



KUWAIT: Kuwaitis buy prayer beads at a market in Kuwait City during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan— Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Modi, Khan speak for the first time...

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Kashmir-divided between India and Pakistan since partition in 1947 - claimed by a militant group based in Pakistan killed 40 Indian troops.

India and Pakistan then carried out tit-for-tat air strikes, but to the great relief of the international com-

munity the two countries retreated from the brink of further action. Earlier this month, in a diplomatic victory for India, the UN added Masood Azhar, the leader of the group that claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing, to its terrorist blacklist.

The group, Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), itself has been on the UN terror list since 2001. The last time that Modi and Khan spoke is believed to have been when Modi congratulated his counterpart on his election victory in July 2018. Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) last week sealed a landslide election win, thanks in part to Modi talking tough about Pakistan. — AFP

## French IS members sentenced...

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One was later released as it was found he had travelled to Syria to support the Yazidi religious minority - the target of a particularly brutal IS campaign that rights groups say may have amounted to genocide. The remaining 12 were put on trial under Iraq's counterterrorism law, which can dole out the death penalty to anyone found guilty of joining a "terrorist" group, even if they were not explicitly fighting.

Gonot, who fought for IS before being arrested in Syria with his mother, wife, and half-brother, has also been sentenced in absentia by a French court to nine years in prison, according to the French Terrorism Analysis Center (CAT). Machou was a member of the infamous Tariq ibn Ziyad brigade, "a European foreign terrorist fighter cell" that carried out attacks in Iraq and Syria and planned others in Paris and Brussels, according to US officials.

Lopez, from Paris, travelled with his wife and two chil-

dren to IS-held Mosul in northern Iraq before entering Syria, French investigators say. Iraq declared victory over IS in late 2017 and began trying foreigners accused of joining the jihadists the following year. Rights groups including Human Rights Watch have criticized Iraq's anti-terror trials, which they say often rely on circumstantial evidence or confessions obtained under torture.

Baghdad has offered to try all foreign fighters in SDF custody - estimated at around 1,000 - in exchange for millions of dollars, Iraqi government sources have told AFP. Among those sentenced to life in prison are 58-year-old Frenchman Lahcen Ammar Gueboudj and two other French nationals. Iraq has also tried thousands of its own nationals arrested on home soil for joining IS, including women, and begun trial proceedings for nearly 900 Iraqis repatriated from Syria.

The country remains in the top five "executioner" nations in the world, according to an Amnesty International report in April. The number of death sentences issued by Iraqi courts more than quadrupled between 2017 and 2018, to at least 271. But only 52 were actually carried out in 2018, according to Amnesty, compared with 125 the year before. Analysts have also warned that prisons in Iraq have in the past acted as "academies" for future jihadists, including IS supremo Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. — AFP



BAGHDAD: Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Ali Al-Hakim (right) attends a press conference with Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Baghdad yesterday. — AFP

## Iran vows to defend itself against...

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media quoted Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi as saying "there are no direct or indirect talks between Iran and the United States".

Washington has been seeking to tighten sanctions against Iran as relations worsen under US President Donald Trump, who last year pulled out of a nuclear agreement that predecessor Barack Obama had signed with Iran and other world powers in 2015. In Tehran, President Hassan Rouhani floated the idea of holding a referendum over Iran's nuclear program, Iranian media reported.

A referendum over the program could give Iran's leaders space to maneuver and a chance to resolve the stand-off with the United States. Top Iranian leaders have said they are not seeking war with the United States and officials speaking to Reuters from Tehran last week said that despite the sharpened rhetoric with Washington, authorities are trying to avoid open conflict.

"Article 59 of the Constitution (referendum) is a deadlock breaker ... and could be a problem-solver at any juncture," the semi-official news agency ILNA quoted Rouhani as saying late on Saturday. Rouhani said that, when he was a top nuclear negotiator in 2004, he had proposed holding a referendum on the nuclear issue to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Iran has held only three referendums since its 1979 Islamic revolution—to approve the setting up of an Islamic Republic and then to approve and amend the

constitution. Washington says it has built up the US military presence in the region, accusing Tehran of threats to US troops and interests. Tehran has described US moves as "psychological warfare" and a "political game". Separately, a deputy commander of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards said the US military presence in the Middle East was at its "weakest in history" despite talk of a build-up.

Meanwhile, Iraqi leaders have warned of the risks of war during a visit by Iranian Foreign Minister, whose country is locked in a tense standoff with the United States. "We are currently repelling all the efforts of war against Iran, whether economic or military," Zarif said at a joint press conference with his Iraqi counterpart Mohammad Ali Al-Hakim. "We will face them with strength and we will resist," he added.

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi warned of the "danger of a war" during a meeting with Zarif, his office said. Abdel Mahdi pleaded for the "stability of the region and the upholding of the nuclear deal," it said, referring to a 2015 agreement between Tehran and major powers. Iraqi President Barham Saleh discussed with Zarif "the need to prevent all war or escalation," his office said.

On Saturday, Zarif called the deployment of extra US troops to the region "very dangerous and a threat to international peace and security." It follows a US decision in early May to send an aircraft carrier strike force and B-52 bombers in a show of force against what Washington's leaders believed was an imminent Iranian plan to attack US assets.

Washington says the latest reinforcements are in response to a "campaign" of recent attacks including a rocket launched into the Green Zone in Baghdad, explosive devices that damaged four tankers near the entrance to the Gulf, and drone strikes by Yemeni rebels on a key Saudi oil pipeline.— Agencies

## The merits of supplication...

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heart and emotions should be engulfed with the feeling that you really need Him yet He doesn't need you. In spite of that, He is able to give you whatever you ask of Him. In your quest for Allah's assistance and unstinted grants, avoid associating partners with Him.

He says in Al-Hadith Al-Quds: "I am, self-sustainable and, indeed, independent of the partners they associate with Me. So whoever does an act of worship to please Me and someone else, I will definitely abandon him to those he associates with Me." What a loss! Who can reward and care about you more than Allah - your creator, cherisher and sustainer! Ramadan is the best training course in sincerity to God (Allah.)

Be confident that Allah (SWT) will give you whatever you ask for: It may take time but eventually you will get it. And if you don't get it as you wanted, He will give it to you in another way that will be more beneficial and meritorious. Abu Huraira (RA) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said what can be translated as: "Whenever one of you supplicates, let him avoid saying, 'O Allah, give me such and such if You will.'

Rather, he should be firm and confident, and that should make invoke Allah (God Almighty) for big things; for there is nothing so big that Allah can't give His servant." Therefore, you are encouraged to ask of Allah anything that comes to your mind so long as it doesn't go beyond the parameters of the Islamic teachings. Etiquette of supplication in Islam:

## Turkey sends weapons to...

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Washington, which has criticized Russia's latest campaign and urged a ceasefire, also said it saw signs that Assad has used poison gas in the latest offensive and warned that it would respond "quickly and appropriately" if this were proven. Assad has denied such allegations throughout the war. A spokesman for the Turkey-backed National Liberation Front (NLF), Captain Najji Mustafa, did not confirm or deny any new supplies by Turkey, saying rebels had long had a big arsenal of weapons from anti-tank to armoured vehicles "alongside material and logistical support by our Turkish brothers".

(A) Avoid raising your voice whenever you supplicate to Allah (SWT). While we believe that Allah is very close to us, His nearness befits His majesty, grandeur and magnificence. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "Indeed, Allah, the One you pray and supplicate to is closer to every one of you than the neck of his camel." Although God Almighty is closer to us than the necks of our camels or our jugular veins, He is over the heavens and there is nothing above Him.

(B) Don't invoke a curse upon yourself or your wealth or your children in a fit of anger or else. Jaber bin Abdallah (RA) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said what can be translated as: "Never pray against yourselves nor your wealth nor your children. It may so happen that you supplicate invoking a curse on the aforementioned at a time when Allah directly answers prayers." (Reported by Muslim)

(C) Do not be impatient to get your supplication answered by Allah. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "Your supplications will be answered so long as you are not in hurry and desperate, saying, 'I have invoked my Lord enough but nothing has materialized.'" (Bukhari and Muslim)

(D) Begin with praising Allah (SWT), thank Him for the bounties and blessings He has conferred upon you, then invoke Him to send His peace, mercy and blessings to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), then finally supplicate for what you want.

*Courtesy of the TIES Center: the TIES Center aims at empower Kuwait's expats through social and educational services that promote a positive and productive role in society, and to facilitate opportunities for intra- and inter-faith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, you can contact TIES at Tel: 25231015/6; Hotline: 94079777; e-mail: info@tiescenter.net.*

The retreat from Kfar Nabouda was an upset to a Russian goal of a speedy military campaign to gain another slice of heavily populated Idlib province. In the last 24 hours, the Syrian army has been sending large troop reinforcements ahead of opening a new front, a source in touch with Syrian army commanders said. The Syrian army said it continued to intensify its attacks on what it called terrorist hideouts in the northwest.

A Turkey backed-rebel grouping called the National Army, which operates in northwestern border areas near Turkey, has been allowed to join mainstream rebel factions along the frontlines. "Large numbers of our fighters have joined with all their weapons to repel the assault," said Major Youssef Hamoud, their spokesman. The rebels' readiness to put aside differences that once led to bloody internecine fighting has united jihadists and mainstream rebels for the first time in years. — Reuters