iran. The indications coming from the IRCG are not reassuring, perhaps because reform poses an existential risk to its raison d'être. The fear remains that Tehran's leaders, especially the supreme leader and IRCG, think the only way to save their regime from having to reform is war.

TOP
4
TWEETS

01



The only people that I don't like my conversation with the new Ukrainian President are those that heard Rep. Adam Schiff read a made up and totally fraudulent statement to the House and public, words that I did not say but that he fabricated (& admitted to this fabrication). Sick!

@realDonaldTrump

02



I stand in solidarity with the youth on an indefinite hunger strike since September 25th protesting against the daily 9 hour traffic ban on NH-766 that has caused immense hardship to lakhs of people in Kerala and Karnataka.

@RahulGandhi

03



There is much misinformation about e-cigarettes. They are extremely harmful for health. What is even worse is that unlike tobacco, where the hazards are known, in this case it is silent and equally lethal. #MannKiBaat

@narendramodi

04



Donald Trump has committed 10+ impeachable offenses. The American people know the truth – and he can't run from it. The President has got to go.

@TomSteyer

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)

Urgent need to stem desertification

By Kota Sriraj

Desertification is proving to be a rising concern for many countries across the world. The problem is more pronounced for countries that have deserts as a significant part of their existing geography, as these countries are fighting a much more tougher battle to ensure that the deserts do not expand more and consume the precious fertile agricultural land and turn the same into dusty dunes of sand. Currently around two billion hectares of productive land have already degraded into deserts worldwide. Making matters worse is the fact that every year around 12 million hectares fall to desertification.

The fight against growing threat of desertification is being spearheaded by The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) founded in 1994. UNCCD is a Convention to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought through national action programs that incorporate long-term strategies supported by international cooperation

Bahrain must develop a desertification reversal protocol that forms the basis and backbone for comprehensive national efforts directed towards halting desertification in its tracks.

and the Grenadines, who said that there are no countries big or small when it comes to desertification and climate change, and the only way to tackle these problems is to act on them as one global family.

The UNCCD summit highlights a very pressing matter that holds a direct relevance for the Kingdom of Bahrain. Bahrain's principal environmental problems are scarcity of fresh water, desertification, and pollution from oil production. Already population growth and industrial development have reduced the amount of agricultural land and lowered the water table, leaving aquifers vulnerable to saline contamination. The development priority accorded to oil resources has accelerated Bahrain's prosperity and become a main driver of its economic growth.

The economic growth however has not been without its cost with the agricultural lands becoming a collateral damage in this process. As a result, lands that might otherwise be productive for food grain generation are now gradually claimed by the expansion of the desert. Pollution from oil production

was accelerated by the Persian Gulf War and the resulting damage to oil-producing facilities in the Gulf area, which threatened the purity of both coastal and ground water, damaging coastlines, coral reefs, and marine vegetation through oil spills and other discharges. These conditions are worrisome for Bahrain as in the future only those countries will be able to put up a sturdy fight with climate change whose ecological assets are robust.

Bahrain must develop a desertification reversal protocol that forms the basis and backbone for comprehensive national efforts directed towards halting desertification in its tracks. In fact given the commitment and dedication of the Government, this can be achieved in record time. The strength of Bahrain is its public administration prowess as was evident in a 2018 United Nations report which ranked Bahrain fifth in Asia and 26th internationally in e-government development efforts. According to the 2018 UN E-Government Survey, Bahrain maintained its ranking among countries scoring very high on the E-Government Development Index (EGDI). This excellent e-governance capability will prove to be a priceless asset for Bahrain to combat desertification and implement strategies that can aim to restore, protect and manage fertile land on a massive scale across the Kingdom of Bahrain. Once done successfully, Bahrain will be a shining example for the entire world to emulate.

business

Trump considers delisting Chinese firms from US markets: sources



Donald Trump

Reuters | Washington

President Donald Trump's administration is considering delisting Chinese companies from US stock exchanges, three sources briefed on the matter said on Friday, in what would be a radical escalation of US-China trade tensions.

The move would be part of a broader effort to limit US investment in Chinese companies, two of the sources said. One said it was motivated by the Trump administration's growing security concerns about the companies' activities.

Major US stock indexes slipped on the news, which came days before China celebrates the 70th anniversary of the birth of the People's Republic on Oct. 1, when the world's No. 2 economy will shut down for a week of festivities.

Shares of Hangzhou, Zhejiang-based Alibaba ended down 5.15 per cent. JD.com fell 5.95pc and Baidu Inc declined 3.67pc. The iShares China Large-Cap ETF shed 1.15pc.

Shares of New York Stock Exchange-owner Intercontinental Exchange Inc ended down 1.88pc and shares of Nasdaq Inc declined 1.70pc.

"This is a very high priority for the administration. Chinese companies not complying with the PCAOB (Public Company Accounting Oversight Board) process poses risks to US investors," the source said.

Startup Weekend is back

The 54-hour event will bridge the gap between FinTech enthusiasts and corporates in Bahrain

TDT | Manama

The new edition of Startup Weekend will be held this year from November 21 to 24 from 6:30 pm onwards.

Hosted by Bahrain FinTech Bay in Strategic Partnership with the National Bank of Bahrain, this year's edition will focus on FinTech Talent and to bridge the gap between FinTech enthusiasts and corporates in Bahrain.

Exclusive Education Partners of the event are the University of Bahrain and Bahrain Polytechnic. GDG Manama is the official Knowledge Partners.

Startup Weekend is an intense 54-hour event which focuses on building a web or mobile application which could form the basis of a credible business throughout a weekend.

Participants will be challenged to create a prototype of their minimum viable product (MVP) that should set out to solve and address FinTech challenges within Bahrain and the



The New Edition of Startup Weekend is back with a focus on FinTech Talent for the first time

GCC region.

The three-day event will present the current Fintech landscape and outline how customers' expectations are changing, with the ever-increasing demand for services and goods to be provided through digital channels.

Education and Knowledge partners will provide workshops and mentorship sessions to support the teams.

Khalid Saad, CEO of Bahrain

FinTech Bay said this year's focus will be on developing startups that address problem statements within the FinTech ecosystem.

Yaser Alsharifi, Chief Strategy Officer at National Bank of Bahrain: "This platform is the ultimate platform for new entrepreneurs to look for a team, create a prototype of an idea, validate their business idea, and receive feedback from experienced entrepreneurs, all in one weekend."

Arab Entrepreneurship Rally begins

● First-place winners will receive a cash prize of US\$50,000, second place winners US\$25,000 and third place winners US\$10,000

TDT | Manama

The Arab Entrepreneurship Rally has kicked off in the Kingdom as part of the upcoming Arab Businessmen and Investors Conference and the World Entrepreneurs Investment Forum 2019 to be held here on November 11th to 13th, 2019.

First-place winners will receive a cash prize of US\$50,000, second place winners US\$25,000 and third place winners US\$10,000.

Arab university students are welcome to submit their business ideas in Agri-Tech, 4th Generation Industrial Innovations, Programming and Applications, Renewable Energy Technology, and Smart-Tech. Participants will have the opportunity of having their ideas reviewed and recognised by designated experts.

The competition is open to teams having up to 4 members (both genders is an asset) and a start-up idea that is not more than one year in operation (MVP) along with a prototype (an advantage). The team leader must be between the age of 18 - 30 years. Female participants/teams are strongly encouraged to apply.

During the past 2 years, the Rally had a total of 5,300 participants, all within a range of 18 to 35 years. Over 370 students' ideas were accepted and were included in more than 90 educational events and training.

The Rally is jointly organised by the UNIDO Investment Technology and Promotions Office (UNIDO ITPO) in Bahrain, the Arab International Centre for Entrepreneurship and Investment (AICEI), the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, the Union of Arab Chambers, the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Association of Arab Universities and the Arab Youth for Sustainable Development.

The Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry is sponsoring the competition.

Alba to establish first Spent Pot Lining Treatment Plant in GCC

TDT | Manama

Aluminium Bahrain (Alba) yesterday announced the establishment of the first-of-its-kind Spent Pot Lining (SPL) Treatment Plant in the GCC and Bahrain.

The new plant will have a capacity to treat 30,000 to 35,000 tonnes of SPL a year, which after being processed, can be used in other industries.

A result of the co-operative efforts between Alba and Bahrain's Supreme Council for Environment (SCE), the SPL Treatment Plant is in line with Bahrain's National Waste Management Strategy led by HH Shaikh



Alba Acting Chief Executive Officer, Ali Al Baqali



Chief Executive of Bahrain's Supreme Council for Environment, Dr Mohamed Bin Daina

Abdulla bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Personal Representative of His Majesty King of Bahrain and President of the Supreme Council for Environment.

With the establishment of this Plant, Alba will be developing a value-creating and sustainable solution for the treatment of SPL with zero-waste.

Commenting on this initiative, Alba's Acting Chief Executive Officer Ali Al Baqali said: "Through establishing SPL Treatment Plant, we get closer to meet our company-wide goals

in key corporate responsibility areas - in line with Bahrain Economic Vision 2030. We also look forward to progressing this project and have it operational by the first quarter of 2021."

Dr Mohamed Bin Daina, Chief Executive of the Supreme Council for Environment, Bahrain said: "We are pleased that Alba will lead this transformation in the region with the establishment of the SPL Treatment plant, which will have environmental as well as economic benefits for Bahrain."



Bahrain Chapter of ICAI held a technical seminar on the Impact of 4th Industrial revolution on Finance and Auditing attended by 200 members. CA Anand Jangid, an experienced Fintech professional was the speaker.

China plans to step up efforts to lift economy - central bank

Reuters | Beijing/Shanghai

China plans to step up economic adjustments to counter its slowing economy while providing adequate liquidity in the economy, the central bank said yesterday.

The United States and China have been locked in an escalating trade war for more than a year, which has hit China's already slowing economic growth.

The statement was posted on the official Twitter-like Weibo account of the Peoples' Bank of China.

China will "continue to implement a prudent monetary



Representative picture

policy and increase the strength of counter-cyclical measures", the statement said.

It also said that China will improve channels for banking sector liquidity to flow into the real economy and will support capital raising measures by smaller banks, which have been hit by shrinking margins and increasing levels of soured debt.