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# Kuwait moves to 54th rank in Global Competitiveness Index

## Oil output from shared Neutral Zone remains on hold

## Teenager kills 19 in Crimea college attack



KERCH, Crimea: Rescuers carry injured victims of a blast at a college yesterday. — AFP

**SIMFEROPOL:** Nineteen people were killed and dozens more wounded, most of them teenagers, after a student opened fire in a technical college in Russian-annexed Crimea yesterday, the authorities said. The toll rose to 19 yesterday afternoon, regional medical officials told TASS state news agency. They said 39 remained hospitalized

after the attack on the college in the city of Kerch on the peninsula annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

Russia's Investigative Committee said the attack was carried out by 18-year-old student Vladislav Roslyakov. He was captured on security camera footage and later found dead with gunshot wounds. Roslyakov

enrolled at the college in 2015, according to its website. RBK newspaper quoted an anonymous fellow student as saying Roslyakov "really hated the college because of evil teachers and hinted he would take revenge on them". Violent attacks on schools and colleges are extremely rare in

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**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has advanced to the 54th position in the annual report of the 2018 Global Competitiveness Index, published by the World Economic Forum (WEF), the finance ministry said yesterday. The report, which placed Kuwait first in macroeconomic stability, reflected the country's improved place in 47 out of 90 indexes in different sectors, the ministry said in a press release. It showed Kuwait's improvement in the indexes of judicial independence, press freedom and reduction of burdens of government regulations that negatively affect economic competitiveness, it added.

The report also indicated improved services in transportation, road quality, air transport infrastructure, labor, wages and production, according to the statement. Kuwait's advanced rank also included pillars of institutions, such as the reduction of burdens of government regulation, protection of intellectual property and legal environment efficiency, it said. Also involved are staff training, vocational training quality, education output skills and digital technology skills, it indicated. The WEF Global Competitiveness Index report is a key index to gauge service improvement in various sectors. It is the 14th time for Kuwait to be included in the report, which measures the competitiveness of 140 countries.

Separately, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait will struggle to resume oil production from jointly operated fields anytime soon due to operational differences between

the Gulf OPEC allies, sources familiar with the matter said. The two countries halted output from the jointly run oilfields - Khafji and Wafra - in the so-called Neutral Zone more than three years ago, cutting some 500,000 barrels per day or 0.5 percent of global oil supply. As oil prices rose to a four-year high above \$85 per barrel this year, Washington has been pressing its top Gulf ally Riyadh to reduce crude prices by increasing production.

Riyadh does not want Kuwaiti laws to apply to US oil major Chevron, which operates the Wafra onshore field on behalf of the Saudi government, a source said. Another source said Saudi Arabia wanted a bigger say and more control in running oil operations in the zone. "The (regional) situation is not stable, so every country should think how to protect itself," Saleh Ashour, a member of the Kuwaiti parliament, told Reuters.

Oil output in the Neutral Zone, which dates back to 1920s treaties establishing regional borders, is divided equally between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The Wafra field is operated by state-run Kuwait Gulf Oil Co and Chevron on behalf of Saudi Arabia. The Khafji field is operated by state oil giant Saudi Aramco and Kuwait Gulf Oil. Tensions have been simmering since the last decade, when Kuwait was angered by a Saudi decision to prolong Chevron's Wafra concession until 2039 without consulting Kuwait. In 2014, Saudi Arabia closed Khafji, citing

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### News in brief

#### Pakistan hangs child killer

**LAHORE:** Pakistani authorities yesterday executed a man convicted of raping and murdering a six-year-old girl, in an incident that shocked the country and sparked riots earlier this year. Chilling CCTV footage broadcast on television following the killing purportedly showed the young girl - Zainab Fatima Ameen - walking hand-in-hand with an unidentified man. Imran Ali, 24, was handed four separate death sentences for the rape and murder, which took place in the eastern city of Kasur in January. In all he confessed to eight attacks on children in the city, including five murders, in a spate of violence that terrorized society. "He was hanged this morning in the presence of a prison official and the father of the victim," said an official at Lahore's central prison, where the convict was executed. — AFP

#### 300 'White Helmets' leave for West

**AMMAN:** Around 300 Syrian "White Helmet" rescue workers who fled Syria for Jordan three months ago have now left for resettlement in Western countries, a Jordanian foreign ministry statement said yesterday. In July the rescue workers, fleeing advancing Russian-backed Syrian government troops, slipped over the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights frontier and into Jordan, with the help of Israeli soldiers and Western powers. Jordan had accepted them after getting guarantees their stay would be temporary and they would be given asylum in Canada, Germany and Britain, Jordanian officials said. The "White Helmets", known officially as Syria Civil Defense, have been credited with saving thousands of people in rebel-held areas. — Reuters

#### Kidnapped Iran troops drugged

**GENEVA:** A group of Iranian security personnel kidnapped on the border with Pakistan this week were unconscious at the time, the commander of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards said, following reports that they had eaten drugged food. Iran's Fars News agency also quoted Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari yesterday as saying that infiltrators had helped with the abduction of at least 10 staff to Pakistan on Tuesday. An Iranian separatist group called Jaish al-Adl said on Tuesday it had seized the personnel, which included members of the Guards, at the Mirjaveh border post in Sistan-Baluchestan province to avenge the oppression of Sunni Muslims in the area. Jafari promised the kidnapers a tough response. — Reuters

## Trump stays cautious over Khashoggi

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump yesterday denied covering up for ally Saudi Arabia in the suspected murder of a critical journalist and said that he should know what happened to Jamal Khashoggi within days. "No not at all, I just want to find out what's happening," Trump told reporters in the White House when asked if his consistently cautious approach to the scandal amounts to a cover-up. "I'm not giving cover at all." The president said he would get a "full report" from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on the diplomat's return from meetings with Saudi and Turkish leaders and that he'd then know the truth. "We

will probably know that by the end of the week," Trump said.

The US president has been on the defensive ever since Khashoggi - a US resident and Washington Post contributor who had criticized Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman - vanished on Oct 2 after visiting the Istanbul consulate. Trump has slow-pedaled on the possibility of action against Saudi Arabia, which he has repeatedly praised as a historic customer for the US weapons industry.

Yesterday, he told Fox Business that the US relies on the kingdom in the fight against terrorism. Earlier, Trump tweeted that Prince Mohammed had denied knowing what happened in the Saudi consulate. "I think we have to find out what happened first," Trump told the Associated Press in an interview on Tuesday. "Here we go again with, you know, you're guilty until proven innocent. I don't like that."

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## India minister in #MeToo storm resigns

**NEW DELHI:** India's fledgling #MeToo movement claimed its highest-profile scalp to date yesterday as a government minister and veteran editor quit after at least 20 women accused him of sexual harassment. M J Akbar, who became junior foreign minister in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government after a glittering journalistic career, maintained however that the barrage of allegations were false. "Since I have decided to seek justice in a court of law in my personal capacity, I deem it appropriate to step down from office and challenge false accusations against me," he said in a statement.

Allegations against Akbar snowballed last week after journalist Priya Ramani accused him of sexual harassment when the pair worked together in the 1990s. Akbar was "an expert on obscene phone calls, texts, inappropriate compliments and not taking no for an answer", Ramani had said. She said that he would



M J Akbar

often insist on conducting interviews and meetings in hotel rooms. "As women we feel vindicated by M J Akbar's resignation. I look forward to the day when I will also get justice in court," she said on Twitter yesterday.

Akbar earlier dismissed Ramani's accusations and said he would sue for defamation. But 20 other women have since offered to testify against him. Another woman said Akbar cornered and pawed her when she was a junior

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ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (right) and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo meet at Esenboga International Airport yesterday. — AFP



SOCHI, Russia: Russian President Vladimir Putin (right) meets Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi yesterday. — AFP

## Sisi hails 'new chapter' in ties with Russia

**SOCHI, Russia:** Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi yesterday said he welcomes a "new chapter" in relations with Moscow after signing a strategic agreement with his Russian counter-

part Vladimir Putin. The deal "opens up a new chapter in our cooperation" and "will take it towards new horizons," Sisi said in translated comments. The two signed the agreement in the presence of ministers in the Black Sea resort of Sochi. Putin said the talks "were held in a businesslike and constructive atmosphere". The leaders "discussed the whole spectrum of bilateral relations as well as key international and regional problems," he said.

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