

Farouk's legacy The last king of Egypt on the centenary of his birth



Pregnant pause Is it possible for women to find a labour to love?



American dream From illegal alien to the global face of New York City



The weekend National

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 28 • SATURDAY FEBRUARY 29 2020

VOLUME:12 ISSUE:273 www.thenational.ae Dh3

AL QAEDA AND ISIS ALLY IN NEW THREAT TO WEST AFRICA

► Surge in regional violence attributed to extremists expanding sphere of influence in the Sahel

THE NATIONAL

Groups linked to Al Qaeda and ISIS are collaborating to gain control over vast areas of land in the Sahel, prompting fears that a surge in violence over the past year will escalate further.

The leader of US Special Operations Command Africa Brig Gen Dagvin Anderson said this week that the extremists' push in West Africa could become a threat for the West and the United States if left unchecked.

The two groups have fuelled ethnic clashes in Burkina Faso and neighbouring Mali as they expand their foothold in the Sahel, a semi-arid region between the Sahara desert and the continent's savannas in the south.

While the scenario poses no direct threat overseas, the US Air Force general said "it's very destabilising to the region".

Experts have long been concerned about a collaboration between Al Qaeda - which has been successfully consolidat-

ing its presence in northern Mali - and ISIS, which claimed an attack that killed four US soldiers in Niger in 2019.

In Burkina Faso, a recent spate of violence rocked the once-peaceful nation and turned it into the latest front for attacks by affiliates of the two groups. In January, 14 people, including seven children, were killed when a bus triggered a bomb in the country's north.

Senior UN officials from all three countries said last year

that insecurity had "reached unprecedented levels". Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced and thousands more have been killed as violence spirals across the region.

While groups linked to Al Qaeda are focusing on establishing safe havens in the Sahel, the largest ISIS affiliate in West Africa, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, is working to destabilise governments, gain territory and rally people to its cause.

High poverty rates and poor

services in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger - all among the 10 least developed countries in the world - create fertile conditions for extremist groups to recruit young men with promises of employment and a better life.

France, which leads military efforts in the region with 5,000 troops stationed there, announced this month that it was sending 600 more troops to combat militants in the Sahel.

Full report, page 3

UAE reveals six new cases of Covid-19 as two recover

THE NATIONAL

Six new cases of Covid-19 were reported in UAE, as two patients recovered from the coronavirus.

The Ministry of Health and Prevention on Thursday said the new patients are four Iranians, a Chinese citizen and a Bahraini. All had recently travelled to the UAE from Iran - where 254 people have been infected and 26 have died in the past few days - before the ban on all flights from the country.

The six new cases, that were detected using the UAE's early screening system, bring the country's total to 19.

The ministry also announced that two people from China had recovered - bringing the total number of healed patients in the UAE to five. One of the two, a 36-year-old woman, belonged to the family from Wuhan who became the UAE's first four cases of coronavirus in January. The entire family has now made a full recovery after being treated in UAE hospitals.

Iran's government, meanwhile, was thrown into turmoil on Thursday when coronavirus was diagnosed in three of its members.

The legislators were identified as Masoumeh Ebtekar, Vice President of Iran for Women and Family Affairs, Deputy Health Minister Iraj Harirchi and MP Mahmoud Sadeghi. Ms Ebtekar is better known as the English-language spokeswoman "Mary" for the 1979 hostage-takers who seized the US Embassy in Tehran.

Mojtaba Zonnour, MP for the city of Qom, where the Iranian outbreak began, posted a video on Thursday

Continued on pages 4-5

The price of protest



The aftermath in a riot-affected area of New Delhi yesterday after clashes between people demonstrating for and against a new citizenship law. Report, page 11 Reuters

NMC Health suspends trading on London Stock Exchange

FAREED RAHMAN

NMC Health suspended trading of its shares on the London Stock Exchange on Thursday, a day after the UAE company removed its chief executive and granted its finance chief extended sick leave.

The UK Financial Conduct Authority agreed to the suspension after a request by NMC's board to ensure "the smooth operation of the market", NMC said in a statement to the LSE. The former chief executive of

NMC Health, Prasanth Manghat, said he was unjustifiably removed from his job as investigations continue into the company's finances.

Mr Manghat told *The National* in reference to his dismissal: "The board should have done more analysis before taking that action. This, I believe is not in the interest of every stakeholder of the company."

NMC Health removed Mr Manghat as its chief executive on Wednesday and chief financial officer, Prashanth Shenoy,

was sent on extended sick leave amid an investigation into the company's finances.

An independent review into the company's activities "identified potential discrepancies and inconsistencies" in its bank statements and ledger entries, according to a statement from NMC on Wednesday.

Mr Manghat, however, said he does not accept the accusations and is considering legal action. "I will definitely take legal action against the board and the company," he said. "I

am currently working with my legal counsels."

NMC Health owns and manages more than 200 hospitals, medical centres, day surgery centres and home health clinics in the UAE, UK and Europe. It treats more than 8.5 million patients a year, according to the company website. NMC Health bought Al Zahra Hospital in Sharjah in 2017 for \$560 million (Dh2.05 billion) and opened its \$200m NMC Royal Hospital in Abu Dhabi in 2016 as part of its expansion plans.

Last year, the healthcare provider finalised a joint venture agreement with Saudi Arabia's General Organisation for Social Insurance that includes up to six billion riyals (Dh5.87bn) of investment in the kingdom over a five-year period.

Company founder BR Shetty and former vice chairman Khalifa Al Muhairi resigned from the company this month, the latter categorically denying any wrongdoing on his part.

Business, page 17

WEEKEND ESSAY

Can machine learning and AI predict the future of regional conflicts?

ROBERT TOLLAST / P13



NEWS THE LAST PAGE

TOP 10

Your essential guide to what's on in the Emirates

ABU DHABI ARABIAN NIGHTS



Shangri-La Hotel is hosting Hikayat Arabian Nights on Saturday. The event takes place every first and last Saturday of the month. Experience Arabic food in a majlis set-up, with meals crafted by Arabian chefs. Favourites include chicken mandi, camel with rice, jallab and qamar al-din. There will also be traditional live entertainment such as belly dancers, tanoura dancers and oud players. **► Saturday, 6pm-9pm; Dh169; Shangri-La Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri, Abu Dhabi; 02 509 8555**

DUBAI LEAP YEAR DEAL

The H Dubai is offering a two-day Leap Year Sale, with 29 per cent off its best available rates on deluxe

and premium rooms, with a free upgrade to an executive suite. Bookings must be made on Friday and Saturday, while stay dates are valid until Monday, December 28.

► Friday and Saturday; The H Dubai, Sheikh Zayed Road; www.hhoteldubai.com

DUBAI MIGHTY MATCH

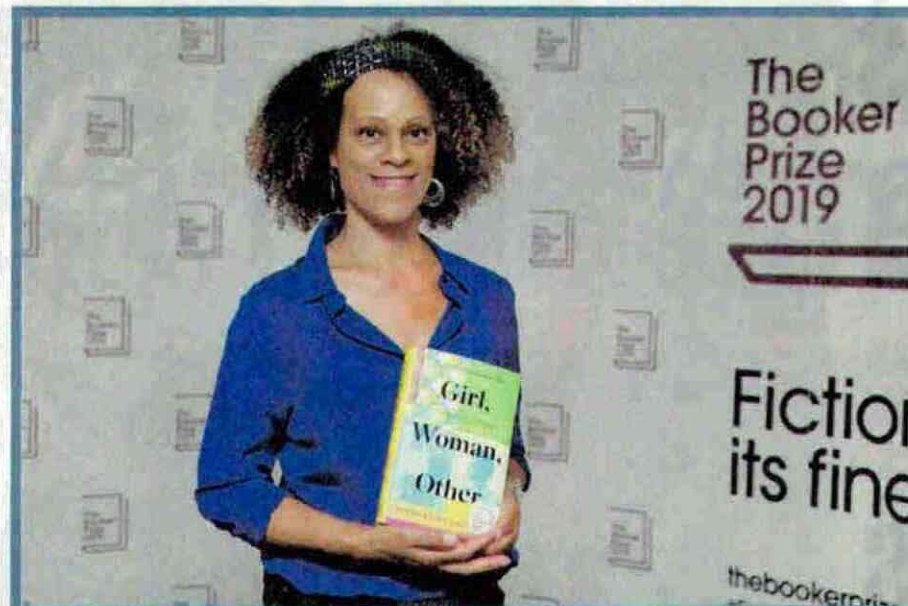
After two weeks of exciting on-court and off-court action at the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships, catch the men's singles semi-final and final. Off-court there will be entertainment, live music and a host of eating and drinking options.

► Until Saturday, February 29, match timings vary from 10:30am to 7pm; tickets from Dh55; Dubai Duty Free Tennis Stadium, Garhoud, Dubai; www.dubaidutyfreetennischampionships.com

ABU DHABI FIND YOUR FELINE

Rescue of Abu Dhabi is hosting a cat adoption day at Pet Oasis Veterinary Clinic. Kittens and adult cats in need of a loving home will be up for adoption. Fees apply and cats that are old enough will be spayed or neutered, vaccinated and microchipped.

► Saturday, 2pm-5pm; Pet Oasis Veterinary Clinic, Al Mushrif, Abu Dhabi; www.facebook/WeAreRoad



ABU DHABI HAY, GOODBYE

Today is the final day of Hay Festival Abu Dhabi, the literary event that started in Wales in 1987. The schedule includes a talk from children's author Philip Ardagh; 2019 Booker Prize winner Bernardine Evaristo (pictured); poet Tishani Doshi; and Najwa Bin Shatwan, Libyan academic and author of *Waber Al Ahssina* (The Horses' Hair). Also speaking is great Syrian poet Adonis, who will be celebrating his 90th birthday with a poetry party on the Etihad Garden Stage. Music-wise, today you can catch Rooftop Rhythm's popular silent disco party from 11pm.

► Today, times vary; from Dh20; locations across Manarat Al Saadiyat; 04 560 9600, www.hayfestival.com

DUBAI BIRTHDAY TREAT

Perry & Blackwelder's, located in Souk Madinat Jumeirah, is hosting a leap year party. Those born on February 29 can enjoy a complimentary two-course dinner, including a main course and a dessert. Meanwhile, other guests can also take advantage of some deals, as the

restaurant is offering a selection of drinks priced at Dh29 all day. There will also be dishes on offer for Dh29, including chilli cheese fries, P&B's signature chicken wings, glazed chicken poppers, and spinach and artichoke dip.

► Saturday, noon-2am; various prices; Perry & Blackwelder's, Souk Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai; 800 666 353, www.jumeirah.com

ABU DHABI CUT-PRICE TREATS

Catch the final days of the Galleria Al Maryah Island's dining campaign. Collect the restaurant guide from any Guest Services desk or download it from their website to take advantage of various offers. These include: Dh29 lunch specials, business lunch deals and

buy-one-get-one-free offers. Finally, Bouchon Bakery, Royal Orchid, Bombay Canteen and Loca will offer complimentary desserts with lunch and dinner.

► Friday, 10am-midnight; Saturday, 10am-10pm; various prices; The Galleria, Al Maryah Island, Abu Dhabi; www.thegalleria.ae

DUBAI FASHIONABLE ART

See Art: The Vogue Lesson, an exhibition by Flavio Lucchini. A heavyweight from the dual worlds of art and fashion, Lucchini's latest work is on display at the Oblong Gallery on Bluewaters Island in Dubai. Rendered as totemic statues almost devoid of human features, or as quasi-cartoon figures in pastel tones or gold leaf, Lucchini's work focuses intently on the space where art and fashion overlap.

► Daily, 11am-8pm; until Tuesday, March 10; free; Oblong Contemporary Art Gallery, Bluewaters Island, Dubai; www.oblongcontemporary.com

RAS AL KHAIMAH PARK LIFE

A new skatepark has opened at Saqr Park in Ras Al Khaimah. It offers 620 square metres of space for the emirate's skating community to practise and train on, with a series of obstacles, including a bowl, pyramids, ledges,



banks and round rails. It is expected to attract skateboarders, rollerbladers and BMX bike riders. The park has been built within a ghaf tree reserve, offering plenty of natural shade. The opening weekend will feature family-friendly events and a Ripe Market pop-up.

► Daily, 10am-midnight; free entry; Saqr Park, off the E18, Ras Al Khaimah; www.visitrasalkhaimah.com

ABU DHABI HERO'S WELCOME

Visit Warner Bros World Abu Dhabi for Super Hero Saturdays. Guests entering the theme park will be greeted with a live performance, as a DJ spins the tunes. Throughout the nine-week series, DC superheroes Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman will be available for photos and to pass along words of wisdom to the heroes-to-be. There will also be a glow-in-the-dark dance party, too.

► Saturdays, 11am; until Saturday, April 4; from Dh295 for adults, from Dh230 for children; Warner Bros World Abu Dhabi, Yas Island; www.wbworld.abudhabi.com