



**24** Facebook curbs livestreaming amid pressure over massacre



**24** Saudi: Oil facility attacks targeting global supplies



**28** Curry powers Warriors over Blazers in the series opener



## Ramadan KAREEM

IMSAK	03:16
Fajr	03:26
Dhur	11:44
Asr	15:20
Magrib	18:33
Isha	20:01

# US orders 'non-emergency' embassy staff to leave Iraq

## German, Dutch armies halt Iraq training amid Iran tensions



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited the Ministry of Interior's Headquarters and Kuwait Fire Service Directorate on Tuesday with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Deputy Chairman of National Guard Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. — Amiri Diwan (See Page 3)

**WASHINGTON:** The US yesterday ordered all non-emergency staff to leave its embassy in Baghdad and consulate in Arbil, as tensions mount between the United States and Iraq's neighbor Iran, prompting Kremlin concern. Washington has ramped up pressure on Tehran in recent days, accusing Iran of planning unspecified "imminent" attacks in the region, and bolstering the American military presence in the Gulf.

A State Department advisory announcing the partial embassy closures warned of numerous "terrorist and insurgent groups" active in Iraq, including "anti-US sectarian militias" who could "threaten US citizens and Western companies throughout Iraq." The US last year shut its consulate in the protest-hit southern Iraqi city of Basra, blaming "indirect fire" by Iran-backed forces.

Tensions have sharply escalated between arch-rivals Washington and Tehran since US President Donald Trump withdrew last May from the 2015 international Iran nuclear deal which removed sanctions in exchange for curbs on Iran's nuclear program. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo—who has made rolling back Iranian influence in the region a top priority—last week paid a surprise trip to Baghdad in a move to bolster ties with Iraq.

He has declined to go into further detail on the alleged plot, which has been met with skepticism in numerous quarters, including from Democratic lawmakers who fear Trump's administration is seeking to spark a war with Iran. A State Department spokesman yesterday said the departure of non-emergency personnel came in response to "the increased threat stream we are seeing in Iraq."

The Pentagon has said its deployments were "in response to indications of heightened Iranian readiness to conduct offensive operations against US forces and our interests". But Russia, a major backer of Tehran which has blamed the current crisis on Washington's decision to pull out of the Iran nuclear deal, expressed concern yesterday that tensions keep escalating despite assurances from Pompeo.

"So far we notice the continued escalation of tensions around this subject," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, a day after Pompeo met with President Vladimir Putin. "We are saddened to see the decisions taken by the Iranian side," Peskov said, while arguing that Washington has been provoking Iran. Ruled by Shiite clerics, Iran has a strong influence in Iraq, especially in the country's Shiite-majority south. Pompeo told reporters he had made his trip because Iranian forces are "escalating their activity" and said the threat of attacks was "very specific."

The top US envoy met with Iraqi President Barham Saleh and Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi, and spoke to them "about the importance of Iraq ensuring that it's able to adequately protect Americans in their country." Diplomatic security is a key priority for the United States. Bombs involving improvised explosive devices (IEDs) occur in many areas of Iraq, including the capital Baghdad, the advisory warned, adding that normal visa services would be suspended. Arbil is the Iraqi Kurdish regional capital, in northern Iraq.

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## Trump hosts iftar dinner at White House

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump hosted an iftar dinner at the White House for Ambassadors and members of diplomatic corps "representing countries with significant Muslim populations," the White House said in a statement Tuesday. In remarks at the iftar, Trump said he was "delighted" to share the "special meal" with so many esteemed dignitaries and friends, saying "I have so many friends in this room and cherished partners from around the world."

He added "we have resolved to defeat the evils of terrorism and religious persecution so that all people can worship without fear," as he referred to the "many trials and hardships" that have been endured in recent weeks. Among the iftar guests were Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah, Jordanian Ambassador Dina Kawar and Tunisian Ambassador Faycal Gouia. — KUNA



**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump hosts iftar dinner at the White House attended by Kuwait Ambassador to US Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah. — KUNA

## Attacks expose weaknesses in Gulf security

**RIYADH:** Attacks on Saudi tankers and other vessels off the coast of the United Arab Emirates this week expose vulnerabilities in the security of a key oil-shipping route amid rising tensions between the United States, Iran and Gulf Arab states. The operation near the Strait of Hormuz appeared designed to test the resolve of the United States and its Sunni Muslim allies without triggering a war, after Washington tightened sanctions on Iran and beefed up its military presence nearby.

The UAE has not characterized the

sabotage or blamed anyone, but US national security agencies believe proxies sympathetic to or working for Iran may have been behind it, a US official has said. Tehran has distanced itself from the incident, which no one has claimed. "This is a pin-prick event, a little needle-like jab at the maritime trade going into the Strait of Hormuz," said Gerry Northwood, chairman of risk management and security firm MAST.

The attack took place off Fujairah emirate, just outside the Strait, a narrow waterway separating Iran from the Arabian Peninsula where a fifth of global oil consumption passes from Middle East producers. Two days later, Saudi Arabia said armed drones had hit two oil pumping stations in the kingdom, an attack claimed by the Iran-aligned Houthis in neighboring Yemen.

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### Ramadan Kareem

## Decisions: Time to reflect

By Ali Abubacker

Life is a journey of decisions. But what is a decision? The Oxford dictionary states that it is the conclusion or resolution after consideration. Since pre-teens we start taking responsibility for our decisions because we understand the consequences. Innocent children of tender age are not responsible for their decisions because they do not yet have that understanding.

In our lives we must have taken millions of decisions from "which socks to wear" to "which multi-million-dollar expenditure option do I approve from my staff." "Do I agree to marry this girl?"; "Do I study engineering at university or not?"; "Do I join company A or B?"; "Do I buy this house or that?"; "Many mundane or complex issues require decisions... but how to consider before deciding? Do I go left or right?"

Throughout our lives we have taken decisions which have material or worldly gain. But when we look back do we regret some of them? Did we decide to do things which caused heartache or pain to ourselves or others? Did we end up losing as a result of the decision? As Muslims we are told to seek help from Allah in all our affairs.

Decision-making is a critical aspect that requires Allah's guidance as He knows what we do not. Moreover, we may have made decisions where our intentions were not pure or where we had hidden agendas or were being selfish. Reflecting back we feel regret and know that Islam is about ethics-based decisions bound by the lawful and unlawful.

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**KHAN YUNIS:** An injured Palestinian demonstrator is seen on the ground during clashes with Israeli forces following a protest marking the 71st anniversary of Nakba yesterday. — AFP (See Page 7)

## MPs approve insurance and tenders laws

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The National Assembly yesterday approved a new insurance law and amendments to the tenders law in the first reading amid calls by MPs that the insurance sector must come under the Central Bank or continue under the Commerce Ministry. Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said the Assembly will hold a secret session today to debate regional developments amid heightened Iran-US tensions and the escalation following drone attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels

against Saudi oil targets.

Commerce and Industry Minister Khaled Al-Roudhan said that Kuwait badly needs a new insurance law especially that the existing legislation was issued some 60 years ago and it was amended for the last time in 1981. He said the existing law does not include supervisory tools and the new one has tackled all the negative aspects in the insurance sector, adding that Kuwait was the first Gulf state to regulate its insurance sector but is the last to implement latest developments.

The minister said that 39 insurance companies are operating in the country, 28 of them are Kuwaiti and the rest are foreign. Together, the insurance companies are dealing with around KD 13 billion. MP Saleh Ashour called for the insurance sector to be under the

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## Palestinians mark 'Nakba'; 47 injured

**GAZA:** Israeli troops wounded nearly 50 Palestinians at the Gaza border yesterday during protests to mark the 71st anniversary of the "Nakba", or catastrophe, when many Palestinians lost their homes in the fighting around Israel's creation, Gaza officials said. Thousands had gathered at the coastal enclave's frontier with Israel, the scene of bloodshed over the past year that has raised international

al concern.

Groups approached the border fence, planting Palestinian flags and throwing stones towards Israeli soldiers on the other side despite the efforts of marshalls in orange vests to keep protesters away from the barrier, witnesses said. Israeli troops fired tear gas and rubber bullets to repel them, but also live ammunition, the witnesses said. The Gaza Health Ministry said at least 47 people were wounded, though it was not clear how many of those were hit by live ammunition or were hurt by rubber bullets or by inhaling tear gas.

The Israeli military said about 10,000 rioters and demonstrators gathered in

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**KUWAIT:** A bus driver was killed in an accident with a truck on Fourth Ring Road. Seven others were injured. The body was recovered by the coroner. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun