

THE DAILY **tribune**



Johnson sets the pace **19** SPORTS

WORLD **13** French President under fire

'Trump discussed payments to Playboy model'

New York

President Donald Trump's former personal lawyer secretly recorded Trump discussing a potential payment for a former Playboy model's account of having an affair with him, people familiar with an investigation into the attorney said yesterday.

The payment was never made, according to Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani, who confirmed the recording and said it shows Trump did nothing wrong.

Former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen surreptitiously made the recording two months before Trump's 2016 election, according to a person familiar with a federal investigation into Cohen that brought the tape to light.

New Hajj link for Qatari pilgrims

Riyadh

The Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah has allocated a new website link to receive the requests of Qataris who wish to perform Hajj after the Qatari authorities blocked the old one.

The new link was made available as part of King Salman's efforts to facilitate the arrival of all pilgrims and ensure that any obstacles that they may face are overcome. The ministry said that it welcomes the arrival of Qatari pilgrims this year irrespective of the ongoing Gulf dispute. The arrival and departure of Qatari pilgrims will take place via King Abdul Aziz International Airport in Jeddah and through any airlines except Qatar Airways.

Shops selling beIN Sports cards to face tough action

Manama

The Ministry of Information Affairs yesterday announced that it will step up inspections against shops selling beIN Sports receivers, warning strict action against violators.

Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have banned the import of beIN Sports receivers and stopped the sale and renewal of subscriptions to the Qatar state-funded sports channels.

The Doha-headquartered beIN media group is the suc-

cessor of Al Jazeera Sports launched in 2003.

In January 2014, the beIN media group was incorporated and Al Jazeera Sports channels were rebranded to beIN Sports.

In November 2015, the group announced it would be expanding from sports-only offerings to air "blockbuster movies, family entertainment, factual and kids' content."

The group says it broadcasts 60 channels across five continents, within 43 countries, and in seven different languages. It has more than 55 million pay-TV

subscribers.

The network is blatantly involved in suspicious cases linked to supporting terrorism

and extremist groups and to promoting the discourse of sedition, hatred and extremism in the region, the ministry said.

The channels were also found, mainly during the broadcasting of FIFA World Cup matches, to be involved in campaigns of political distortion against several Arab countries and in abuses to discredit them.

The ministry said that it condemned such abuses that reflected a poor mind-set within the channels and the adoption of a confused policy and terrible

media standards that cannot be missed by any observer.

"We reiterate our consistent position of denouncing the policy adopted by the beIN Sports channels that intrudes politics into sports in order to achieve personal gains that clash with the universal goals of sport," the ministry said.

The ministry renewed its call to review the legal position of the beIN Sports channels in each country, especially after the offensive campaigns they adopted to harm the Arab countries and peoples.

60
 channels are broadcast by Qatar-based Al Jazeera Network.

Strategic friends

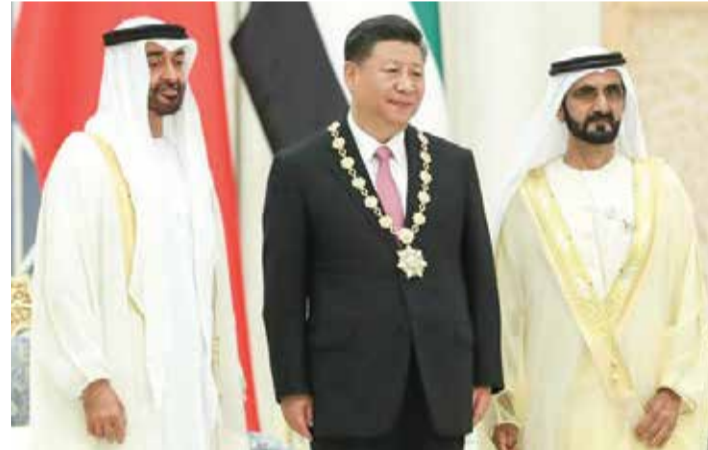
13 agreements and memoranda of understanding signed between China and the UAE during Xi's visit

● As both a major energy exporter and a hub for international trade, the UAE is an important part of Xi's "Belt and Road" initiative.

● China's commerce minister Zhong Shan said that his country was ready to cooperate with the UAE to promote globalisation.

Dubai

China and the United Arab Emirates signed a raft of financial, business and trade agreements yesterday during a visit by President Xi Jinping to the UAE, underscoring



Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan with Xi after the Chinese President was conferred with the Order of Zayed, the UAE's highest civil decoration.

energy-hungry Beijing's rapidly growing interest in the Middle East.

Xi made the first visit by a Chinese leader to the Gulf state in 29 years, meeting two of its leaders, Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, ruler of Dubai, and

Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi.

They announced 13 agreements and memoranda of understanding, including approval for the first Chinese state-owned financial services firm to set up in

53.5
 billion American dollars was the trade between the UAE and China last year.

Abu Dhabi Global Market, a financial center, while the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company and the China National Petroleum Corporation agreed to explore joint business opportunities.

As both a major energy exporter and a hub for international trade, the UAE is an important part of Xi's "Belt and Road" initiative to invest in infrastructure linking China by both sea and land to markets in Asia and Europe.

"We have many areas of politi-

cal and economic agreement and a solid base of projects in the energy, technology and infrastructure sectors. More importantly (we have) a strong political will to start a greater phase of cooperation and integration," Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid wrote in a Twitter post.

"Today, we have exemplary relations with China and a Chinese leadership that sees the UAE as main strategic partner in the region," he added.

China is the UAE's second largest trading partner and biggest source of imports. The UAE is the gateway for about 60 per cent of China's exports to the Middle East, and on its own accounts for around a quarter of total Arab trade with China.

UAE economy minister Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri said that total bilateral trade between his country and China is expected to reach \$58 billion in 2018, up from \$53.5 billion in 2017.

FALLING IN LOVE

India's Modi surprised by opposition star Rahul Gandhi hug

New Delhi

Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi surprised Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday when he interrupted a no-confidence debate by walking across the parliament floor to give his rival a hug.

Modi easily survived the no-confidence vote thanks to his parliamentary majority but not before a 12-hour debate in which his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) battled with Gandhi's Indian National Congress, in a warm-up for elections due by May.

The Hindu nationalist BJP calls Gandhi, the fourth-generation scion of the Nehru-Gandhi family, a "failed dynast" out of touch with ordinary people whose only political credential is the accident of his birth.

After a speech accusing Modi of promoting crony capitalism, Gandhi addressed such criticism: "You have anger



Rahul winks after hugging Modi.



Rahul hugs Modi in Lok Sabha.

against me, you can call me names, you can abuse me, but I don't have a speck of hatred against you. I will take out this hatred out of you and turn it into love," he said before striding across the floor to put his arms awkwardly around the seated prime minister.

Startled by Gandhi's gesture, Modi

froze in his seat but later called Gandhi back to his seat and shook hands, smiling.

Modi, whose BJP is setting up next year's vote as a presidential-style contest between the experienced prime minister and an untested challenger, is himself known for his bear hugs, embracing leaders such as US President Donald Trump

and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

After a poor start in politics, losing a string of elections to Modi's party, Gandhi is drawing crowds as he seeks to exploit Modi's failure to deliver tens of thousands of jobs he promised India's youth and a broader decline in law and order.



03 Can't pay? Won't pay!

04 Comedy 'booming on social media'

05 Court acquits man accused of arson

