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Kuwait cleared to compete in Olympics after IOC lifts ban

Amir, Crown Prince hail move • KOC chief calls on sportspeople to work sincerely

India hikes duty on gold imports

MUMBAI: India raised the import duties on gold and other precious metals on Friday in a surprise move that industry officials say could dampen retail demand and boost smuggling in the world's second-biggest bullion consumer. Lower demand from India could weigh on global prices that are trading near their highest level in six years. Jewelry trade associations have asked India's government to reduce gold import duties, which have caused a surge in smuggling.

The government instead hiked the duty to 12.5 percent from 10 percent



BANGALORE: A salesman arranges a gold necklace at a jewelry store on Friday. —AFP

as policymakers try to bring down the fiscal deficit and recapitalize banks. "This is a shocking move."

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PARIS: Kuwait has been cleared to compete in the 2020 Olympics after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced on Friday it was lifting the suspension it imposed on the Kuwait Olympic Committee (KOC) four years ago. In a statement, the IOC said the KOC had successfully implemented "a roadmap agreed between all parties". The announcement comes less than a week after Sheikh Fahd Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah was elected President of the KOC. This was the third and final step in the roadmap which also required revision and adoption of new statutes for sports clubs and federations, followed by elections.

HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah praised Friday HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his "relentless" efforts to reaffirm Kuwait's status at the international level. HH the Crown Prince, in a cable to HH the Amir to congratulate him after IOC permanently lifted the ban on Kuwait sport, described the end of the ban as "very good news for every Kuwaiti". The Crown Prince prayed to Allah the Almighty to bestow his blessings upon Kuwait.



HH the Amir thanked HH the Crown Prince and said the lifting of the ban brought joy for all Kuwaiti people. HH the Amir commended the relentless efforts of the legislative and executive authorities, the ministry of state for youth and the Public Authority for Sport which contributed to the permanent lifting of the ban. HH the Amir, in a cable to HH the Crown Prince, hoped the lifting of the ban would pave the way for sport achievements at regional and international levels.



Kuwait was suspended in Oct 2015 following "undue government interference after a sports law that was not compatible with the basic principles that govern the Olympic Movement was passed in the country". The new law had threatened the autonomy of the KOC and all other national federations while also meaning the country would no longer comply with the Court of Arbitration for Sport or the World Anti-Doping Agency.

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News in brief

Jordan bans online game PUBG

AMMAN: Jordan yesterday banned the hugely popular but brutal online game PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds, citing its "negative effects" on the kingdom's citizens. PUBG pits marooned characters against each other in a virtual fight to the death, and has become one of the world's most popular mobile games. A source in Jordan's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority warned the game "had negative effects on its users, which led to its being officially blocked". PUBG is widely popular in Jordan and institutions in the kingdom have issued warnings to employees not to play it. Psychologists in the country have repeatedly warned the game encourages violence and contributes to bullying among youth. — AFP

Niqab banned in Tunisia gov't offices

TUNIS: Tunisia's premier on Friday banned the niqab Muslim face covering for women in government offices, citing security concerns after attacks in the North African country. Prime Minister Youssef Chahed signed a government circular "banning access to public administrations and institutions to anyone with their face covered... for security reasons," his office said. "They have the right to prohibit (the niqab) given the events we are currently witnessing," said Ilhem, a young Tunisian woman. "But in the end, it remains an individual freedom," she added. Lina questioned "why the woman must make sacrifices every time there are security measures to be taken". The Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights urged that the measure be only temporary. — AFP

Trump vows to reduce US drug prices

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Friday said his administration is working on an executive order to reduce US drug prices to match the lowest in the world. "We're working on a favored nations law where we pay whatever the lowest nation's price is," Trump told reporters from the White House South Lawn. The president accused pharmaceutical companies of having "taken advantage of the system for a long time", with US drug prices often exceeding those in neighboring Canada and Mexico as well as Europe. "Why should other nations like Canada - why should other nations pay much less than us?" Trump said, declaring that he would handle the matter "in the form of an executive order". — AFP

UK ship 'safe and well' after stop in Gulf

DUBAI: The UK-flagged supertanker Pacific Voyager that halted in the Gulf yesterday is "safe and well," a British official told Reuters, after Iran dismissed reports its Revolutionary Guards had seized the vessel. A Revolutionary Guards commander on Friday had threatened to seize a British ship in retaliation for the capture by Royal Marines of Iranian supertanker Grace 1 in Gibraltar.

The Pacific Voyager stopped in the Gulf en route to Saudi Arabia from

Singapore, before resuming its course, Refinitiv Eikon mapping showed. It stopped as part of a routine procedure to adjust its arrival time at its next port, an official at UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) told Reuters. UKMTO, which coordinates shipping in the Gulf, had been in contact with the tanker, the official said.

Yesterday, an Iranian cleric said Britain should be "scared" about Tehran's possible retaliation for the seizure of the Grace 1, the Fars semi-official news agency reported. "I am openly saying that Britain should be scared of Iran's retaliatory measures over the illegal seizure of the Iranian oil tanker," said Mohammad Ali Mousavi Jazayeri, a member of the Assembly of Experts clerical body.

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GIBRALTAR: Supertanker Grace 1 is seen off the coast of Gibraltar yesterday. —AFP

UNESCO adds Bahrain burial mounds, Babylon to World Heritage List

DUBAI: The UNESCO World Heritage Committee voted yesterday to add Bahrain's Dilmun Burial Mounds to its World Heritage List, praising the tombs for their "globally unique characteristics". The burial grounds include "21 archaeological sites in the western part of the island" built between 2050 and 1750 BC, according to the global body. "Six of these sites are burial mound fields consisting of a few dozen to several thousand tumuli," it said in a statement. In all there were some 11,774 burial mounds, UNESCO said, while another 15 sites include 17 royal mounds built as two-storeyed towers.

The tombs were among a handful of nominations made yesterday as the World Heritage Committee



BABYLON, Iraq: In this photo taken on June 29, 2019, the Ishtar Gate is seen at this ancient archaeological site south of Baghdad. — AFP

meets in Azerbaijan's capital of Baku for its 43rd session. UNESCO said the burial mounds were evidence of the early Dilmun civilization, "during which Bahrain became a trade hub, whose prosperity

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Crews assessing damage as second quake hits Calif

RIDGECREST, California: Emergency rescue crews fanned out yesterday to assess damage from the second powerful earthquake to hit Southern California in as many days - a 7.1 magnitude tremor that revived fears of the so-called Big One the region has feared for decades. No fatalities or serious injuries have been reported from this second quake, the largest in Southern California in more than two decades. It hit Friday night in a remote and sparsely populated area around 240 km northeast of Los Angeles, where it was also felt.

But the earth's mighty twitch shook buildings, damaged roads and rattled people still jittery from a 6.4-



RIDGECREST, California: Firefighters battle an electrical fire in a mobile home park yesterday following a magnitude 7.1 earthquake on Friday. — AFP

magnitude earthquake in the same region on Thursday. Victor Abdullatif, owner of a small supermarket in the Mojave Desert town of Ridgecrest,

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Sudan protesters hail landmark deal with generals

KHARTOUM: Crowds of jubilant Sudanese took to the streets of Khartoum on Friday to celebrate a landmark deal between protest leaders and the country's ruling generals aimed at turning the page on months of political unrest. The power-sharing deal, reached in the early hours after two days of hard-won talks brokered by Ethiopian and African Union mediators, came after previous negotiations collapsed in May over who should lead the new body - a civilian or soldier.

"The two sides agreed on establishing a sovereign council with a rotating military and civilian (presidency) for a period of three years or little more," African Union (AU) mediator Mohamed El Hacen Lebat told reporters. Sudan has been gripped by political deadlock since the generals ousted longtime president Omar Al-Bashir in a palace coup in April following months of mass protests nationwide.

General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the ruling military council's number two, stressed the deal "does not exclude anyone". The group that initially launched demonstrations against Bashir in December hailed the agreement. "Today, our revolution has become victorious and our victory shines," the Sudanese Professionals Association said in a statement.

Tension between the two sides had soared after a brutal raid on a longstanding protest camp outside army headquarters in Khartoum that killed dozens of demonstrators and wounded hundreds on June 3. Lebat did not specify the exact make-up of the new ruling body.

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