



2 Amir receives letters from Russia, China, Egypt leaders



6 Tunisia fishermen turn lifesavers in the Med



24 Massive blackout hobbles South America, power trickling back



28 India beat Pak to maintain perfect World Cup record



Riyadh blames Iran for tanker attacks; US vows free passage

Iran hints US could be behind attacks • Saudis intercept Houthi drone, US drone downed

Poll: Trump trailing Biden, 4 other Dems

WASHINGTON: A nationwide Fox News poll released yesterday shows President Donald Trump trailing former vice president Joe Biden and no fewer than four other Democratic contenders as early campaigning for the 2020 election begins to gain steam. A separate survey of battleground states, by CBS, shows Democrats strongly favor Biden as the candidate most likely to beat Trump in next year's elections. The Fox poll showed Biden leading Trump by 49 percent to 39 percent among all registered voters nationwide, while Senator Bernie Sanders held nearly the same advantage over the president, at

49 percent to 40 percent. Holding edges of 1 or 2 points over Trump - albeit within the poll's 3-point margin of error - were Senators Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris, as well as Mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Indiana. The polling comes more than 500 days before the Nov 3, 2020 election, an eternity in the political world. One widely viewed tweet this week shows five presidential candidates in recent decades who trailed at this point in their campaigns - including Trump - but who went on to win. The president does not officially launch his re-election campaign until Tuesday, at a rally-style event in a huge arena in Orlando, Florida.

Still, the Fox poll, conducted June 9 to June 12, is seen as heartening by Democrats eager to chip away at Trump's popularity, particularly in key battleground states like Pennsylvania

Continued on Page 24

DUBAI: Two damaged tankers arrived safely yesterday at locations off the Emirati coast after they were rocked by explosions in Gulf waters, in an incident Saudi Arabia blamed on its regional arch-rival Iran. The Japanese-owned Kokuka Courageous was carrying highly flammable methanol through the Gulf of Oman on Thursday when it came under attack along with the Norwegian-operated Front Altair - the second assault in a month in the strategic shipping lane. US President Donald Trump has said the operation had Iran "written all over it" - rejecting Tehran's vehement denial - and Washington's key Gulf ally Saudi Arabia has also lashed out against Tehran.

In his first public comments since the attacks, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said in remarks published yesterday that he would not hesitate to tackle any threats to the oil-rich kingdom. "We do not want a war in the region... But we won't hesitate to deal with any threat to our people, our sovereignty, our territorial integrity and our vital interests," he told pan-Arab daily Asharq

Al-Awsat. He said Iran had responded to a visit to Tehran by Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe "by attacking two tankers, one of which was Japanese". Abe had been on an unprecedented visit to the Iranian capital in a bid to defuse tensions between Washington and the Islamic republic when the attacks took place.

The US military on Friday released grainy footage it said showed an Iranian patrol boat removing an "unexploded limpet mine" from the Japanese vessel. Yesterday, it said Iran had unsuccessfully tried to shoot down a US drone on a surveillance mission following the attack on the Kokuka Courageous. The vessel's Singapore-based BSM Ship Management said in a statement yesterday that it had "arrived safely at the designated anchorage" and that its crew were "safe and well". The other ship, the Front Altair, was under safe tow by tug boats towards an area off the coast of the eastern Emirati port of Fujairah. "First inspections are under way and no hot spots have been identified following the fire," while all crew members

were in Dubai, the vessel's owners said in a statement yesterday.

The UAE's Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Saturday called on world powers "to secure international navigation and access to energy". Thursday's attacks took place southeast of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital corridor connecting the energy-rich states of the Middle East to the global market. Iran, which is struggling with crippling US sanctions, has repeatedly warned in the past that it could block the strait in a relatively low-tech, high-impact countermeasure to any attack by the United States.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo yesterday vowed the US would ensure the strait remains open, without detailing what options Washington is considering to protect shipping. "What you should assume is we are going to guarantee freedom of navigation throughout the strait," he said in a Fox News television interview. "This is an international challenge, important to the entire globe."

Continued on Page 24

News in brief

Clampdown on delivery services

KUWAIT: The interior ministry has asked the ministry of commerce and industry to stop issuing licenses for delivery services, because the interior ministry is the authority responsible for giving the final approval to issue such licenses. Sources said the interior ministry believes the delivery market has become chaotic and needs new regulations to organize it, as it is expanding rapidly, particularly the delivery of food and other consumer goods. The sources said the commerce ministry will not reject any application to establish a new delivery company in principle, but the completion of procedures needs approval by the interior ministry. — Al-Qabas

Two drown off Abu Halifa

KUWAIT: Two Africans drowned in the waters across a major mall in Abu Halifa. Fire operations responded to a call, along with rescue teams and divers from Shuaiba and Salmiya centers. The body of one victim was found in the water, while currents washed the second body ashore. The bodies were recovered by forensics. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun

Israel to attend Bahrain conference

JERUSALEM: Israelis will attend a US-led conference in Bahrain next week on proposals for the Palestinian economy as part of a coming peace plan, Foreign Minister Israel Katz said yesterday. A source briefed on the event told Reuters Israel would send a business delegation but no government officials to the June 25-26 workshop. "Israel will be at the Bahrain conference and all the coordinations will be made," Katz said told Israeli Channel 13 News in New York. Palestinian leaders have spurned the conference, alleging pro-Israeli bias from Washington. On Twitter, Katz later added that Israel's representation had yet to be decided and that the country's high-tech and innovation capabilities could greatly benefit development in the region. — Reuters

Escape goes wrong for stuntman

KOLKATA: An Indian stuntman who entered the Ganges River yesterday tied up with steel chains and rope is missing, police said. Chanchal Lahiri, known by his stage name "Jadugar Mandrake" (Wizard Mandrake), was lowered into the river by crane as family members, media and police watched from the banks. But the 40-year-old failed to emerge from the water, triggering a frantic search by authorities. Lahiri earlier said he had successfully pulled off a similar stunt 21 years ago at the same venue. "If I can open it up then it will be magic, but if I can't it will be tragic," he said. When Lahiri tried the stunt at the river in 2013, he was assaulted by onlookers who saw through his escape from a locked cage via a door that was clearly visible. — AFP

Bashir charged with corruption

KHARTOUM: Fallen Sudanese leader Omar Al-Bashir was yesterday seen in public for the first time since being ousted, as he was driven in an armed convoy to the prosecutor's office. The former strongman, who ruled his northeast African nation with an iron fist for three decades, was toppled on April 11 after weeks of protests against his reign.

Dressed in a white traditional robe and turban, Bashir rode in a heavily-armed convoy from the notorious Kober prison in the Sudanese capital Khartoum to prosecutors' office to face charges of alleged corruption. Prosecutor Alaeddin Dafallah told reporters after Bashir left

the office that the ousted president had been informed that he was facing charges of "possessing foreign currency, corruption and receiving gifts illegally".

Meanwhile, a top general from the country's new ruling military council vowed that those who carried out a deadly crackdown on an iconic protest site that left dozens dead earlier this month would face the death penalty. "We are working hard to take those who did this to the gallows," Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, deputy chief of the ruling military council said in a speech broadcast live on state television. "Whoever committed any fault" will be held accountable, Dagalo added. Thousands of protesters who had camped outside Khartoum's military headquarters for weeks were violently dispersed by armed men in military

Continued on Page 24

Bibi unveils 'Trump Heights'; wife guilty of misusing funds

GOLAN HEIGHTS: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday inaugurated a new settlement in the occupied Golan Heights, in honor of his key ally US President Donald Trump. Netanyahu unveiled a "Trump Heights" sign to mark the site of the new settlement. The ceremony comes after the US president in late March recognized Israeli sovereignty over the part of the strategic plateau it seized from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day war. Israel later annexed the area in a move never recog-

nized by the international community.

"The Golan is Israeli and will remain so always", Netanyahu declared. Trump is "a very great friend of Israel who has taken a decision that has never before been taken", he added. Surrounding a large table, Israel's cabinet met under a tent in the north of the Golan to name the settlement. Its construction is planned in an area currently occupied by four settler families. Some 23,000 Druze - an Arab Muslim minority also present in Syria and Lebanon - live in the occupied and annexed portion of the Golan, while 25,000 Israeli settlers have arrived there since 1967.

Earlier yesterday, an Israeli court convicted Netanyahu's wife of fraudulently using state funds for meals, under a plea bargain which dropped more severe charges. While the ruling cut short a high-profile trial, the Netanyahu

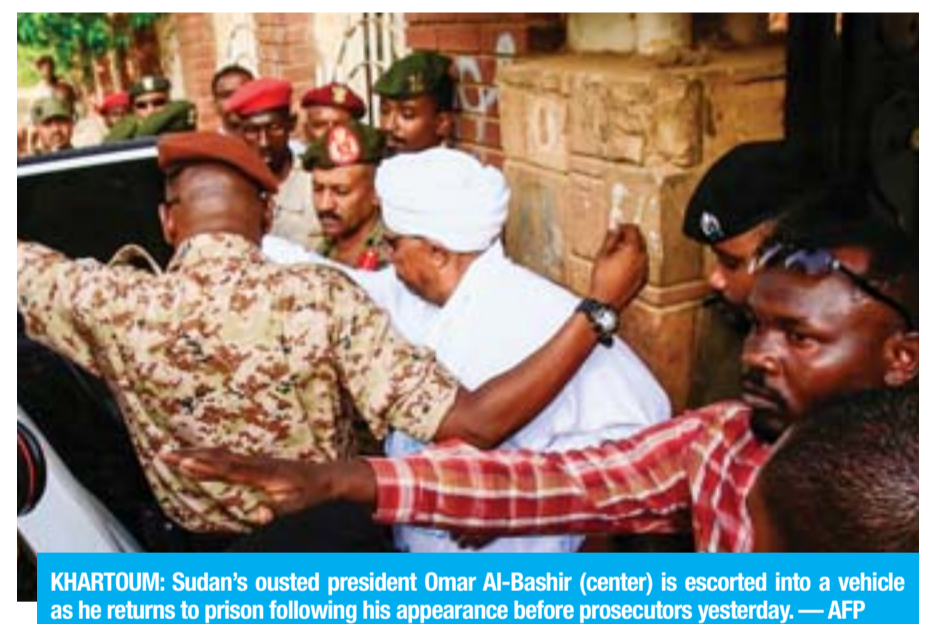
Continued on Page 24

Heat wave hits Iraq, and sparks begin to fly

NASIRIYAH, Iraq: Hospital ventilators shut down, football matches with obligatory water breaks and food spoiling in fridges without power: Iraq's notorious summer has arrived. As one of the hottest countries in the world with around half of its terrain covered in desert, Iraq is no stranger to stiflingly hot summers. But even by its own standards, this June has been a sizzler - averaging a daily 48 degrees Celsius, compared to around 40 in previous years.

Across the country, Iraqis have sprung into usual routines to cope: Wrapping outside door handles in tape to stop them getting too hot in the sun, keeping a change of clothes in the car, or stepping fully-clothed into curbside showers to cool off. Working hours have changed, with businesses opening and closing later to take advantage of the cooler evenings. Baghdad residents shutter themselves away during the searing afternoons, then re-emerge around midnight or later for a belated dinner in the manageable 35-degree heat. Inside, they crank up air conditioning units, putting extra strain on the country's dilapidated power grid and causing the much-despised outages that sparked massive protests last year.

Continued on Page 24



KHARTOUM: Sudan's ousted president Omar Al-Bashir (center) is escorted into a vehicle as he returns to prison following his appearance before prosecutors yesterday. — AFP



GOLAN HEIGHTS, Syria: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (second right) and US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman (left) applaud after unveiling the sign for the new settlement of "Trump Heights" during an official ceremony in this Israeli-annexed territory yesterday. — AFP



BAGHDAD: An Iraqi man uses a curbside shower to cool off during a heat wave in the capital on June 14, 2019. — AFP