



3 Kuwait aspires to more flights with India: Envoy



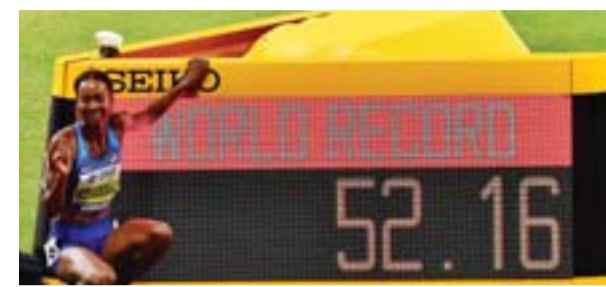
10 India clampdown hits Kashmir Silicon Valley



21 Beatles classic 'Abbey Road' tops charts again after 50 yrs



28 Muhammad sets world record as Barshim soars for Qatar gold



Protesters flood Iraq streets anew as death toll nears 100

Authorities lift Baghdad curfew • Sadr bloc boycotts parliamentary session



BAGHDAD: Iraqi protesters take part in a demonstration against state corruption, failing public services and unemployment in the Iraqi capital's central Khellani Square on Friday. — AFP

BAGHDAD: Renewed protests took place under live fire in Iraq's capital and the country's south yesterday as the government struggled to agree a response to days of rallies that have left nearly 100 dead. The largely spontaneous gatherings of demonstrators - whose demands have evolved since they began on Tuesday from employment and better services to fundamental government change - have swelled despite an Internet blackout and overtures by the country's elite.

Among the 94 dead across the country since Tuesday, 55 were killed in Baghdad while 250 others in the capital were treated for sniper wounds, the Iraqi parliament's human rights commission said. Nearly 4,000 people have been wounded since the protests began in Baghdad and spread to cities across the south, it added. Yesterday, dozens gathered around the oil ministry in central Baghdad, facing live rounds fired in their direction, an AFP photographer said.

Thousands also descended on the governorate buildings in the southern cities of Diwaniyah - where gunfire was

unleashed into the air - and in Nasiriyah, AFP correspondents said. A curfew in Baghdad had been lifted yesterday morning. Parliament had been due to meet at 1:00 pm (1000 GMT) but could not reach quorum, after firebrand cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr's bloc of 54 lawmakers and other factions boycotted the session.

The former militia leader threw his weight behind the demonstrations on Friday with a call for the resignation of Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi. Sadr's movement has the power and organization to bring large numbers of supporters onto the streets, but at the risk of alienating many of those whose protests in recent days have been based on rejecting all of Iraq's feuding political factions. Parliamentary speaker Mohammad Al-Halbusi had extended a hand to protesters saying "Your voice is being heard", and he had been hoping to discuss job creation and social welfare schemes with lawmakers in the session.

But the mainly young, male protesters have insisted their movement is not linked to any party or religious establishment

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News in brief

Health insurance online only

KUWAIT: The interior ministry's PR and security media department said as part of the ministry's efforts to automate services provided to expats, it decided to automate health insurance services and make them available only online. Accordingly, effective today, Oct 6, 2019, all health insurance paperwork will be halted in favor of online payment at all residency affairs departments, it said, noting that paper slips will be accepted at various citizen service centers until Oct 28, when all health insurance transactions completely go online on the health ministry's website www.moh.gov.kw.

Foreigners can share Saudi hotel rooms

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia is allowing foreign men and women to rent hotel rooms together without proving they are related, after the kingdom launched a new tourist visa regime to attract holidaymakers. Women, including Saudis, are also permitted to rent hotel rooms by themselves. The Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage confirmed a report on Friday by Okaz newspaper, adding: "All Saudi nationals are asked to show family ID or proof of relationship on checking into hotels. This is not required of foreign tourists. All women, including Saudis, can book and stay in hotels alone, providing ID on check-in." — Reuters

No health insurance, no entry

WASHINGTON: The US will block the entry of immigrants without health insurance or the ability to pay for medical bills, President Donald Trump revealed Friday. Consular officers will only be allowed to issue visas to prospective immigrants who can prove they "will not impose a substantial burden" on the US healthcare system, according to a proclamation authored by Trump. "Lawful immigrants are about three times more likely than United States citizens to lack health insurance," Trump said in the proclamation. — AFP

Edible sensor helps TB patients

PARIS: An ingestible sensor that allows doctors to remotely monitor tuberculosis patients' intake of medication has the potential to save millions of lives and revolutionize treatment for the world's most deadly infectious disease, researchers said Friday. A randomized trial of 77 patients in California, published in the journal PLOS medicine, found that 93 percent of patients using the sensor were taking their daily treatment doses, compared with 63 percent who did not. The so-called Wirelessly Observed Therapy (WOT) involves a patient swallowing a small, pill-sized sensor and wearing a paired patch on their torso which transmits medication levels via Bluetooth. — AFP

Pompeo slams 'harassment' as Dems subpoena White House

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration complained yesterday of harassment by Democratic lawmakers who issued subpoenas for White House documents regarding President Donald Trump's alleged pressuring of Ukraine for political favors. And in a key development, a potential second whistleblower was reportedly weighing whether to come forward.

The latest explosive turns in the

impeachment investigation against Trump came as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo accused Democratic-led congressional committees leading the inquiry of having "harassed and abused" State Department employees by contacting them directly for documents rather than going through department lawyers. "That's harassment," Pompeo said during a visit to Athens, "and I'm never going to let that happen to my team."

The House committees leading the probe issued their subpoenas as evidence mounted that Trump abused his powers by attempting to use US military aid to pressure Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky to seek damaging information on 2020 Democratic rival Joe Biden. The investigations were touched off by reports that an original whistleblower - reportedly

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Aussies held in Iran return home in swap

SYDNEY: An Australian travel-blogging couple held in Iran on spying charges have been freed and returned home, authorities said yesterday, in a possible swap for an Iranian student wanted in the US. Perth-based Jolie King and Mark Firkin had been documenting their journey from Australia to Britain on social media for the past two years, but went silent after posting updates from Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan about three months ago. The pair, who have tens of

thousands of followers on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, were alleged to have used a drone to take pictures of "military sites and forbidden areas", an Iranian judiciary spokesman said last month.

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne said they were released after "very sensitive negotiations" and had been reunited with their family in Australia. "We are extremely happy and relieved to be safely back in Australia with those we love," the couple said in a statement issued by the foreign ministry in Canberra. "While the past few months have been very difficult, we know it has also been tough for those back home who have been worried for us."

Hours later, state media in Tehran said an Iranian student held in Australia for 13

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Families survive on one meal amid Zimbabwe drought

BUHERA, Zimbabwe: In eastern Zimbabwe's parched Buhera district, Omega Kufakunesu's family has been forced to scale down daily meals to just a portion of vegetables and sadza, a thick maize-meal porridge. In the morning only the children get the porridge, and everyone skips lunch. "During the day we have wild fruit collected by the children, and at night we have smaller portions of sadza with vegetables," harvested from the communal village garden, said Kufakunesu, sitting outside her thatched round hut.

A palmful of shumba, a drought-resistant wild fruit, is all she will eat during the day until dinnertime. "We have reduced our food portions so that it's enough for everyone," she said. But there are days when "my husband

and I don't eat at all" to make sure the children have some food, she said. Zimbabwe is experiencing one of the worst droughts in history, blamed on the effects of the El Nino weather cycle. In addition, the former regional breadbasket is in the throes of its worst economic crisis in a decade with inflation estimated to be over 900 percent.

Because of the combined effect of drought and an ailing economy, more than five million rural Zimbabweans, nearly a third of the population, are going to face food shortages before the next harvest in 2020. A disturbing feature of this year's food shortages is the increase in the number urban poor who are vulnerable. The government estimates that up to 2.2 million people in towns and cities are struggling to feed themselves.

WFP country representative Eddie Rowe said there are "more hungry people than ever before in Zimbabwe". In August, the United Nations extended its appeal for aid - from \$234 million in February to \$331 million to feed the combined total of over seven million Zimbabweans, roughly half the country's population.

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ATHENS: Communist-affiliated protesters hold placards as they take part in a demonstration to protest against the visit of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo yesterday. — AFP



TEHRAN: An image grab shows Reza Dehbashi, a PhD student at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, talking to relatives after arriving at Imam Khomeini International Airport yesterday. — AFP

PayPal abandons Facebook's Libra cryptocurrency

SAN FRANCISCO: Pioneering digital payments firm PayPal on Friday said it is abandoning an alliance intended to oversee the Facebook-backed Libra cryptocurrency, which has come under attack by regulators. "PayPal has made the decision to forgo further participation in the Libra Association at this time," the California-based company told AFP. "We remain supportive of Libra's aspirations and look forward to continued dialogue on ways to work together in the future."

International outcry is mounting over Libra - with central banks and governments railing against

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