

Full Gov't-CBE coordination to prop up economy **2**



Australia keeps World Cup hopes alive **4**



Trump's immigration order sparks confusion **5**



Strike a pose: International Yoga Day stretches around world **6**



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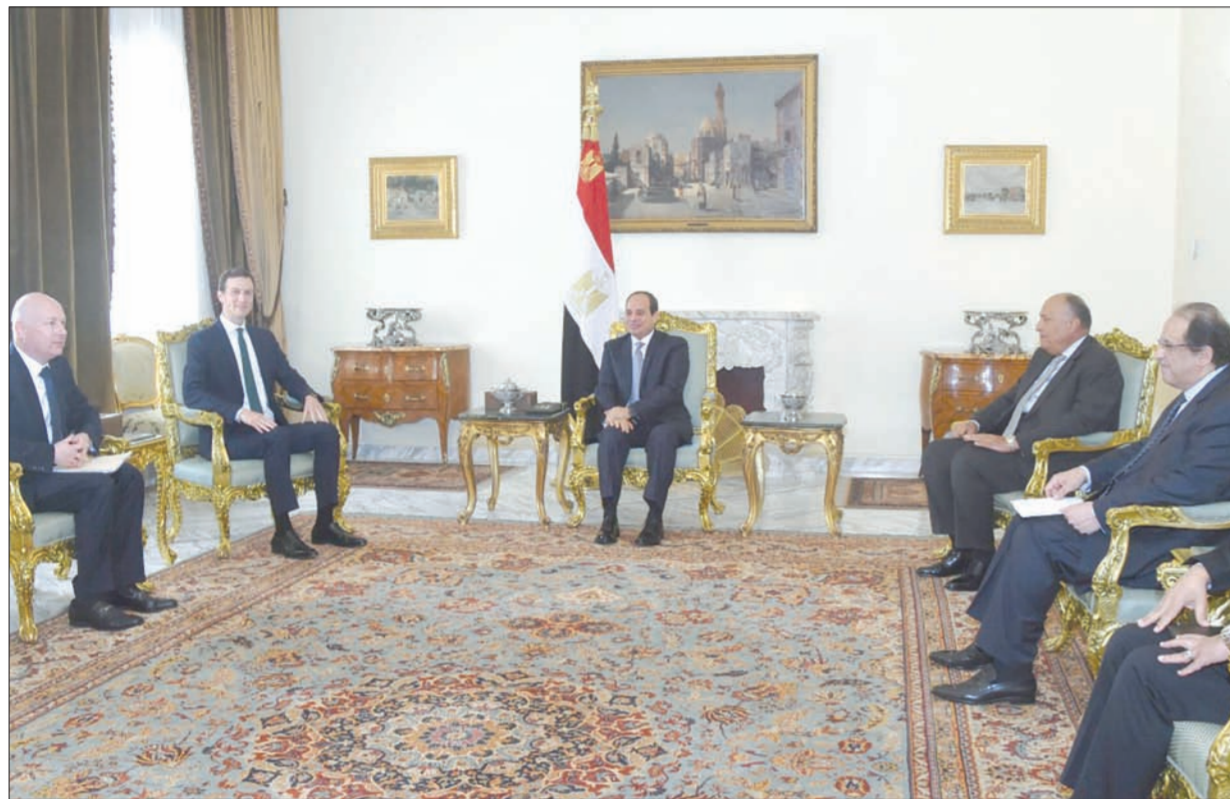
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In Figures

GERMAN Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday promised a \$100 million loan to troubled Jordan, where mass protests over austerity measures forced the prime minister to resign earlier this month. The chancellor said Germany will provide the \$100 million loan in addition to bilateral aid which amounts to about 384 million euros (\$442 million) this year.



PRESIDENT Abdel Fattah El Sisi during his meeting with Jared Kushner and Jason Greenblatt, the two top advisers to US President Donald Trump, yesterday.

US praises Egypt ties

Sisi: A just solution to Palestinian problem will create new status in ME

Ashraf Sadek

EGYPT confirms the importance of the strategic relations with the United States and Cairo's keenness on boosting co-operation and coordination with Washington on issues of shared interest to help the two countries confront the current regional challenges, President Abdel Fattah El Sisi affirmed yesterday.

At a meeting with the Senior Advisor, Jared Kushner, and the Special Representative for International Negotiations, Jason Greenblatt, who arrived in Cairo yesterday for talks with officials on the latest regional developments, President Sisi praised the long-term partnership between Egypt and the US in confronting the current regional challenges.

Speaking to the visiting officials and their accompanying delegation, President Sisi said that Egypt fully supported any international effort or initiative that was aimed at reaching a just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian problem, in accordance with the already approved resolutions and the two-state solution, which calls for the

establishment of an independent Palestinian state within the pre-June 5, 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The president then reviewed with Mr Kushner and Mr Greenblatt, the Egyptian efforts to effect a reconciliation between the Palestinian groups Fatah and Hamas, reduce tension in the Gaza Strip and ease the suffering of the Gaza residents. Last Month, President Sisi ordered the Rafah Border Crossing, which provides Gaza residents with a vital link to the outside world, to be kept open during the Holy Fasting Month of Ramadan.

President Sisi also talked about Egypt's continuous contacts with all the parties concerned, to push forward any effort aimed at the resumption of peace talks between the Palestinian and Israeli sides.

The president emphasised to Mr Kushner and Mr Greenblatt that reaching a just and comprehensive solution to the pivotal Palestinian problem would create a new status that would help bring about stability and security for all the countries of the Middle East region.

President Sisi also told the two US

officials and their delegation about Egypt's counter-terrorism efforts, which are being exerted in conjunction with the government's endeavours to achieve socio-economic development, Presidency Spokesman Ambassador Bassam Radi said in his round-up of the meeting.

Mr Kushner noted that Egypt and the United States were bound together by a strategic partnership and strong relations, Spokesman Radi said.

He asserted that the stability of Egypt was crucial to the stability of the Middle East region and that the US supported the economic reform programme that Egypt was now pursuing.

"The US Administration fully appreciates and supports Egypt's efforts to combat terrorism and extremism as well as Cairo's endeavours to reach a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian problem," Mr Kushner was quoted by Ambassador Radi as telling President Sisi.

Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukri and the Acting Intelligence Agency Chief, Major-General Abbas Kamel, attended the meeting.

Zohr project progressing well

Staff Report

PRESIDENT Abdel Fattah El Sisi yesterday held a meeting with Mr Claudio Descalzi, the Chief Executive Officer of the Eni oil company, which operates the offshore Zohr field, a presidency spokesman said.

During the meeting, President Sisi thanked Mr Descalzi for his company's efforts to speed up the operation and production of the Zohr project in accordance with the set timetables and plans.

The president expressed the keenness of the government for the company to continue its work and make more discoveries here, Presidency Spokesman Ambassador Bassam Radi said.

The president also directed the Petroleum Ministry to co-operate with Eni and remove any obstacles that might impede the progress of its work, Radi said.

Following the meeting, which was attended by Petroleum Minister Tarek el-Mulla and Acting Intelligence Agency Chief Abbas Kamel, Mr Descalzi said

that he had briefed President Sisi on the latest developments pertaining to the Zohr project as well as the company's current oil prospecting ventures in the country.

Mr Descalzi said that Eni was working on a project for developing the Nowras (Seagull) oilfield in the Nile Delta region.

He said that his talks with President Sisi dealt with the latest developments in Egypt's giant offshore Zohr field, which was discovered by Eni in 2015 and could turn Egypt into a regional energy hub.

He said that Egypt was one of the most important markets for his company as it has promising opportunities in the energy and renewable energy sectors.

Later, Mr Descalzi held talks with Minister el-Mulla that during which he expressed the Eni full confidence in the country's economy and investment climate.

"That is why the company had earmarked 70 per cent of its international investments for Egypt alone," he said, adding that Eni had \$8.4 billion into the

Nowras and Zohr fields project. "The company would put another \$3 billion into the coming phase of this project," he said.

During his meeting with Minister el-Mulla, Mr Descalzi presented a progress report about the Zohr field project in which he said that the company was moving ahead with the construction of an onshore gas treatment facility in Port Said governorate.

He said that the company was working in full co-operation with the Egyptian oil firms to complete the project phases in accordance with set timetables and action plans.

The development of Zohr in a record time would be a new source of energy for the Egyptian market. The offshore field, which is estimated to hold 30 trillion cubic feet of gas, would save the country some \$1 billion per annum in gas imports.

Egypt has drawn up plans to ensure its future energy security, since oil and natural gas are important in the government's development and investment plans.

Operation Sinai 2018 strikes at more terrorist hideouts

Staff Report

THIRTY-TWO highly-dangerous terrorists were eliminated and nine others were arrested in Central and Northern Sinai over the past few days as part of the comprehensive Operation Sinai 2018, which started on February 9, the Armed Forces said in a communiqué it issued yesterday.

The troops seized many automatic rifles, as well as ammunition and explosive devices, which were in the terrorists' possession.

Another 84 wanted criminals were arrested and referred to the authorities concerned for the proper legal action to be taken against them, the communiqué, the 24th since the start of the operation, said.

Two vehicles loaded with arms and ammunition were also destroyed by the Air Force in the Western Desert, the communiqué said.

In Central Sinai, the Armed Forces destroyed 21 targets, while the military engineers discovered and detonated 15 explosives that had been planted to target army personnel carrying out their missions in the theatre of operations, it added.

Twenty cannabis and bhang farms along with 466 kilos of bhang, ready for distribution and sale, were also seized in Northern and Central Sinai, the communiqué added.

It said that the Law Enforcement Forces spotted and destroyed 272 caches full of ammunition, explosive devices, computers, cameras, military uniforms, transmitters, money and books promoting extremist thought.

The communiqué said that the latest operations were part of the intensive efforts exerted by the Armed Forces to eliminate terrorism in Central and Northern Sinai.

In its action to secure the land crossings to and from Central Sinai, the Armed Forces seized a truck carrying narcotics, motorcycle spare parts, and explosives, west of Ahmed Hamdi Tunnel, said the communiqué, issued by the Armed Forces General Command. It added that the Border Guard forces had managed to seize five four-wheel-drive vehicles on the western border, carrying drugs, a sniper rifle, an automatic rifle and ammunition. They had also arrested 1099 infiltrators of different nationalities who were trying to enter the country illegally. The guards referred them to the authorities concerned for legal actions.

The comprehensive Operation Sinai 2018 is the latest in a series of rounds in the war on terrorism called The Martyr's Right (Haq el-Shaheed). The present round is far-reaching and intensive.

Mbappe strike sends France into knockout stages

YEKATERINBURG (News Wires) – France moved back above Denmark to the top of Group C with an unconvincing 1-0 win over Peru.

After their fortuitous 2-1 win over Australia in the opening game, France had hoped to make a statement in Ekaterinburg but struggled to impress once again.

Their winning goal came when Kylian Mbappe tapped in Olivier Giroud's deflected shot, as the Paris Saint-Germain forward became the youngest Frenchman to score at a World Cup finals.

Army reinforcements roll into Yemen's Hodeida

KHOKHA – Reinforcements rolled into Yemen's Hodeida yesterday as the army and its regional allies set their sights on the city's port held by rebels who have vowed to fight to the end.

Military sources said the army, backed by troops from the United Arab Emirates, had been sending backup troops to the area ahead of a major offensive to close in on the Red Sea port. "Our preparations are in their final stages for the advance on the port," a military source told AFP, requesting anonymity.

The Iran-allied Houthi rebels have refused to cede control of Hodeida port, the entry point of three quarters of imports to impoverished Yemen.

The Houthis have controlled the port since 2014, when they drove the



A MAN inspecting damage of an airstrike on a truck in the northwestern city of Saada yesterday.

government out of the capital and seized much of northern Yemen and a string of Red Sea ports.

On June 13, Yemen's army and its

allies launched their offensive to clear Hodeida of the rebels, raising UN concerns for vital aid shipments and food imports through the city's docks.

Assad presses assault in southwest

BEIRUT (Reuters) – Syrian government forces pounded rebel-held areas of the southwest with artillery yesterday, in a steady escalation by President Bashar al-Assad who has vowed to win back the area bordering Jordan and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

The Syrian Observatory for Human

Rights said 12,500 civilians had fled the town of Busra al-Hariri and nearby areas of Deraa province in the last two days. Rebel officials gave conflicting assessments of the scale of displacement.

A major government offensive in the southwest risks further escalating the seven-year-old war.

Iraq's top court upholds vote recount

BAGHDAD (News Wires) – Iraq's top court upheld yesterday a law mandating a nationwide recount of votes in a May parliamentary election but ruled that the cancellation of overseas, displaced, and Peshmerga ballots was unconstitutional.

Parliament, which had mandated the recount after a government report found

serious violations had taken place, had also canceled some results such as overseas and displaced votes by amending the election law this month.

The verdict from the Supreme Federal Court confirms the recount process, which was opposed by the elections commission and some parties who made significant gains in the election.