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# MoI lifts ban on recruiting Ethiopian domestic workers

## MoCI sets fixed rates of KD 990 and KD 390 for hiring helpers

### Kuwaiti properties in Basra 'safe'



**BASRA:** The Kuwaiti media delegation meets head of Basra governorate council Waleed Kitan yesterday. — KUNA (See Page 2)

**BASRA, Iraq:** Kuwaiti properties in Basra are safe and there is no power that can change the status of the properties' ownership, an Iraqi official said yesterday. Speaking to KUNA while meeting a visiting Kuwaiti media delegation, Basra Governor Asaad Al-Eidani said properties belonging to prominent Kuwaiti families still exist and are protected by documentation and official statistics. Any attempt to change real estate ownership must go through the Kuwaiti consulate in Basra and the Iraqi authorities, said Eidani, who affirmed that such a process can only be done via original documentation and authorized procedures.

He affirmed that Kuwaitis eager to visit their properties in Basra are welcome to do so, adding that many Kuwaiti families refused to sell their properties; therefore, they are the rightful owners of the sites. The governor lauded Kuwait for all its efforts to assist Iraq, noting that the recent Kuwait International Conference for



**Basra Governor Asaad Al-Eidani**

the Reconstruction of Iraq (KICRI), attended by 75 nations, reflected Kuwait's strong interest in the welfare of Iraq.

Eidani welcomed Kuwaiti involvement in investment and business ventures in Basra and elsewhere in Iraq, affirming that this will reflect posi-

tively on Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations. The situation in Basra, especially within the security domain, has improved tremendously due to the defeat of the so-called Islamic State, the Iraqi official said.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti media delegation also met head of Basra's governorate council Waleed Kitan, who briefed them on various service projects in the governorate. The official said Basra is eager to witness the participation of Kuwaiti investors in numerous ventures in the city. The Kuwaiti media delegation arrived on Sunday for talks with local officials and to visit archeological sites in the nearby Thi Qar governorate. The delegation includes KUNA Deputy Director General for Editorial Affairs Saad Al-Ali, Editor-in-Chief of Al-Anbua Yusuf Al-Marzouq, Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait Times Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, Media Advisor at HH the Prime Minister's Diwan Hassan Al-Sayegh and others. — KUNA

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait will begin rehiring Ethiopian domestic workers after a ban that lasted for years, the interior ministry announced yesterday. The decision was made after a series of meetings with representatives from the Ethiopian government, the interior ministry's assistant undersecretary for citizenship and passports affairs Maj Gen Sheikh Mazen Al-Sabah said in a statement. He pointed out that this is being done on compassionate grounds as well, as the holy month of Ramadan is approaching, which invariably means more household chores for Kuwaiti families.

Sheikh Mazen made clear Ethiopian delegates were apprised of a raft of measures the government has taken to protect the rights of domestic workers. Kuwait has long been a magnet for migrant domestic workers, he said, adding that the country is keen on exploring new opportunities in the domestic work market.

"We aim to open the door to the recruitment of Ethiopian workers to fill the deficit of domestic servants and reduce prices," said General Talal Al-Maarifi, head of the interior

ministry's general department of residency affairs. The Philippines banned its citizens from working in Kuwait after the body of 29-year-old Joanna Demafelis was found in a freezer earlier this year, bearing signs of torture. Ethiopia five years ago instituted a similar ban, following reports of abuse and complaints that employment agencies lured its citizens to work under illegal and appalling conditions. The ban was lifted last Thursday.

Maarifi said there were more than 15,000 Ethiopians currently living and working in Kuwait. Kuwaiti police in March 2017 detained a woman for filming her Ethiopian maid falling from the seventh floor without trying to rescue her. The 12-second video shows the maid hanging outside the building, with one hand tightly gripping the window frame, as she begs for help.

Meanwhile, anyone seeking to hire the services of a domestic worker through any government-accredited offices throughout the country will now have to pay KD 990 (\$3,267). According to a decision by Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled



**Maj Gen Sheikh Mazen Al-Sabah**

Al-Roudhan, those who prefer to handle the process on their own are required to provide the office with a copy of the domestic worker's passport, and the cost will be KD 390 (\$1,287). These charges are fixed and not subject to change, the commerce ministry stressed in a statement, warning violators of legal action. It added the decision will be in effect for a trial period of six months pending reevaluation. — Agencies

### MBS says Israelis have right to land; Houthis attack Saudi oil tanker

**RIYADH:** Saudi King Salman reaffirmed support for Palestinians to US President Donald Trump, state media said yesterday, after his son and heir apparent said Israel has a "right" to a homeland. The king "reaffirmed the kingdom's steadfast position towards the Palestinian issue and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital," the official Saudi Press Agency said. The king also empha-

sized the need to advance the Middle East peace process in a phone call with Trump, which came after Israeli forces killed 17 Palestinians last week during a demonstration on its border with Gaza.

Saudi Arabia and Israel have no formal diplomatic relations, but behind the scenes their ties appear to have improved in recent years against what they see as a common Iranian threat. Israel's conflict with the Palestinians has long proved an obstacle to a full rapprochement, however, as Riyadh still supports the Palestinian claim to sovereignty.



**Prince Mohammed**

Continued on Page 11

### Russia-Turkey ties tighten with nuclear project, Syria talks

**ANKARA:** Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday embarked on a two-day visit to Russia's increasingly close partner Turkey to launch the construction of its first nuclear power plant and coordinate policy on the war in Syria. Putin held an afternoon of talks with his counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan, before the two strongmen leaders are joined today by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani for a summit devoted to Syria.

Their meeting in Ankara opened with Putin and Erdogan, via video conference, launching construction of Turkey's first nuclear power station in the Mediterranean Mersin region, a massive project that will come online in half a decade. In a sign of the importance of the alliance, Putin's visit to Turkey is his first trip abroad since he won a historic fourth presidential mandate in March 18 polls.

Putin and Erdogan - who have both led their post-imperial states out of economic crisis but also into a new era of confrontation with the West - have forged an increasingly close alliance in recent months. The Russian leader was driven to the vast presidential palace surrounded by an escort of Turkish troops in ceremonial dress on horseback and was warmly greeted by Erdogan who was waiting in person at the gate.

Their meeting comes as ties between Russia and the West are nosediving to post-Cold War lows after the March poisoning of Russian ex-double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the UK. While EU powers have rushed to join Britain in condemning Russia and expelling diplomats over the attack on Skripal, Turkey has been much more circumspect. Erdogan, who in 2017 held eight face-to-face meetings with Putin and has already spoken to the Russian leader seven times by phone this year, has said that Ankara will not act against Moscow "based on an allegation". In a move that has



**ANKARA:** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (left) and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin attend a symbolic groundbreaking ceremony for Turkey's first nuclear power station at the Presidential Palace yesterday. — AFP

troubled Turkey's NATO allies, Ankara has agreed to buy S-400 air defense missile systems from Russia.

But Ankara-Moscow relations were also tested by a severe crisis from Nov 2015 when Turkey shot down a Russian war plane over Syria, a confrontation both sides are trying to put behind each other. Despite being on different sides of the Syrian civil war, key regime backers Russia and Iran have joined with rebel-supporting Turkey to push forward a peace process but also to ensure influence in Syria once the conflict ends. "We are also in close cooperation with Russia to end as soon as possible the terror threat and clashes in Syria," said Erdogan.

Continued on Page 11

### Oil to solar: Saudis push to be renewable energy powerhouse

**AL UYAYNA, Saudi Arabia:** Saudi engineers whip up a simulated sandstorm to test a solar panel's durability at a research lab, the heart of the oil-rich kingdom's multibillion dollar quest to be a renewable energy powerhouse. The world's top exporter of crude seems an unlikely champion of clean energy, but the government lab in Al Uyayna, a sun-drenched village near Riyadh, is leading the country's efforts for solar power as it seeks to diversify.

A dazzling spotlight was shone on those ambitions

last week when Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman unveiled plans to develop the globe's biggest solar power project for \$200 billion in partnership with Japan's SoftBank group. The memorandum of understanding to produce up to 200 gigawatts of power by 2030 - about 100 times the capacity of the current biggest projects - was the latest jaw-dropping statement as the Saudis look to wean themselves off oil.

If built on one site, the solar farm would cover an area twice the size of Hong Kong, according to a Bloomberg News calculation. While the scale of the plan has stirred some disbelief - the agreement announced in the US was greeted with determination at the laboratory. "We can do it," said Adel al-Sheheween, director of the solar laboratory under the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology.

Continued on Page 11



**AL UYAYNA:** A Saudi man talks on his mobile under the shade of a solar panel at a solar plant on March 29, 2018. — AFP

## Local

# Detention center rules abide by human rights standards

## Kuwait, Morocco okay judicial cooperation protocol implementation

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Interior Ministry has stressed that it is eager to uphold the rule of law at detention centers, with full respect for international human rights standards, an official said yesterday. The Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Criminal Justice Major General Khaled Al-Deen made the remarks after meeting the deputy head of the International Committee of the Red Cross' (ICRC) regional delegation Ralph Wehbe, read a statement by the ministry. The Kuwaiti official pointed out that his country's partnership with the ICRC has proven fruitful for both sides, saying that Kuwait is a proponent of a number of international human rights conventions and agreements. He went on to say that Kuwait has introduced various legislations that underline its commitment to human rights, including a regular report submitted to the UN in that regard.

In another development, Kuwait and Morocco

jointly signed a working program for the implementation of a protocol on judicial cooperation, during a Kuwaiti official's visit to the North African country. The two-year program, which falls in line with the protocol signed in 2008, aims to strengthen bilateral cooperation on the exchange of expertise related to the training of judges, law clerks and judicial assistants. It also approves the co-organization of forums and the exchange of know-how in relation to judicial work, the issuance of annual public notices, authentication and information management. Kuwait's Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Fahad Al-Afasi alongside Morocco's Minister of Justice Mohamed Ojar signed the document on behalf of their respective countries. The Kuwaiti minister arrived in Marrakech on Sunday heading a delegation that attended an international conference on justice. —Agencies



**KUWAIT:** The Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Criminal Justice Major General Khaled Al-Deen meets the deputy head of the ICRC regional delegation Ralph Wehbe. —KUNA

## Media delegation promotes, boosts Iraq-Kuwait ties

**BASRA:** The Kuwaiti media delegation's visit to the city of Basra will lead to the bolstering of relations between Kuwait and Iraq, said a Kuwaiti diplomat yesterday. Speaking to KUNA, Kuwait's consul to the southern Iraqi city Ambassador Yousef Al-Sabbag said that the Kuwaiti media delegation's visit to Basra, which began Sunday, included several meetings with senior local officials. He indicated that finding ways to boost investments was one of the major issues discussed during the meetings, adding that a proposal was made to open a commercial bureau at the Iraqi embassy in Kuwait, which will be directly tasked with handling the affairs of mutual Iraqi and Kuwaiti enterprises and businesses.

The Kuwaiti diplomat indicated that Basra used to be a destination for Kuwaitis seeking tourism in the past, saying that to revive this aspect, local authorities in the southern Iraqi city must work on measures to attract visitors from Kuwait. The Kuwaiti media delegation arrived last Sunday for talks with local officials and visit archeological sites in the nearby Thi Qar Governorate. The delegation also includes KUNA Deputy Director General for Editorial Saad Al-Ali, Chief Editor of Al-Anbaa Newspaper Yusuf Al-Marzouq, Chief Editor of Kuwait Times Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, Media Advisor at His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Hassan Al-Sayegh, and others. —KUNA



**Kuwaiti media delegation and Iraqi officials pose for a group photo. —KUNA**

## Man ingests gasoline

**KUWAIT:** An Egyptian was admitted to Adan Hospital's ICU after he ingested gasoline while attempting to siphon it from a boat with his mouth. A citizen told police he saw an expat lying next to his boat with a hose inside the gas tank. When paramedics arrived, they found he had ingested the gasoline.

### Endangering lives

An adolescent was arrested while showing off in his car near Sabah Al-Nasser Co-op roundabout. The suspect was sent to the traffic department and charged with endangering his and others' lives. He confessed to violating the traffic law.

### Drug suspect nabbed

A citizen in his 40s was sent to the Drugs Control General Department for possessing what is suspected of being drugs. The man was seen sitting on the pavement, and when his ID was checked, he was found wanted for a KD 2,067 debt. While getting inside the police car, he threw out a joint, so police picked it up as evidence.

### Drug overdose

An Egyptian abused a large amount of heroin, then threw what was left out of fear of police. He then collapsed and was rushed to a medical center, where he confessed. A police patrol noticed a man in a Farwaniya street unable to control himself, who then collapsed and hurt himself. An ambulance took him to the medical center, where it was found out he suffered a sharp drop in blood pressure due to drug use. The Egyptian confessed to using drugs and told police he threw some of it in the area where he collapsed. Police went to the area and found a bag full of powder. The case is in the hands of concerned authorities.

### Maid disappears

A citizen accused her maid of stealing money and jewelry and disappearing. The citizen said her maid was missing when she returned home, then discovered that jewelry worth KD 2,700 and KD 900 were also missing. She said the maid's phone is switched off. Police are working on the case. — Al-Rai/Al-Anbaa

## Shabu farm in Kabd

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** Drugs Control General Department arrested a citizen who manufactured shabu in a farm he owns in Kabd. Authorities were tipped off about his activity and a warrant was obtained. The farm was raided and 10 kg of shabu was found ready for sale. The suspect said the liquid raw material was delivered by a driver from a neighboring country, but did not give any information about him.

## KIB sponsors World Down Syndrome Day event

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait International Bank (KIB) sponsored an event for World Down Syndrome Day, which was organized by the Ministry of Health's Kuwait Medical Genetic Center (KMGC) in cooperation with a Down Syndrome support group and the Kuwait Down Syndrome Society. Held at Gulf Square, the event featured a range of exciting and fun-filled activities for children with Down Syndrome and their families, seeking to mobilize community support and promote inclusion.

On his part, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia, said: "This sponsorship comes as part of KIB's unwavering commitment to enhancing communication and collaboration between health care providers and children with Down Syndrome and their families. On the occasion of this global event, we hoped to bring joy and happiness to the lives of these children by



supporting activities that raise public awareness and advocate for their rights, needs, inclusion and overall well-being. Additionally, the event provided families with a platform to meet and exchange experiences, thereby reducing parents' doubts and anxieties, as well as introducing them to valuable information."

Najia added that KIB strongly believes that children affected by Down Syndrome should be treated equally to other children, as they are fully capable of living normal lives with the right opportunities, necessary support from the community and proper health care services. It is worth noting that KIB's sponsorship falls under the umbrella of its leading social responsibility program. Accordingly, the Bank is committed to supporting global events and initiatives that contribute to the development of all segments of the local community.

## US ambassador launches 'American Restaurant Guide'

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman launched the 'American Restaurant Guide', a booklet that will showcase 26 restaurants from the United States. The launch was held at the US Embassy premises on Monday night with the participation of various companies, CEOs and owners listed in the catalogue. "I sometimes joke that there are more American restaurants here in Kuwait than I know from living in the US. There's a good reason for that: Kuwaitis have developed a taste for American food and the style of American restaurants. They liked the food they ate during their visits to the US and wanted to bring some of it home with them. There is

another reason: Introducing new American restaurants to Kuwaitis was - and still is - a good business investment," he said.

Silverman said US businesses have strived to offer a wide variety of foods to the public to allow them to enjoy the flavors and also maintain a healthy lifestyle. "That's important for an increasingly selective and educated customer base. We encourage healthy options," he added. He also announced that a delegation looking for additional franchise opportunities at the International Franchise Expo in New York to be held on May 31-June 2 will be headed by Rasha Al-Muhtaseb from the embassy's commercial section. "This is the top franchising show in the United States. The show will exhibit more than 400 concepts and host a number of seminars. There currently are about 15 people in the delegation," the ambassador added.

US exports of food products form a significant portion of US-Kuwait trade, totaling approximately \$240 million in 2017. Silverman said the Sultan Center alone stocks 4,000 different US food items. "Your restaurants import numerous menu items from the United States. We will continue to support you and promote a smooth, efficient and safe customs procedure for the importation of your food items



## News in brief

### Ramadan donation guidelines

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Ministry of Social Affairs said yesterday it issued a number of guidelines aimed at better organizing charity during upcoming Holy Month of Ramadan, and affirmed collection of donations was illegal unless permitted by Ministry. Hanaa Al-Hajri, Assistant Undersecretary for Social Development, said 31 charitable societies have expressed desire to participate in a ministry-supervised donation campaigns during Ramadan. She added the ministry was coordinating with Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Ministry of Interior, Kuwait Municipality and the Manpower authority to have a better control over collection of donations and those who manage them. Al-Hajri said cash collection was forbidden, and the only means to pay any grant would be via debit cards, online payments or bank transfer. Material donations, she said, should be registered in invoices. — KUNA

### 15% renewable energy

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Electricity and Water yesterday affirmed its keenness on realizing His Highness the Amir's vision as to securing 15 percent of domestic power demand from renewable energy by onset of 2030. Mounting power demand in Kuwait should prompt all stakeholders to come up with practical solutions to minimize dependence on oil to produce energy, said Mohammad Al-Sharhan, the assistant undersecretary for technical services. Employing the renewable energy is one of these solutions, he said, also noting that his department had inked a deal with South Korea to install small solar energy panels. He was speaking in a statement during inauguration of Kuwait Technology and Sustainable Energy Conference. —KUNA

### Arab League applauds Kuwait

**CAIRO:** The Arab League yesterday praised relentless efforts that had been exerted by Kuwait when it served as member of the United Nations Security Council last February in support of the Palestinian cause. The Kuwaiti efforts were appreciated in a statement issued after the extraordinary meeting that grouped delegates at the Arab organization to demonstrate solidarity with the Palestinians in face of latest Israeli attacks. The session final statement affirmed support for a request by Palestine to the International Criminal Court to hold urgent investigation into the Israeli crimes against peaceful Palestinian demonstrators. The conferees affirmed the Palestinians' right to pursue their struggle through whatever means against the occupation, called on the UN to form a panel to prosecute the Israeli officials for the latest crime, alluding to Friday's deadly shooting by Israeli troops against Palestinian protesters on Gaza's fringes. — KUNA

### Qualitative educational center

**BEIRUT:** The Kuwaiti International Center for Qualitative Education, an affiliate of the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO), yesterday opened its new headquarter in Tripoli north of Lebanon. Following the opening, head of the center and the Kuwaiti delegation Khaled Al-Subaishi said that the delegation met with the UK-headquartered Islamic Relief Worldwide's members and discussed with them the strategic partnership for the education of the Syrian refugees. The meeting also tackled number of strategic projects including education for the disabled Syrian refugees, teachers' preparation during emergencies, and reading program projects in Dubai for the refugee's children. The delegation also inspected refugee's schools in Tripoli supervised by the center and concluded the tour with honoring outstanding students and participants in Quran recitation and memorization competition. — KUNA

### Lifting sports ban

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri stressed yesterday the keenness of relevant authorities to continue efforts to lift suspension of sports to all games - affirming the need for concerted efforts so as to achieve this goal. Al-Jabri made his remarks at a ceremony, honoring Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan, the former Minister of State for Youth Affairs, organized by former President of Kuwait Football Association Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yussef Al-Sabah. Al-Jabri added that the Kuwaiti people would be very happy to see the ban lifted, adding they will continue exerting all efforts to lift ban to all sports because this was task entrusted to him by His Highness the Amir when he took over the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs. —KUNA

Local

# MPs pass rights body, refuse to debate Muwaizri letter

## An independent body to defend human rights

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: In its regular session yesterday, the Assembly passed without discussion the establishment of Kuwait Human Rights Commission, an independent body to defend human rights in the country. It also approved in the first reading a law to grant additional benefits to Kuwaitis who retired from the oil sector between 2010 and last year. The government said it accepts the law in principle but it needs more time to resolve some legal issues associated with the legislation.

The Assembly is expected to approve the law in the second and final reading in the next session. Opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri requested that the issues relating to a complaint he had submitted to the International Parliamentarians Union against speaker Marzouk Al-Ghanem over the jailing of three MPs while enjoying parliamentary immunity be debated. Ghanem rejected the request because it was not in line with the assembly charter and insisted that constitutional experts also supported this view.

Muwaizri later submitted an official request to make the debate but it was rejected by the assembly as only 17 out of 49 MPs present supported the move. MPs Abdulkarim Al-Kundari and Salah Khorshid threatened to grill the oil minister and the oil minister over the appointment of expatriates in the oil sector. The Oil Minister said that two mega oil projects underway, the new refinery and the clean fuel project, will create 2,000 jobs for Kuwaitis but added that 25 percent of the total jobs will go to foreigners who are supplied by contractors.

But Khorshid said that if the minister does not rectify this issue - the appointment of expatriates - within two weeks, he will file to grill the minister. Kundari however said he will not hesitate to grill the prime minister over this vital issue. Health Minister Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah said the ministry is currently studying the idea of setting up a specialized advanced hospital for the treatment of cancer. The announcement came after MPs said the existing cancer hospital is in bad shape and deteriorating.



KUWAIT: Kuwait lawmakers are pictured at the National Assembly yesterday. MPs passed without discussion the establishment of Kuwait Human Rights Commission, an independent body to defend human rights in the country. — KUNA

## Ministry to launch Award for Quran Memorization and Recitation

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic affairs for Quran and Islamic Studies Affairs Waleed Al-Shuaib said the ministry will launch the 9th Kuwait International Award for Quran Memorization and Recitation under the auspices of HH the Amir on April 10, 2018. "Kuwait is playing a leading role as a country caring for the Quran," he added, noting that the award aims at introducing various Quran recitations to the Muslim and Arab nations. Shuaib also stressed that the award enhances competition amongst participants, whom he urged to exert more effort and spend more time in preparation. He also urged younger generations to participate, noting that 138 competitors from 79 countries are expected to take part this year.

### Job opportunities

During its ordinary session yesterday, the parliament discussed a number of inquiries and relevant ministers' responses to them, said parliamentary sources. In one of the inquiries, Oil Minister and Minister of Electricity and Water Bakheet Al-Rasheed said the new refinery in Al-Zour will provide 1,000 job opportunities for citizens, in addition to 1,000 more in the biofuel project. "The executing company and the contractor are responsible for appointing 25 percent expats," he remarked.

### Infertility centers

Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah said a joint committee has been formed with elements from MoH and MPW to study remarks over Jaber Hospital and work on avoiding them, pending launching it soon. Sheikh Basel added that the ministry is studying a project to build a specialized hospital for cancer treatment, in addition to two infertility centers at the maternity hospital. Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State for Services Jenan Boshehri said infrastructure contracts are proceeding according to schedule.

## General Department of Traffic honors NBK

KUWAIT: The General Department of Traffic honored National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) for its support during the GCC traffic week. NBK Public Relations Executive Manager, Abdulmohsen Al Rushaid received Colonel Ibrahim Soud Al Jallal, Captain Yousof Abdullateef Rabah and Line Officer Ali Taha Bou Rabie at NBK. The General Department presented a trophy in appreciation to the bank's annual contribution in this occasion.

In his turn, Al Rushaid praised the efforts showed and great dedication as well as the helpful hand offered to NBK team during the bank's initiatives all year round. NBK has a long tradition supporting social and community oriented activities in the country. NBK continues to promote a range of philanthropic missions and social welfare programs as part of its corporate social responsibility to assert its leadership in supporting Kuwait's social development, standing as a model in serving all aspects of the community.



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## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A coffeepot maker poses for a photo at the Nayef Palace Expo.—KUNA

# Kuwait pledges \$250,000 to assist war-ravaged Yemen

## UN raises \$2 billion in Yemen appeal

GENEVA: Kuwait is pledging \$250,000 to international relief aid efforts in Yemen this year, said a Kuwaiti top diplomat yesterday. During the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA) 2018 Yemen High-Level Pledging Event, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah said that this donation would hopefully help the Yemenis survive the upheavals they are facing in their country. The donation came in line with His Highness the Amir of Kuwait and UN humanitarian leader Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's directives to aid the fellow Yemenis, said Al-Jarallah who indicated that the pledge came on time especially with the nearing of the month of Ramadan in mid-May.

The Kuwaiti top diplomat said that his country took all necessary steps to find a resolution to the Yemeni crisis, indicating that several inter-Yemeni meetings were organized by Kuwait to find a political solution to the dilemma. He said that the solution to the Yemeni crisis must be based on the tenets of the GCC peace initiative, the results of the national Yemeni dialogue, and UNSC resolution 2216 regarding the end of violence in Yemen. Al-Jarallah called on the Houthi militias to abide by international laws and stressed that national unity is the only way to end the situation in Yemen.

The top diplomat took the chance to condemn the Houthi's ballistic missile attacks launched from Yemeni territories towards Saudi Arabia, affirming that Kuwait was against such vile acts. Al-Jarallah urged the international community to gather three billion dollars to support relief aid efforts in Yemen this year, saying that it is a humanitarian obligation. Al-Jarallah thanked the Saudi-led Arab

coalition for Yemen in its efforts to provide assistance to the Yemenis and also expressed gratitude towards the Swiss Confederation, Kingdom of Sweden, and OCHA for organizing the one-day high-level pledging event.

### UN raises \$2 billion

Meanwhile, the United Nations raised more than \$2 billion yesterday to help civilians in Yemen, with half the funds pledged by governments that are bombarding the war-ravaged country. UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres hailed the donor conference in Geneva as a "remarkable success". The target for the 2018 Yemen humanitarian appeal was set at \$2.96 billion (2.4 billion euros). Guterres told reporters that in addition to the \$2 billion already committed, multiple countries had promised more donations in the coming months, leaving him "optimistic that we will be able to reach the level that corresponds to the needs". Last year's Yemen appeal for \$2.5 billion, which was 73 percent funded, but the needs have intensified in a country battered since 2015 by a Saudi-led military offensive aimed at repelling Iran-backed Houthi rebels who control the capital. The UN has labeled Yemen "the world's worst humanitarian crisis" and said that three-quarters of its population—around 22 million people—need some form of aid.

### Pay for what you break?

Saudi Arabia and its allies have repeatedly been accused of hitting civilians targets including hospitals and markets in their three-year campaign against the Houthis. The kingdom and its coalition partner, the United Arab Emirates, were also the largest donors at yesterday's conference, jointly pledging \$1 billion in humanitarian relief,

## Kuwait urges Houthi militias to abide by international laws



## Ooredoo concludes 3rd Jahzeen program

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait concluded the activities of Jahzeen training program in its third edition, graduating 40 students in different fields and specialties. The program, which was launched three years ago was sponsored by Ooredoo from its first edition. The program is also sponsored by the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program, Al Mulla Group, and the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs.

The program, which features training courses and seminars, targets fresh graduates as well as newly recruited youth. The sponsorship stems from Ooredoo's core values of caring and connecting with the community, especially as youth in Kuwait comprise more than 60 percent of the population and are certainly an important asset worth investing in. Commenting on this, Ooredoo Kuwait's Senior Director of Corporate Communications noted that the program is reflec-



Mijbil Alayoub

tive of the core values at Ooredoo, which is empowering youth.

He noted that the support for youth-centric initiatives reflects the company's wishes to embrace the directions of H.H. the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who noted on several occasions the importance of investing in youth and supporting them reach their potential. Alayoub added: "We are proud of all the participants in the program, and wish all the best of luck to the 40 graduates. We certainly hope that they benefited from the program's seminars and training courses."

The program helped 400 students since its launch in 2015. It targets three segments: University students in their final year, university graduates, and newly recruited youth no longer than 3 years working. The program is divided into four segments. The first segment consists of training courses and programs that cover career essentials, such as succeeding in job interviews, writing CVs, team work, and workplace legal



Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah

according to figures provided by the UN. Asked if he saw a contradiction in the Saudi stance towards Yemen, Guterres said a country's humanitarian commitments and military actions should be kept separate.

"We all know that there is a war. We all know who the parties (are) to the war but the two things need to be seen separately," the UN chief told reporters. "Independent of the fact that there is a war, there are humanitarian obligations that are assumed by countries," he said. "The countries that are also party to the conflict were party to these international efforts to support the people of Yemen."

Guterres underscored that the only way to ensure that Yemen donor conferences do not continue year after year is for the sides to negotiate a peace deal.

"There was never a humanitarian solution for any humanitarian crisis," he said. "The solution has always been political." The UN's Yemen envoy, Martin Griffiths, has recently visited Riyadh and Sanaa in hopes of revitalizing sputtering peace talks. "I believe there is an opportunity and that opportunity must be seized," Guterres said, explaining that Griffiths was "encouraged" by his trip and sees a window for further talks. —Agencies



framework. The second segment consists of success stories told through seminars by exemplary Kuwaiti professionals, while the third segment consists of an assessment test, which will be conducted in cooperation with Profile International,

followed by one-on-one sessions to assist applicants in choosing their career paths. The fourth segment consists of job fairs organized in association with a number of private sector entities.

# Kuwait showcases health products and services at medical exhibition

## Philippines promotes medical tourism



KUWAIT: MoH undersecretary Dr Muhammad Al-Khasti (second left) poses with the Medical City Clark staff along with Renato Villa (third left) Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A three-day international health exhibition opened yesterday at the Kuwait International Fair Ground in Mishref. The Kuwait Health Exhibition & Conference showcases various local clinics and international hospitals, along with health products and services. The event from April 3-5 is being held under the patronage of Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah, who was represented by MoH Undersecretary Dr Muhammad Al-Khasti, who inaugurated the event.

The health exhibition is held for buyers, decision makers and others from various medical fields searching for the best products and health services. This year's expo focuses on sports and fitness products, and features seminars and conferences on the future of healthcare, advancement of surgery and hospital care. "This is my second time opening this expo, and it's very exciting to be part of it. Kuwaitis want the best healthcare providers, products and services. A lot of companies and products are here, so I wish everyone a very successful venture in our market," Khasti said.

Around 100 participants in the expo hail from various

parts of the world. Medical City Clark (Hospital) from the Philippines is one of the gold sponsors. The medical city encourages Kuwaitis and expats to visit their booth for free medical consultations, especially for people who are overweight. "We want to share our expertise in bariatric surgery - we offer free assessment to overweight patients in Kuwait. The good thing is that if you sign up until April 5, we will provide a special promo package. Medical City Clark is committed to partnering with Kuwaitis and expats to share the best of our medical expertise," said Dr Emanuel Astudillo, a bariatric and metabolic surgeon from Medical City Clark.

Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait Renato Villa said the Philippines is participating in the health expo for the third time. "Thanks to Medical City Clark for actively promoting Philippines medical tourism, which is world-class. This is another proof how the Philippines is competing in the medical world right now. We are proud, and I know that the Kuwaiti market is searching for the best partners. We want to showcase this hospital in our country. We are not only world-class in caring for people, but also in terms of technology and experts in the field. We are now in the forefront," he said.

## 110 reports filed by anti-corruption authority

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources said the public prosecution has received over 110 reports filed by the anti-corruption authority against officials who failed to submit their financial statements on time, and said that the number will probably increase, compared to only 10 reports filed last

year. The sources added that the Capital prosecutor Nasser Bader referred the reports to courts and that the concerned officials might be penalized by imprisonment, fines and dismissal from office. The sources also noted that officials who fail to submit their statements within 90 days after leaving office despite being warned several times will also be prosecuted.

### Continuous rain

Meteorologist Essa Ramadan forecast continuous rain from Wednesday till Saturday. He added that both Kuwait and parts of Saudi Arabia might witness scattered thunderstorms.

### New employment lists

The CSC is currently preparing new lists of citizens to be employed in the public sector, said informed sources, expecting that the list will include at least 3,000 citizens.

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Chinese, N Korean dignitaries meet ahead of major summits

## Netanyahu cancels deal on African migrants

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GHOUTA: Pro-government forces drive past destroyed buildings in the recently conquered area of Jobar. — AFP

# Syria regime eyes Ghouta re-conquest

## 'There are divisions among the Jaish Al-Islam group'

**WAFIDEEN CHECKPOINT, Syria:** Buses entered the last rebel holdout of Syria's Eastern Ghouta yesterday in preparation for a possible second day of evacuations as the regime eyed the total re-conquest of the enclave. Evacuations of Jaish Al-Islam fighters and their families from the former bastion's main town of Douma started Monday under a Russia-brokered deal.

Jaish Al-Islam has not yet confirmed the accord, amid reports hardliners within the group were refusing to leave their positions. The reported deal is the latest in a string of agreements that have seen tens of thousands of people-rebels and civilians-leave the onetime stronghold outside Damascus for the north of the country. Russia-backed regime forces have retaken control of 95 percent of Eastern Ghouta since February 18 through a combination of a deadly air and ground assault and evacuation deals.

The re-conquest of Eastern Ghouta would mark a major milestone in President Bashar Al-Assad's efforts to regain control

of territory seized by rebels during Syria's seven-year civil war. Buses entered the enclave yesterday to prepare for a second day of evacuations, a military source and the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said. But there were no reports of any having exited at the start of the afternoon. "The operation could continue today or not. There are divisions among the Jaish Al-Islam group on their leaving but we are continuing preparations," the military source said.

### 'Will not leave'

In a first wave of the evacuations from Douma under the deal, more than 1,100 people-Jaish Al-Islam fighters and family members-set off late Monday to the rebel-held town of Jarabulus in northern Syria, state news agency SANA said. In the morning, an AFP reporter saw dozens of empty buses waiting by the side of the highway and near a government-held checkpoint used by the buses to enter and

exit Eastern Ghouta. The Observatory, which relies on sources on the ground, said the evacuations were set to continue on Tuesday but that divisions continued within the group.

"There is still a hardline wing in Jaish al-

“Those who want to leave should leave”

Islam that refuses the deal," Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said. Jaish Al-Islam has around 10,000 fighters in its ranks, the Observatory says. In video footage published by the group online on

Sunday, leader Essam Al-Buidani told men in a mosque: "We will stay in this town and will not leave." But "those who want to leave should leave", he said.

Monday's evacuation came after more than 46,000 people-including fighters from other areas of Eastern Ghouta-left on buses to the northwestern province of Idlib, the last in Syria to remain largely outside regime control. Backed by Russia, Assad's forces have scored a series of victories over rebel forces in recent years, often through campaigns of siege, aerial bombardment and ground offensives that have drawn widespread international condemnation.

### 'Spider's web'

Before February 18, some 400,000 people in Eastern Ghouta had lived under regime siege for five years, facing severe food and medicine shortages. The regime assault on Eastern Ghouta since mid-February has killed more than 1,600 civilians and caused tens of thousands to

flee into regime-held territory. Aid workers have criticized the living conditions in the temporary camps in government-controlled territory receiving the displaced.

Yesterday, SANA quoted a military source as saying more than 40,000 people have returned to their homes in areas of the former rebel enclave. Syria's war has killed more than 350,000 people and displaced millions since starting in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests. Eastern Ghouta lies within mortar range of the capital, and last month the deadliest rebel rocket attack on the capital in months killed 44 civilians.

Rebels have left behind a labyrinth of tunnels under Eastern Ghouta, fitted with hospitals and military headquarters, and some of them wide enough to drive a car through. A Syrian army official who escorted journalists on a visit Monday described them as "a real spider's web". SANA said the military also found two underground field hospitals, equipped with medical equipment and medicine. — AFP

## India withdraws 'fake news' order after backlash

**NEW DELHI:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday reversed an order to punish journalists found guilty of reporting "fake news", after an outcry over a perceived government crackdown on the press. The media sanctions, issued late Monday, stated that the government would withdraw the official accreditation of any journalist responsible for repeated reporting of "fake news". India is the latest government to act against what it calls "fake news". Malaysia is passing a law allowing for up to six years in jail for publishing allegedly misleading information. The government said it needed to curb the spread of misinformation in the media. But Modi's office rescinded the directive just hours later amid allegations India's vibrant press was being muzzled. "PIB (Press Information Bureau) Press release titled 'Guidelines for Accreditation of Journalists' amended to regulate Fake News' issued on 02 April 2018 stands withdrawn," the information and broadcasting ministry said in a statement Tuesday.

Under the withdrawn guidelines from the ministry,

a first offence would have led to a six-month suspension of government accreditation. A second case would attract a year's suspension followed by a permanent withdrawal for a third offence. About 2,000 journalists with leading Indian media have a Press Information Bureau card from the information ministry, which eases access to government departments and ministries.

The Indian Express newspaper in a front-page headline on Tuesday said, "In the name of fake news, govt frames rules to blacklist journalists." "Move comes in election year," it added. Several journalists and activists, while acknowledging the problem of fake news, criticized the government intervention. Audrey Truschke, assistant professor of South Asian history at Rutgers University in the United States, called the sanctions "a shocking and unacceptable attack" on freedom of the press in India. "It's not about #fakenews. Rather, it's about controlling a notably vibrant press that often sheds light where those in power would prefer darkness," Truschke posted on Twitter.

"Accreditation is not essential to the practice of free journalism but to me this debate is Trumpian in its othering of the media as enemy," Barkha Dutt, a veteran Indian journalist and editor of the Mojo digital news platform said. "I don't deny that fake news is a hugely valid concern and the media should take steps to weed it out," she said, adding self-regulating industry bodies, not the government, should decide penalties. — AFP

## London murder rate overtakes New York's

**LONDON:** London police investigated more murders than their New York counterparts did over the last two months, statistics show, as the British capital's mayor vowed to fight a "violent scourge" on the streets. There were 15 murders in London in February against 14 in New York, according to London's Metropolitan Police Service and the New York Police Department. For March, 22 murders were investigated in London, with 21 reports in New York.

In the latest bloodshed, a 17-year-old girl died on Monday after she was found with gunshot wounds in Tottenham, north London, a day after a man was fatally stabbed in south London. "The Mayor is deeply concerned by violent crime in the capital - every life lost to violent crime is a tragedy," a spokeswoman for Mayor Sadiq Khan said in a statement yesterday. "Our city remains one of the safest in the world ... but Sadiq wants it to be even safer and is working hard to bring an end to this violent scourge."

Including January's figures, New York had still experienced more murders so far this year than London. The cities have a similar-sized population. Gun violence is much less of a problem in Britain, which has strict gun control laws, than in the United States, and most British police are not equipped with firearms. But British politicians and police are increasingly expressing concern

about London's rising murder rate, which is driven by a surge in knife crime. Of the 47 murders in London so far this year, 31 have been committed with knives.

Britain's interior ministry said it was consulting on new laws to further restrict dangerous weapons, including banning online stores from delivering knives to residential addresses and making it an offence to possess certain weapons in public. "This government is taking action to restrict access to offensive weapons as well as working to break the deadly cycle of violence and protect our children, families and communities," a Home Office spokesman said.

Khan, who has been in office since May 2016, is from the opposition Labour Party. Before him, Conservative Boris Johnson was mayor for eight years. The national government has been run by the Conservatives since 2010, with Prime Minister Theresa May previously serving as interior minister from 2010 to 2016. Britain's most senior officer, London police chief Cressida Dick, said gangs were using online platforms to glamorize violence, adding that disputes between young people could escalate within minutes on social media.

The Ben Kinsella Trust, an anti-knife crime charity named after a young victim, said social media amplified a range of other factors that have contributed to the crisis. The charity's CEO Patrick Green said there had been extra funding to tackle knife crime, which he welcomed, but added that the government needed to act with more urgency and that budget cuts affecting youth services had played a part. "This has been a horrendous year. It's looking like it'll be worse than last year, which was worse than the year before," he told Reuters. "The response so far has been too slow... It feels like we're in a crisis and we need to respond in that way." — Reuters

International

# ACT CONGRESS: Trump outraged over Mexico migrant 'caravan'

## US President vents on Twitter for second day running

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump lashed out in fury Monday over immigration, an outburst triggered by images of a "caravan" of hundreds of Central American migrants headed toward the US border. For the second straight day, Trump took to Twitter to attack Mexico for allowing the 1,500-strong group to march unimpeded toward the United States, their daily progress mapped out by US media.

He threatened to abrogate NAFTA—the US-Mexico-Canada free trade pact—while demanding Congress pass tougher immigration legislation and support his plan for a wall along the Mexican frontier. He also declared he no longer supported a replacement for DACA, the program that had offered protection against deportation for about 700,000 undocumented immigrants, most of them Mexicans, who came to the US as children.

“Big wasted procedure must take place”

**'An Obama joke'**

Since taking office more than a year ago, Trump has sought to crack down on legal and undocumented immigration, but some of his proposals have become tied up in court and Congress. "As ridiculous as it sounds, the laws of our country do not easily allow us to send those crossing our Southern Border back where they came from. A whole big wasted procedure must take place," Trump tweeted in the evening, following similar comments in the morning and on Sunday. "Mexico & Canada have tough immigration laws, whereas ours are an Obama joke. ACT CONGRESS."

The administration's own statistics showed that arrests of undocumented migrants soared in the first year of Trump's presidency, while illegal border crossings plummeted. Data from Immigration and Customs Enforcement suggested, however, that processes to deport arrested illegal immigrants have become even more backed up than before.

"Honduras, Mexico and many other countries that the U.S. is very generous to, sends many of their people to our country through our WEAK IMMIGRATION POLICIES. Caravans are heading here. Must pass tough laws and build the WALL. Democrats allow open borders, drugs and crime!" The president has repeatedly tried to link immigration with crime but immigrant defenders say many immigrants are fleeing poverty and violence. Activists accuse authorities of rounding up longtime residents with families and jobs on minor infractions. On Sunday he said Mexico

"must stop the big drug and people flows, or I will stop their cash cow, NAFTA."

During his 2016 election campaign Trump called the North American Free Trade Agreement a disaster, and last year triggered a renegotiation of the 1994 pact which he has threatened to pull out of unless the US gets a better deal. The next stage of those talks could take place next Sunday in Washington, after possible meetings between Mexican, Canadian and US negotiators this week in an effort to try to resolve remaining differences, sources said on Monday.

**1,500 headed to border**

Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto demanded that the United States respectfully pursue the continuing NAFTA trade talks, despite disagreements over immigration. "We have been conducting serious negotiations," he said, expressing

hope that "this spirit of positivity, mutual respect and cordiality" will continue, while looking for areas "that really favor the development of the three countries."

Organized each of the past five years by activists of Pueblo Sin Fronteras, or People Without Borders, the 1,500 migrants say they have fled El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras or Nicaragua because of poverty and widespread violence from criminal gangs. They set off on March 25 from the southern Mexican state of Chiapas for the US border, where many hope to apply for asylum. Mexico's government "under no circumstances" promotes irregular migration, the government said in a statement late Monday.

It described the caravan as "a public demonstration that seeks to draw attention to the migratory phenomenon and the importance of respecting the rights of Central American migrants." The Mexican statement said "it is not the responsibility of this government to exercise immigration decisions of the United States or any other nation."

On Monday, the caravan was passing through the mountainous southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. Trump appears to have become aware of them over the weekend from a report on Fox News, which he regularly watches. He accused the migrants of seeking to benefit from DACA, but a leader of the caravan countered that Trump is using it as an excuse to stop any deal on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). The program would provide those qualified—as many as 1.8 million people a path to citizenship. —AFP



TIJUANA: View of murals reading "In the sky there are no borders" on the US-Mexico border wall. —AFP

## Xi hails Mugabe's successor as 'old friend of China'

BEIJING: President Xi Jinping greeted Zimbabwean counterpart Emmerson Mnangagwa as an "old friend" of China on Tuesday as the African leader visited Beijing, which previously backed his ousted predecessor Robert Mugabe. Mnangagwa, who received military training in China when he was a young liberation fighter in the 1960s, was met with a military honor guard at the Great Hall of the People on his first state visit outside of Africa.

The two leaders oversaw the signing of six documents, including a letter on economic and development cooperation and another on emergency food assistance, as Mnangagwa seeks help from a major ally with historic ties to Zimbabwe. "I heartily welcome President Mnangagwa on his visit to Beijing," Xi said as the two sat down for talks. "You are an old friend of China and I appreciate your efforts to develop relations in all areas," he said.

Mugabe sacked Mnangagwa from his job as vice president in November over a succession tussle with the first lady Grace Mugabe, leading to a military intervention that culminated with the veteran president's ousting and Mnangagwa taking office. The country's then-army chief, General Constantino Chiwenga, had visited Beijing shortly before the military action, leading to questions about whether China had any role in the power transfer.

Chiwenga was named vice president in December. China denied it played any part in the transition. Beijing had long been one of Mugabe's most powerful allies and a major trade partner, as the West shunned him over his government's human rights violations, but it avoided publicly taking sides during his ousting.

"Last November Zimbabwe achieved a peaceful, smooth transfer of power that was broadly recognised by the international community," Xi said. "I am willing to work with Mr. president (Mnangagwa) to jointly map out our future cooperation and write a new chapter in China-Zimbabwe relations for the benefit of our two peoples." Mnangagwa, wearing a scarf in the colors of Zimbabwe's flag, told Xi he appreciated China's "political support and goodwill" following the "peaceful political transition in Zimbabwe".

**'Socialism with Zimbabwean characteristics'**

Mnangagwa has also been accused of playing a key role in his mentor Mugabe's authoritarian regime that left the economy in ruins and under sanctions. He was targeted by EU and US measures imposed on Mugabe and his close allies over violence and intimidation during Zimbabwe's 2008 presidential campaign.

The visit comes as China takes a more proactive role in Africa, where it has long invested in infrastructure projects and sought resources. It has recently built its first overseas military base in Djibouti. Relations between China and Zimbabwe date back to the liberation struggle of the 1960s, when Beijing provided arms and trained some of the top guerrilla leaders including Mnangagwa.

Before his arrival on Monday, Mnangagwa told China's official Xinhua news agency that his trip was aimed at thanking Xi and the Chinese people for supporting his country "during the hard times when the

West imposed sanctions on us". He said he would seek to sell Zimbabwe as a destination for Chinese investment and take part in economic forums aimed at attracting business to the country.

Zimbabwe was China's largest foreign supplier of tobacco, with some 40 percent of the product imported by the Asian country coming from the African nation. China also set up a joint venture with Zimbabwe in a diamond mining company, but Mugabe announced the nationalization of the nation's diamond mines in 2016.

Chinese companies have also been involved in projects to install a cellular phone network, expand a hydropower station and build a coal-fired power plant. Mnangagwa will meet Premier Li Keqiang on Wednesday, then visit the eastern provinces of Anhui and Zhejiang before his visit ends on Friday. The Zimbabwean leader gave a nod to his host's political philosophy, "Xi Jinping thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era." "I will take this mantra to Zimbabwe and hope to develop some socialism in Zimbabwe with Zimbabwean characteristics," he said. —AFP

## Russian city scraps direct mayoral vote

MOSCOW: Regional lawmakers voted yesterday to cancel direct elections in Russia's fourth-largest city in a blow to the opposition mayor as the Kremlin intensifies a crackdown on dissent. Yekaterinburg Mayor Yevgeny Roizman has been the only top regional official to publicly voice criticism of Putin, elected for a fourth Kremlin term last month.

The regional legislature in the Urals city of nearly 1.5 million people voted to scrap direct mayoral elections despite protests by several thousand people on Monday. The new mayor will be elected by city lawmakers. Yekaterinburg until now has been one of several large Russian cities with direct mayoral elections.

Roizman—who was elected in 2013 for five years and openly supports opposition leader Alexei Navalny—said the cancellation of direct polls was a "direct offence to residents of Yekaterinburg". "The bill is very half-baked," he told Echo of Moscow radio station. "But it was bound to sail through, therefore it was so brazen." He said he was certain that he would not be considered for the post again and added that he himself had no plans to run for a new term, implying however that he would remain active in politics.

"The word 'give up' does not belong in our vocabulary," tweeted Roizman, who is an active blogger and has more than 630,000 followers on Twitter. Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Kremlin could "neither interfere nor comment". "This is the absolute right

of the local legislative assembly," he told reporters. According to a survey by Yekaterinburg-based pollster Sotsium released last week, 62 percent of respondents did not support the measure.

**Odd man out**

Roizman, a tough-minded, free-wheeling 55-year-old, has become a popular figure in Russia's opposition circles, attending protests and urging ordinary people to participate in local politics. Roizman has also made himself unusually accessible to his constituents, regularly receiving the city's neediest people such as the elderly and orphans to help them solve their everyday problems. He first shot to prominence as founder of a foundation called City Without Drugs and a drug rehab centre in Yekaterinburg to fight Russia's severe narcotics epidemic. Human rights activists have questioned the centre's methods, which included handcuffing addicts to their beds and forcing heroin addicts to go cold turkey. Its supporters however have reported a significant drop in drug-related deaths since the foundation was set up in the late 1990s. Roizman then channeled his energies into politics, beating a Kremlin-friendly candidate in a mayoral election in 2013.

In one of his most recent posts, he slammed the re-election of Putin for a fourth Kremlin term. "Life will become even worse but the turnout will grow even larger with every new election, the president's approval ratings will be even higher and we'll be even closer to North Korea," he wrote on Facebook. Since first being elected as president in 2000, Putin has stamped his total authority on Russia, crushing opposition and muzzling independent media. Gubernatorial elections were scrapped in 2004 under the pretext of the fight against terror, after the Beslan school massacre that claimed more than 330 lives, more than half of them children. —AFP

## International

# Chinese, N Korean dignitaries meet ahead of major summits

## A flurry of diplomacy that has eased regional tensions

BEIJING: China's foreign minister told his North Korean counterpart yesterday that Beijing appreciates Pyongyang's efforts to ease nuclear tensions ahead of planned summits between the isolated country's leader Kim Jong Un and the South Korean and US presidents. North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho met China's chief diplomat Wang Yi in Beijing just a week after Kim made a surprise trip to the Chinese capital to meet President Xi Jinping.

China and North Korea are trying to repair their own relations, which have been strained as Beijing has backed a slew of United Nations sanctions to pressure Pyongyang to stop its nuclear activities. China is North Korea's sole major ally and trade partner. The latest visit is part of a flurry of diplomacy that has eased regional tensions after months of bellicose rhetoric between the United States and North Korea over Pyongyang's nuclear program.

"China appreciates the North's commitment to the denuclearization of the peninsula and its important efforts to ease the situation on the peninsula, and supports the North's leader's meeting with the leaders of South Korea and the US," Wang told Ri, according to a Chinese foreign ministry statement. Ri said Pyongyang was willing to develop the traditional friendly relations between the Cold War-era allies, and the ministry quoted Ri as saying the North "will also maintain close and strategic communication with China on Korean peninsula issues".

Wang told his counterpart the two foreign ministries should increase exchanges at all levels. "Under the current situation, maintaining and developing the traditional

friendship between China and North Korea is very important for both countries and regions," Wang said, according to the statement. State media images showed Wang and Ri smiling as they shook hands and sat for talks. North Korea's official KCNA news agency said Ri was heading a government delegation that left yesterday for a conference of foreign ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement in Azerbaijan. Ri will also visit Russia and other former Soviet states.

### Eliminate interference and continue dialogue

with honor guards, bouquets, red carpets and meetings with most of China's top leaders.

Kim is now due to hold a summit with South Korea's Moon Jae-in on April 27 and a landmark meeting with US President Donald Trump is also planned—events that give both Pyongyang and Beijing new incentives to repair their strained relationship. Wang struck a note of caution about the diplomatic developments during a press conference with Switzerland's visiting foreign minister yesterday.

"Of course, historical experience tells us that when the situation on the (Korean) peninsula eases and peace talks usher in the light of dawn, there are often all types of disturbances," he said, calling on all parties to "eliminate interference" and continue dialogue. "We hope the leaders of the US and North Korea can successfully meet and enhance mutual understanding and establish basic

#### 'Eliminate interference'

Kim last week met President Xi Jinping on his first trip abroad since inheriting power from his father Kim Jong Il in December 2011. Kim's secretive visit was dubbed "unofficial" but bore all the trappings of an official state occasion.



PYONGYANG: South and North Korean musicians perform during a joint show at the 12,000-seat Ryugyong Jong Ju Yong Gymnasium. —AFP

trust," Wang said. South Korea said last month after talks with Kim in Pyongyang that he would consider abandoning his nuclear weapons in exchange for US security guarantees, and would halt weapons tests while talks were under way.

In Beijing, Kim had been quoted as saying by China's

Xinhua news agency that the issue of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula "can be resolved if South Korea and the United States respond to our efforts with goodwill, create an atmosphere of peace and stability while taking progressive and synchronous measures for the realization of peace". —AFP

## Bangladesh college suspends professor for 'defaming' PM's father

DHAKA: Bangladesh's most prestigious university has suspended a professor for writing a column critical of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's father, as the ruling party cracks down on dissent in a tense election year. Morshed Hasan Khan was "suspended until further notice" from Dhaka University, its vice-chancellor said yesterday, after the student wing of the Awami League staged angry rallies on campus.

University head Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman said Khan defamed Bangladesh's first post-independence president and Hasina's father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in the controversial article published in a Bengali daily. The professor of marketing was also accused of "distorting the history" of Bangladesh's war of independence in 1971, the legacy of which remains contentious today.

Dhaka University is regarded as a stronghold of liberalism and secularism in Muslim-majority Bangladesh, which has been ruled by Hasina's Awami League for more than nine years. Hasina jailed her political rival, Khaleeda Zia, in February for corruption in a move seen by critics as an attempt to remove opposition ahead of a general election slated for December. The jail sentence handed to Zia, a two-time former premier and erstwhile ally of Hasina, sparked angry clashes between police and supporters from her Bangladesh Nationalist Party. —AFP

## Rohingya boats arrive in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR: A boat carrying dozens of Rohingya from Myanmar arrived in Malaysia yesterday and the refugees will be allowed to enter the country, but an expert played down fears of a new exodus.

It has been rare for Rohingya migrants to attempt the sea routes south since Thai authorities clamped down on regional trafficking networks in 2015, sparking a crisis across Southeast Asia as large numbers were abandoned at sea. But there have been concerns desperate migrants might start taking to the high seas again after mainly Buddhist Myanmar launched a new crackdown last year that forced about 700,000 members of the stateless Muslim minority to flee to Bangladesh. Malaysian authorities intercepted the Rohingya boat off the northwestern island of Langkawi, after it was first spotted at the weekend off Thailand, said navy chief Ahmad Kamarulzaman Ahmad Badaruddin.

"All 56 passengers, mostly children and women, are safe but tired and hungry," said the navy chief. "We have provided them with water, food and other humanitarian assistance. The boat and its passengers will be handed over... to the immigration authorities." The coastguard said there were 19 men, 17 women, 12 girls and eight boys on the boat.

#### 'End of sailing season'

The navy and coastguard had stepped up patrols around Langkawi—where Rohingya have come ashore in the past—after the boat was spotted off Thailand's west coast at the weekend and its passengers said they were trying to reach Malaysia. Chris Lewa, of Rohingya advocacy group the Arakan Project, said the vessel was thought to have left a week ago from the Rakhine state capital Sittwe. But she did not expect many more to be following. "April is the end of the sailing season so we don't expect many boats now," Lewa told AFP.

The 2015 crisis began when Thailand discovered mass graves in a human-trafficking camp along its southern bor-



This undated handout photo released by the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency on April 3, 2018 shows members of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency detaining a boat carrying Rohingya refugees in Malaysian territorial waters off the island of Langkawi. —AFP

der and launched a crackdown on the brutal networks that ferry migrants to Malaysia. Unable to offload their human cargo in Thailand anymore, traffickers abandoned them at sea in large numbers, leaving them trapped on boats with little food and water. Images of emaciated Rohingya pleading for help from overcrowded boats drew global condemnation, and forced Indonesia and Malaysia to allow hundreds of Rohingya to come ashore after initially refusing.

Muslim-majority Malaysia has long been a favorite destination for Rohingya, as the country is relatively affluent and authorities are sympathetic to their plight. Tens of thou-

sands have been allowed into the country, where they toil in low-skilled industries such as agriculture and construction—earning low wages and with little hope for the future.

The situation is however much worse for the hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who have fled the latest crackdown in their homeland. They are living in cramped and often squalid conditions in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district, where many Rohingya who fled previous waves of persecution are already living. An agreement to repatriate Rohingya from Bangladesh to Myanmar's Rakhine state has yet to see a single refugee returned. —AFP

## Pakistan party linked to Mumbai attacks rips US blacklisting

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistan political party linked to the alleged mastermind of the Mumbai attacks blasted Washington yesterday for violating the country's "sovereignty and constitution", hours after the United States blacklisted the group. The move by the US comes as the White House continues to ratchet up pressure on Islamabad to crack down on extremist groups operating in the country after suspending military aid to Pakistan in January for inaction.

The Milli Muslim League (MML) was launched last August by Hafiz Saeed's Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) — the charity wing of militant group Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT). LeT is accused of masterminding the 2008 Mumbai attacks that left nearly 166 people dead and brought nuclear-armed India and Pakistan to the brink of war. Since launching, the MML has struggled to officially register with Pakistan's Election Commission over its links to JuD.

The task is likely to be harder after the US State Department amended its designation of LeT Monday to include the political party. "(The) US has no right to intervene in Pakistan's internal political matters and label terror allegations against people who themselves are against extremism," said MML's Information Secretary Tabish Qayyum. "Such designations are aimed to undermine Pakistan's sovereignty and constitution." The decision comes after Pakistani officials began seizing assets from JuD in February. The crackdown followed a vote by members of the Financial Action Task Force a global anti-money laundering watchdog to place Pakistan on its grey list of nations which are not doing enough to combat terror financing in June.

Saeed, who operates freely in Pakistan despite a \$10 million US bounty on his head, has denied involvement in terrorism and the Mumbai attacks. Six Americans were among those killed during the three-day rampage in Mumbai, when gunmen who arrived by sea sparked battles with Indian commandos. Saeed, was listed by the UN in December 2008 for being associated with LeT, as well as having links to the Al-Qaeda terror network and Taliban militants. —AFP



KUNDUZ: An Afghan boy receives treatment at a hospital. —AFP

## UN investigates Afghan airstrike

KUNDUZ: The United Nations said yesterday it was investigating "disturbing reports of serious harm to civilians" in an Afghan airstrike on a religious school that security sources say left dozens of children dead or wounded. Hundreds of people were attending a graduation ceremony at the madrassa in a Taliban-controlled district in northeastern Afghanistan on Monday when Afghan Air Force helicopters struck, witnesses have told AFP.

"Human Rights team on ground establishing facts. All parties reminded of obligations to protect civilians from impact of armed conflict," the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan said in a brief statement. At least 59 people, including Taliban commanders meeting at the compound in the Dashte Archi district in Kunduz province, were killed in the attack, Afghan security sources told AFP on condition of anonymity. Most of the civilian victims were children, they said. Government officials in both Kabul and Kunduz have given conflicting figures, with some denying any civilians had been killed or that a madrassa had been hit. Afghan officials have been known to minimize civilian casualties.

"I myself counted 35 bodies," Abdul Khalil said at the hospital in the provincial capital Kunduz—more than 50 kilometers from the airstrike—where health officials said 57 injured had been taken. "I arrived at the scene right after the airstrikes—it was like a butcher's shop. Everywhere was covered with blood, the ground was littered with body parts, heads, limbs and other parts."

A man called Yousuf, who was at the ceremony when the airstrikes happened, told AFP he saw "blood

and body parts everywhere". Afghan television showed anguished relatives standing outside the hospital yelling "shame on you". So far the defense ministry has denied civilians were among the casualties. "Twenty Taliban, including the commander of their Red Unit in the district, and also a key member of the Quetta Shura were killed," defense ministry spokesman Mohammad Radmanish told said. The Red Unit is the insurgent group's elite unit and the Quetta Shura is its leadership council. The same number were wounded, Radmanish added.

#### Police deny madrassa hit

Kunduz police chief General Abdul Hamid Hamidi said yesterday that "72 of the enemy" had been killed in the airstrike. Hamidi added that five civilians also died and another 52 were wounded but he denied a madrassa or mosque had been hit. Security forces have donated large quantities of blood to the hospital.

The Taliban on Monday confirmed the attack on the religious school but denied that any militants had been there. The madrassa was run by Islamic scholars sympathetic to the Taliban but the facility was open to the public, a senior Taliban commander speaking from an unknown location in Pakistan told AFP yesterday. He said as many as 2,000 people were at the school on Monday, including 750 students, for a graduation ceremony, but insisted there were no senior Taliban leaders present.

He estimated that 400 people had been killed and an unknown number wounded. The Taliban are known to exaggerate battlefield claims. Several boys with their arms and legs bandaged were seen lying in beds and along the corridors of the hospital. One of the security sources said the Taliban had started meeting at madrassas in the hope of avoiding airstrikes. US and Afghan forces are increasing ground and air offensives against Taliban and Islamic State insurgents as they try to get the upper hand in the 16-year war. —AFP



International

# US-backed fighters, Kurds on alert in Syria's Manbij

## Turkey threatens to overrun the northern city

**MANBIJ:** On the outskirts of Syria's Manbij, Kurdish-led fighters have dug trenches and US-led coalition soldiers patrol from land and sky after Turkey threatened to overrun the northern city. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has repeatedly threatened to launch an attack on the city, near which US troops are stationed as part of their support to a Kurdish-led alliance fighting jihadists.

Pro-Ankara Syrian rebels control territory to the north and west of the city held by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) alliance. The rebels control Jarabulus near the Turkish border to the north, as well as Al-Bab to the west of Manbij. On its northern flank, only a few hundred meters separate the positions of the pro-Ankara rebels and the SDF, which has spearheaded the fight against the Islamic State jihadist group.

Outside Manbij, as spring turns the surrounding hills bright green, Kurdish fighters have been consolidating their positions in preparation for a possible assault. On the front line, the facade of a derelict home sheltering SDF fighters was riddled with bullet holes. "We're on high alert. There are always skirmishes at night," Kurdish fighter Shiyar Kobane said. "They fire mortar rounds and shell our positions." At a US military base near the city, three armoured cars bearing the US flag were driving back to camp after completing a mission.

**US base between olive trees**  
A helicopter flew overhead after taking off in a swirl of dust from the base, fortified with mounds of rubble between olive trees. Coalition forces carry out regular patrols on the frontline and "have increased their patrolling tours recently".

“ There are always skirmishes at night ”

SDF commander Khalil Mustafa said. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitor with sources on the ground, says around 350 members of the US-led coalition—mostly American troops—are stationed around Manbij.

Military sources on the ground, the Observatory and pro-regime newspaper Al-Watan say the coalition has sent in reinforcements, heavy artillery and other military equipment to the area. An AFP correspondent saw the US troops even after President Donald Trump said Thursday that he would pull forces out of Syria "very soon".

Trump was speaking the same day that two members of the coalition—an American and a Briton—were killed by an improvised explosive device in Manbij. Since 2014, the coalition has provided weapons, training and other support to forces fighting IS jihadists in Syria and neighboring Iraq. Turkey-led forces last month seized control of the Kurdish enclave of Afrin to the west of Manbij after a two-month assault that killed dozens of civilians and displaced tens of thousands of civilians.

**'Taking threats seriously'**  
Ankara views the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia that controlled Afrin as "terrorists", although the YPG formed the backbone of the US-backed SDF that has ousted IS from much of Syria. Erdogan has warned that Turkey could extend the Afrin offensive to Manbij. Trenches have been dug outside the city and checkpoints erected to thoroughly scan the identity papers of those entering the city. "We're taking the Turkish threats seriously," Mohammed Abu Adel, the head



MANBIJ: A picture taken yesterday shows vehicles of US-backed coalition forces driving in the northern Syrian town of Manbij.—AFP

of the Manbij Military Council—a part of the SDF—said. "The international coalition has increased the number of its forces in Manbij," he said. Abdelkarim Omar, a top foreign affairs official with the Kurdish semi-autonomous administration in northern Syria, said US forces were not likely to leave the country any time soon. "It's premature to speak of any American withdrawal," he said. "Terrorism is still present," he

added, referring to IS fighters. Two offensives—one by the SDF and another by the regime—have expelled the jihadists from much of Syria. But IS fighters still cling to pockets of territory in eastern Syria and maintain the ability to launch deadly attacks. They carried out a spate of attacks that killed 19 pro-government fighters last week in eastern Syria, and in March seized a district of the capital. —AFP

## Netanyahu cancels deal on African migrants in shock reversal

**JERUSALEM:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cancelled an agreement with the UN refugee agency yesterday aimed at avoiding forced deportations of thousands of African migrants only hours after having announced the deal himself. The stunning turnaround after Netanyahu announced the accord in a televised address on Monday afternoon came as he faced mounting pressure from his right-wing base.

The UN refugee agency urged Netanyahu to reconsider. Monday's announcement drew immediate anger from right-wing politicians, including Netanyahu allies, and many of his traditional supporters. After the deluge of criticism, the premier said in a late-night Facebook post on Monday he was suspending the agreement that would have allowed thousands of the migrants to remain in Israel at least temporarily. Yesterday, he said the deal was being cancelled outright after having held discussions on it. "After having heard numerous comments on the agreement, I have examined the pros and cons and have decided to cancel the agreement," Netanyahu said in a statement.

**'Playing with our minds'**

The agreement was designed to end the possibility of forced deportations of thousands of migrants to Rwanda under a controversial plan put forward by Netanyahu in January. Under the agreement with the UN, a minimum of 16,250 migrants would have instead been resettled in Western nations. In return, Israel would grant temporary residency to one migrant for each one resettled elsewhere.

The presence of the primarily Sudanese and Eritrean migrants in Israel has become a key political issue, and Netanyahu is already under heavy pressure due to a string of graft probes. He has repeatedly referred to them as "not refugees but illegal infiltrators". A range of Netanyahu's own ministers spoke out strongly against the deal, with Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon saying he had known nothing of it until Monday. Yesterday morning, Netanyahu



TEL AVIV: African migrants and Israelis demonstrate in the city of Tel Aviv on April 3, 2018, against the Israeli government's policy to forcibly deport African refugees and asylum seekers.—AFP

held talks with residents of southern Tel Aviv, where many of the migrants live. A group of southern Tel Aviv residents had harshly criticized the deal. Dozens of migrants and their supporters also protested outside Netanyahu's office in Jerusalem and in Tel Aviv. "We thought that if we came here, there is democracy and Israel will defend our rights, but they are playing with our minds and our lives," Sernai Dori, a 28-year-old mother of three from Eritrea who has been in Israel for a decade, said at the protest in Jerusalem.

**'Reconsider its decision'**

The UN refugee agency meanwhile said it had found out about Netanyahu's initial suspension of the agreement through news reports. The agency, known as the UNHCR, said yesterday it hoped Netanyahu would change his mind about the cancellation. "We continue to believe in the need

for a win-win agreement that can benefit Israel, the international community and people needing asylum and we hope that Israel will reconsider its decision soon," spokesman William Spindler said in an email.

Netanyahu said he was forced to resort to the deal with the UN after Rwanda indicated it would not be able to follow through on the previous plan. Uganda, another country widely thought to be a destination for those deported, had also said it could not accept those sent involuntarily. Under Netanyahu's previous plan, migrants who entered illegally would face a choice between leaving voluntarily or facing indefinite imprisonment with eventual forced expulsion. According to interior ministry figures, there are currently some 42,000 African migrants in Israel, half of them children, women or men with families who are not facing immediate deportation. —AFP

News in brief

Arab Israeli man shot dead

**JERUSALEM:** An Arab Israeli man was shot dead by soldiers yesterday after crashing into a hitch-hiking stop in the occupied West Bank and then attempting to flee, officials said. No other injuries were reported and officials said the crash was still being investigated. It was not for now being labelled an attack. Israel's military said the incident occurred near the Jewish settlement of Ariel, south of the Palestinian city of Nablus. The driver was in a stolen car and being pursued when he crashed into the hitch-hiking spot, the army said in a statement. It was not clear if anyone was at the time present at the hitch-hiking stop, one of the designated locations for hailing a ride common in Israel and near Israeli settlements. He then attempted to flee on foot and was shot by soldiers in the area, the army said. It did not provide details on the driver's identity, but official Palestinian news agency WAFA identified him as an Arab Israeli. —AFP

China cracks down on spoofs

**BEIJING:** China's culture watchdog has slapped fines on websites that posted parodies of "Communist classics and heroes", as the authorities further restrict what people can say—or even laugh at—online. Major video sites iQiyi and Sina were handed undisclosed fines for "distorting or mocking" classic works, the culture ministry said, less than two weeks after new rules were issued to ban online spoofs. The ministry did not describe the offending videos. But another company in southwest China's Sichuan province, Sichuan Shengshi Tianfu Media, was given "the highest fine according to law" for creating a popular parody of a revolutionary ballad, the ministry said in a Monday statement. "Yellow River Cantata", a patriotic song written in 1939 encouraging youth to fight during the Sino-Japanese war, has inspired several humorous remakes that have chafed the authorities. One viral video this year featured employees from the Sichuan company in panda hats, lamenting delays in year-end bonuses. —AFP

Fresh Papua violence

**JAYAPURA:** An Indonesian soldier and at least one separatist rebel have been killed near a huge US-owned mine in Papua, the latest in a string of deadly clashes, authorities and separatists said yesterday. Papua on the western half of New Guinea Island has been the scene of a simmering insurgency since it was annexed by Indonesia in the late 1960s. Freeport McMoran's gold and copper mine has been a frequent flashpoint in the struggle for independence and a bigger share of the region's rich resources. The deaths happened during a Sunday shootout in which a soldier was killed. The military, citing drone footage, said at least two rebels had died while dozens were injured. "A soldier died... and the footage from the drone showed two separatists were also killed," military spokesman Muhammad Aidi said in a statement. A spokesman for the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPN-OPM), linked to the Free Papua independence movement, said just one rebel had died. —AFP

Massive crystal meth seizure

**BANGKOK:** Thai authorities have seized a massive methamphetamine haul worth almost \$38 million near the Laotian border, officials said yesterday, highlighting the kingdom's role as a pipeline for drugs flooding through Southeast Asia. Early yesterday authorities found some 788 kilograms of crystal meth—a high-purity form of the stimulant—in an abandoned pick-up truck in northern Chiang Rai province, the heart of the notorious "Golden Triangle" drug producing zone. More than nine million meth tablets were also found in fertilizer bags inside the vehicle, some 100 meters away from the Mekong river that divides Thailand and Laos. "Both type of drugs were found in the abandoned pickup truck... in Wiang Kaen district in Chiang Rai province," a military official said. He said the drug smugglers had already fled the scene while authorities have detained three Thai men suspected of preparing to move the cache to the next destination. —AFP

## Iraq scouts make a comeback in Mosul

**MOSUL:** Scouts are making a symbolic comeback in Mosul after a three-year absence from the city that used to serve as the Islamic State jihadist group's capital in Iraq. With white shirts and neckerchiefs, more than 200 male and female scout leaders from across Iraq recently converged on the city that was devastated by three years of jihadist rule and nine months of heavy urban warfare.

It was "a message to Iraq and the world: The scouts of Mosul and Iraq are back," Mohammed Ibrahim, head of scout activities in Mosul said. The rally took place at Mosul's scout camp set in the heart of a wooded area popular with locals for family outings on Fridays, the weekly day of rest in Iraq. Iraq was one of the first Arab countries to join the World Organization of the Scout Movement in 1914 when it was still part of the Ottoman Empire.

But in 1999, the world scout body evicted the Iraqi chapter because it was allegedly being used by former dictator Saddam Hussein's regime for military training. But the Iraqi scouts kept operating. In 2017, they were readmitted into the international scouting world and have since grown to 25,000 members across the country.

Loudspeakers blasted nationalist songs at full volume as children from local schools paraded in traditional Iraqi dress at the Mosul rally. For Qassima Mohsen, a 42-year-old scout leader in the southern province of Zi Qar, the 800-kilometer trip to Mosul had both symbolic and personal value.

In the early 2000s, she used to come regularly to Mosul's scout camp for gatherings. More than 15 years



MOSUL: Iraqi female scout leaders parade with national flags during training at the "Al-Hadbaa" scout camp in the northern city of Mosul on February 25, 2018, with the participation of scout teams from various parts of Iraq.—AFP

later—after the US-led invasion, the fall of Saddam, years of sectarian violence, the jihadist occupation of nearly a third of the country and its subsequent recapture by Iraqi forces—she is back. With the ouster of the jihadists from Mosul last July, she has returned to the northern city to help build an activities centre for young scouts

in the area. The rally also provided a space for leaders and organizers from across the country to network and discuss future projects. "We will organize camps in Mosul to lend a hand with its reconstruction," said Ali Latif, a 34-year-old scout leader from Kirkuk, a multi-ethnic northern province. —AFP

## Analysis

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## Senegal city races to move families as sea swallows homes

**“M**um, mum, get up - the water's here!” Fatou Ndiaye's children shook her awake in the night, as waves crashed against their house on the coast of Saint-Louis, a city in northern Senegal. They were used to sleeping with the sound of the ocean a few feet away - but this time Ndiaye stretched out her hand and felt water rising inside the room. They fled. Two weeks later, she told the story standing by a pile of rubble where her childhood home used to be. The disaster surprised no one in this crowded fishing neighborhood. Since 2016, two or three times a year, the ocean has swelled and knocked another row of houses off the coast.

Saint-Louis, a city that spans a thin peninsula between the Senegal River and the Atlantic Ocean, is particularly vulnerable to the rising sea levels and urban crowding that are putting pressure on West Africa's coast. With damage now unavoidable, Senegal's government and the World Bank are mobilizing to resettle nearly 10,000 people from the city's riskiest zone. The effort reveals the challenges other countries will also face as their shorelines retreat due to a combination of higher seas linked to global warming and coastal erosion driven by natural processes and manmade factors, such as poorly planned infrastructure and sand mining.

In Saint-Louis' dirt streets, crisscrossed with laundry lines and filled with sheep, residents described their predicament. “They took people to Khar Yalla, but Khar Yalla is not good,” said Ndiaye, referring to a temporary relocation site about 6 km inland that now houses about 1,000 people. Not wanting to go to a place where most people are living in tents without electricity or running water, she instead moved in with neighbors whose house was still standing - but could be the next to go.

Other residents near the water's edge said they were afraid and ready to leave, but had not received help. “For two years now, the water has been rising. It doesn't recede,” said Soda Mbengue, eight months pregnant, walking through her shell of a home. “The government told us they'd come here to help us, and give us houses, but up until today we've seen nothing,” she said. Water seeps into her bedroom all the time.

### Fishermen commute

Tourists still stroll through art galleries in the center of Saint-Louis, the former French capital of colonial West Africa, but it is in the poor neighborhoods, just across a short bridge, that buildings are disappearing into the ocean. A school and a large mosque have already succumbed to the waves, with pupils redistributed to other packed classrooms. Khalifa Faye, 21, was among the first to lose his home to a storm, two years ago. After living in a tent for a few months, he and his family were given a small concrete house at the relocation site in Khar Yalla. “In the beginning it was bad. We didn't know this place,” said Faye, standing in a yard where his aunts made couscous and children played. Now he is happy, he said, though he wishes they had plumbing.

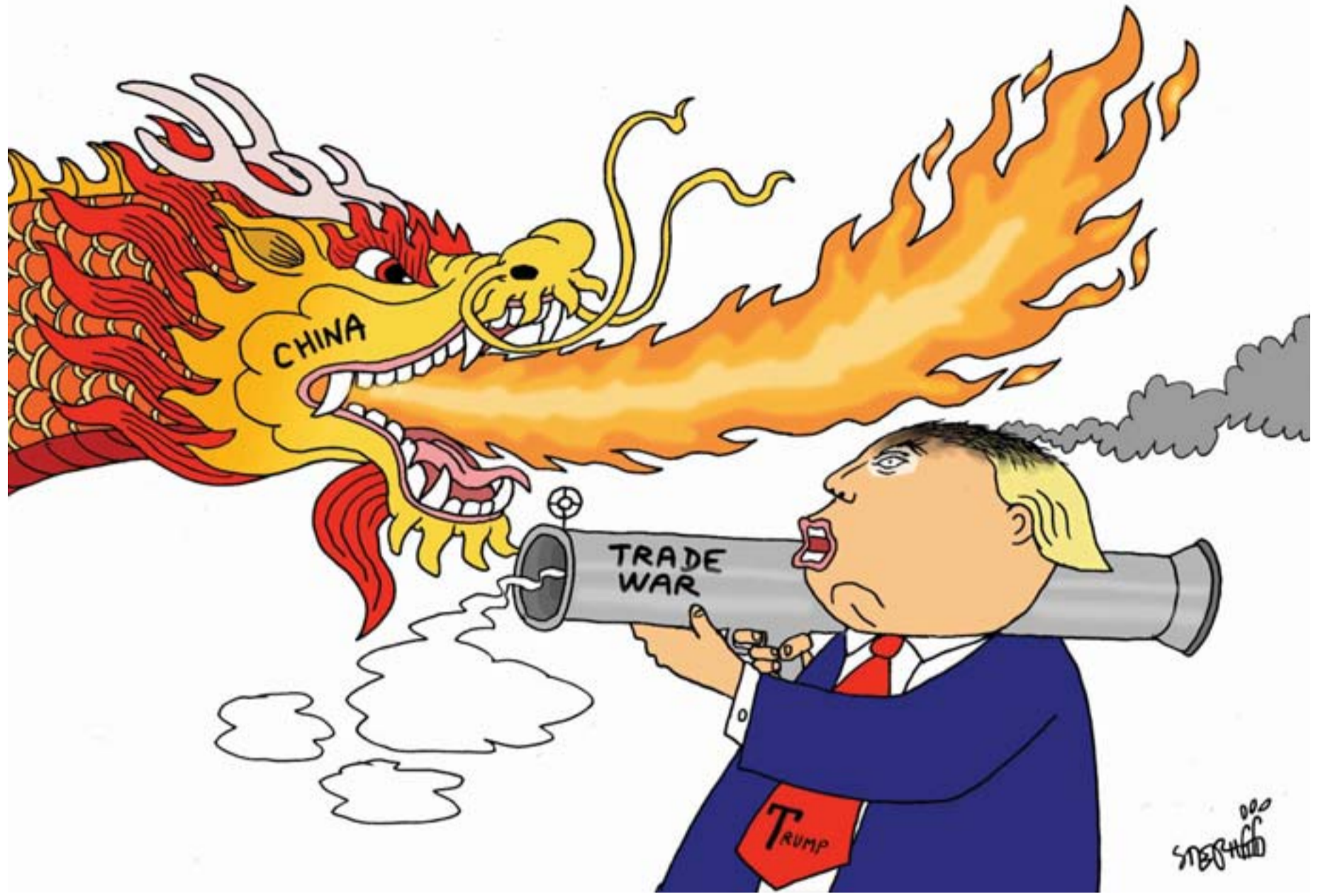
But other residents, especially those newly displaced, were less content. The temporary settlement sits on the side of a highway, surrounded by barren fields. Tauty Fall lifted the flap of a blue canvas tent to reveal a small space where she lives with her husband, their five children, and another family. “Life is not good here,” she said. Almost all the men earn a living from fishing and must now commute to the sea, said their wives. They take a bus for 150 CFA francs (\$0.30) but in the off-hours they have to take expensive taxis.

Deputy Mayor Balla Gueye said the people shifted to Khar Yalla are living in “precarious, very difficult conditions”. The city is working to provide them with better temporary lodging, such as mobile homes, before the permanent relocation scheme gets underway, he added. In the meantime, the government is ordering more tents. Another 59 families lost their homes in the most recent storm at the end of February, and some don't even have a canvas roof yet, Gueye said.

### West Africa funding

The World Bank project in Saint-Louis aims to relocate about 10,000 people at a cost of \$30 million. It covers residents within 20 m of the waterline on a 3.5 km stretch of shore, said the deputy mayor. But erosion threatens thousands of kilometres of coast from Mauritania to Gabon. About 105 million people live in West Africa's coastal areas, which generate 56 percent of the region's gross domestic product, according to the World Bank. In some places, the land is receding as much as 10 m a year, it said.

To deal with the larger problem, the bank has launched a West Africa Coastal Areas Management Program (WACA), with a first funding round of about \$220 million due to be approved this month. The money will be used to build sea walls and other defenses, plant vegetation along shores and support communities, said Benoit Bosquet, WACA manager at the World Bank. But it will not be enough to move everyone out of harm's way. “When it comes to relocation, it's very tricky,” Bosquet told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. “It's not clear that we will have the time or money sufficient to do relocation everywhere.” —Reuters



## Sierra Leone 'little gifts' incite graft fight

**W**hether you want to sit an exam, get electricity or just drive in town, life in Sierra Leone is punctuated by endless “little gifts” to those with power. In defiance of government anti-bribery campaigns, the sticky fingers of officialdom are a wearisome fact of life for many in this poor West African country. The nation of a little more than seven million people holds 128th place out of 180 on the latest Corruption Perceptions Index compiled annually by Transparency International, an NGO that focuses on the misuse of public power for private benefit.

The run-off of a presidential election took place on Saturday, with both candidates contending with allegations of graft. Samura Kamara, the candidate of the ruling All Peoples' Congress (APC), was tagged “Mr Ten Percent” by contractors when he ran the finance ministry. His rival Julius Maada Bio of the opposition Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) is accused of misappropriating \$18 million (14.6 million euros) during his brief time as head of state in 1996 after a coup.

“Whether you want to get electricity connection, whether you want to get land, whether you want to get scholarship for studies abroad,” graft is everywhere, Lavina Banduah, the director of Transparency International's small Sierra Leone office in Freetown, told AFP. For bus driver Tamba Ellie, speaking at the main public transport terminus in the capital beside the central market, the biggest bane

was the police. “Whenever they want us to give the money, they always stop us, and they say that you commit(ted) a crime last week, or this week, without no reason. And there is no proof,” Ellie said. Drivers have no choice but to cough up, since otherwise the police immobilise their bus for hours, the young man said.

### Sexual favors

In another district, a 28-year-old man who wished to go only by his first name, Abioseh, has painful memories of his efforts to get his teaching qualifications. “The one I vividly remember is when I was asked to pay a fee for certain subjects. I couldn't afford the 500,000 leones (52 euros/\$64) to pay as I was asked. Even though I did study hard, I was withheld on one subject because I didn't pay that one,” he declared. Bribery perhaps would be less of a problem if teachers weren't usually paid five or six months late, Abioseh said.

But, he also noted, from secondary school through university, some payments are made “in kind”—a euphemism for sexual services. With financial support from the British government, authorities in Sierra Leone have founded an Anti-Corruption Commission, charged with cracking down on graft and taking preventive steps including in education. In recent years, members of the public have been able to report cases of corruption via a free phone service.

Every three months, the commission publishes statistics illustrated with the

most telling cases, such as a nurse who demanded the equivalent of 25 euros before she would give a blood transfusion to a young child, and police who fleece car drivers and motorcyclists the equivalent of a euro per day in central Freetown. Banduah believes that the combined efforts of the Anti-Corruption Commission and the courts are starting to bear fruit.

“From what we've been following, a lot of public officials... have been found wanting and in most cases punitive measures

have been meted against them,” Banduah said, noting that police officers have been sacked and civil servants face legal action. Teacher Abioseh remains far from convinced. “I know about the free phone line, but I don't contact them,” he said. “It's just a waste of time.” Meanwhile, tackling graft beyond petty bribery is another matter. Corruption in the higher echelons of state remains the hardest kind to fight “since we don't see the money changing hands,” Banduah said.—AFP



In this photograph taken on March 30, 2018, a moneychanger holds a bundle of Sierra Leone currency notes on a pavement in Freetown. —AFP

## Hungary media squeeze triggers 'samizdat' revival

**A**s a student in 1980s communist Hungary, Janos Laszlo used to help out in the famous “samizdat” movement that published underground, homemade news in Soviet Bloc eastern and central Europe. Fast-forward to 2018 under strongman Prime Minister Viktor Orban - who is running for re-election on Sunday and dominates Hungary's media landscape - and Laszlo is back at it with his “Print it Yourself” venture. Armed with a stack of A4-sized news pamphlets that he puts together and prints at home or at friends' print shops, once or twice a week he sets off for the countryside to spread the word - literally.

“There aren't many independent media outlets left in Hungary anymore,” the 60-year-old told AFP aboard a train to the provincial city of Szekesfeharvar. “So I bring their content to people outside Budapest who are particularly isolated,” he said. According to Laszlo, a former journalist, people outside the capital, especially the elderly, get their news mainly from regional newspapers or state television and radio. But all have been under strict central control since a radical overhaul of media under Orban, in power since 2010.

Readers of Laszlo's weekly paper though can catch up on six or seven stories - from corruption scandals to street protests - that are reported only in independent outlets, typically Budapest-based news websites. “We felt a moral obligation to provide a balance to the distortions elsewhere in the media,” said Emese Nagy, 48, one of five helpers on the train folding the newsletter pages in two. “If an ordinary person sees something in a newspaper or on TV then chances are he thinks it must be true, even if it is not,” she said. Once off the train the team hand the pamphlets to pedestrians, leave them at busy spots like train stations or underpasses, or drop them in mailboxes along village lanes.

### Takeover

Laszlo says he decided to act last August after business interests close to Orban completed the takeover of Hungary's popular regional newspapers with circulations often exceeding those of national titles. “That was the last straw, even though it was just the latest stage in the systematic elimination of the free press here in recent years,”

he said. Public television and radio channels were merged soon after Orban swept into power and given the same content from the now tightly controlled state news agency.

In recent years most commercial media critical of the government have been bought by business interests close to the ruling Fidesz party. All 18 regional papers are owned by either Orban's hometown mayor Lorinc Meszaros, Hollywood film producer and casino magnate Andy Vajna or Austrian tycoon Heinrich Pecina. Most of the papers' staff have left or been fired, while their political content closely follows the government's relentless anti-immigration agenda. “There are hardly any literate people left at the paper, there's certainly no real news anymore,” Erno Klecska, former editor of the Fejer Megyei Hirlap, the Szekesfeharvar-based county paper, told AFP. “It's like the powers-that-be want to close down every channel of potential criticism that exists,” he said.

### Samizdat

As polling day approaches, government-friendly media have intensified warnings over Orban's main campaign themes: immigration and interference by Brussels and US billionaire George Soros. Laszlo says demand for his newsletter has also been increasing. On the “Print it

Yourself” website, people can download the latest issue, print it at home and distribute it in their own locality, or Laszlo's team can give a helping hand with printing. “We've just sent 10,000 copies down to Szeged (southern Hungary),” he told AFP.

In Szekesfeharvar, a city of some 100,000, most passersby accepted a copy, although one man stopped to rip it up and hand back the pieces with a grin. “When Fidesz supporters are confronted with scandals and strong headlines it winds them up,” Laszlo said. Another local, Eva Tolvaj, sat on a bench folding copies and said she agreed “with every word” in this “little piece of samizdat”. Back in the 1980s Laszlo helped to circulate periodicals and banned books printed by “samizdat” publishers. For Roza Hodosan, who ran an underground publishing house specializing in works banned by the communist authorities, Laszlo's initiative is “important”.

“This is something at least, but it can't reach enough people to compensate for the overwhelming dominance of the government media,” the 63-year-old sociologist told AFP in Budapest. “Then, we could see the end as communism got milder toward the end of the decade. But now it seems as things are getting more restrictive again, and that the world is entering dark times,” she said.—AFP



A picture taken on Feb 16, 2018 at the southern railway station of Budapest shows activists of civil organization “Nyomtasd te is!” (Print it yourself!) preparing their own printed leaflets in a train on their way to the provincial city of Szekesfeharvar. —AFP



An Indian mahout washes his elephant in the Yamuna River in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

## Russia-Turkey ties tighten with nuclear...

Continued from Page 1

The Akkuyu power station - a project costing over \$20 billion and heavily disliked by environmentalists - was already launched once before in Feb 2015 but then put on hold due to the row over the downed Russian plane. "The scale of this project is difficult to exaggerate," Putin said at the ceremony. "This marks a new stage in the development of Turkey's economy." Erdogan declared: "We are witnessing a historic

moment." The project was launched with Erdogan declaring "in the name of God!" and work immediately began on the site, with the first concrete pouring as celebratory fireworks were let off.

Once completed the power station will provide 10 percent of the electricity needs of Turkey, which has few energy resources of its own. The first stage is due to come online in 2023, the 100th anniversary of modern Turkey's founding, and be completed entirely in 2026. Russia and Turkey are also building the TurkStream gas pipeline under the Black Sea that will allow Moscow to pump gas to Europe avoiding Ukraine and increase Turkey's importance as a transit hub. Half of the offshore section of the pipeline has already been installed. "We are realizing a number of strategic projects with the Russian Federation," said Erdogan. — AFP

## MBS says Israelis have right to land...

Continued from Page 1

But Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman indicated a notable shift in the kingdom's position in an interview published Monday with US news magazine The Atlantic.

The prince was asked by the magazine whether the "Jewish people have a right to a nation-state in at least part of their ancestral homeland?" "I believe that each people, anywhere, has a right to live in their peaceful nation," said the prince, who is on a three-week US tour. "I believe the Palestinians and the Israelis have the right to have their own land," he added. "But we have to have a peace agreement to assure the stability for everyone and to have normal relations." Since 2002, Saudi Arabia has been the main sponsor of the Arab Peace Initiative, which envisions a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. No senior Saudi official is known to have previously accepted that Israel has a right to any land beyond the practical need to secure a lasting deal.

Separately, Yemen's Houthi group hit a Saudi oil tanker off the main port city of Hodeidah yesterday, the Saudi-led coalition said, in an attack that could complicate a new United Nations push to end a war that has killed more than 10,000 people. The Iranian-aligned Houthis said they had targeted a coalition warship in response to an air strike on Hodeidah on Monday that killed at least a dozen civilians, including seven children.

Tensions have been rising in recent days after the Houthis, who control most of northern Yemen, launched

a series of missile strikes on Saudi Arabia, including the capital Riyadh, in recent days. In a statement carried by Saudi media, the coalition said the oil tanker was in international waters when it came under "Houthi-Iranian attack" at around 1330 local time (1030 GMT). A coalition warship conducted a "swift intervention" foiling the attack, it said, without identifying the type of weapon used in the assault. "As a result of that attack, the tanker was subjected to a slight but ineffective hit and it resumed its naval course northwards, escorted by a coalition warship," the statement said.

A European Union naval force that operates in the region confirmed the ship was underway, adding that the crew was safe and unharmed. The media department of the Houthi-run Yemeni military said naval forces had "targeted a battleship belonging to the coalition in response to the bombardment of displaced people in Hodeidah". It gave no further details. The department's text message was referring to an air strike by the Saudi-led coalition on Monday in Houthi-controlled Hodeidah that destroyed a house and killed 12 civilians from the same family, including seven children. A coalition spokesman said the alliance takes the report very seriously, promising a full investigation.

Last week, Saudi air defenses intercepted a flurry of missiles, and falling debris caused the first death in the capital Riyadh. Saudi Arabia accuses Iran of supplying missiles to the Houthis, who have taken over the Yemeni capital Sanaa and other parts of the country. Tehran and the Houthis deny the charge. Earlier yesterday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged the warring sides in Yemen to reach a political settlement to end a conflict now in its fourth year that has left 22 million people in urgent need of aid. — Agencies

## Oil to solar: Saudis push to be renewable...

Continued from Page 1

"This may take time, but we have all the raw materials - sunshine, land and most importantly, the will," he added, giving AFP a tour of the facility widely known as Solar Village. Engineers were working away testing solar panels under harsh conditions. A miniature sandstorm inside a cylindrical chamber battered one panel. A machine with what appeared to be a large boxing glove punched another.

The site, which also includes a solar field that supplies electricity to neighboring villages, was established some three decades ago. But the push for renewables only now appears to be gaining momentum. It is driven by a key incentive - to free up more oil reserves for export, the kingdom's chief revenue earner. Saudi Arabia currently draws on oil and natural gas to both meet its own fast-growing power demand and desalinate its water, consuming an estimated 3.4 million barrels of oil daily. That number is expected to rise to 8.3 million barrels in 10 years, according to the King Abdullah City for Atomic and Renewable Energy, eating up the bulk of Saudi Arabia's crude production.

"Saudi Arabia has long had a vision for becoming... an exporter of oil and of gigawatts of power," Ellen Wald, a scholar at pro-Saudi think tank Arabia Foundation and author of the book "Saudi Inc", told AFP. "That vision requires solar power installations of a massive scale. My understanding is the project will be rolled out in pieces and not as one giant plant." But the sheer scope of the project, which aims to produce well above the kingdom's own projected requirement of 120 gigawatts by 2032, has prompted skepticism. "Although Saudi Arabia has more than enough vacant, non-arable desert land... (it) really does not need so much solar power," said Bart Lucarelli, a managing director for power and utilities at advisory firm AWR Lloyd.

"There has been speculation about whether this amount of new solar capacity can even be built in that time frame within a single country. The consensus view is that the 200 gigawatt figure is excessive," Lucarelli said. Saudi Arabia instead "needs a balance" between renewables and fossil fuels - and pointed out that the solar memorandum is non-binding for now. To handle the amount of power the project envisions, experts say the



Saudis work at a solar panel factory in Uyayna on March 29, 2018. — AFP

kingdom would require huge investments to upgrade its grid and set up large-scale battery storage facilities.

The solar push appears to be driven by geopolitics as much as economics. "Saudi Arabia's problem is that (rivals) Iran and Qatar have the gas reserves it does not," said James Dorsey, a Middle East expert at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. "That is one reason why renewables figure prominently in Prince Mohammed's reform program, not only to prepare Saudi Arabia economically for a post-oil future but also to secure its continued geopolitical significance."

Saudi Arabia also harbors atomic ambitions, with plans to build 16 reactors over the next two decades for \$80 billion, despite concerns over nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. But the economics favor solar power. Electricity from solar sources costs less than half that of nuclear power. SoftBank's Vision Fund would invest \$1 billion for the first phase of the deal, but it is unclear where the rest of the investment will come from. Saudi Arabia has dazzled investors with several plans for hi-tech "giga projects", funded in part by its sovereign wealth fund, but skeptics question their viability in an era of cheap oil.

The kingdom has unveiled blueprints to build NEOM, a mega project billed as a regional Silicon Valley, in addition to the Red Sea project, a reef-fringed resort destination - both worth hundreds of billions of dollars. "Throwing money at a project, be it a solar project or a tech city, won't make it work unless it's accompanied by technology that works and effective project management," said Wald. "Most likely, the end result of mega projects will be markedly different than the vision expressed today. That is not to say worse, but different." — AFP

Kuwait Times

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Sports

# Australia's swimmers can ride wave of home crowd to glory

## Australia's swimming team expected to top medals table in the pool

**GOLD COAST:** A fervent home crowd is expected to help propel Australia's swimming team to the top of the medals table in the pool for the 10th successive Commonwealth Games but also banish memories of a poor return at last year's world championships.

Locals are expected to comprise much of the 10,000-strong crowds in the temporary stands at the Gold Coast Aquatic Centre for the April 5-10 competition, which Scotland coach Alan Lynn said would provide a psychological boost for the home team.

"This is the spiritual home of swimming as far as we're concerned," he said of the open-air venue. "It's like playing rugby against New Zealand in Auckland." Defending women's 100m freestyle champion Cate Campbell, who lives and trains in nearby Brisbane, added that she had witnessed how the Glasgow crowd had lifted the Scotland team four years ago.

"There was something in the air that got them ready to swim fast," Campbell said. "I'm really hoping that we feel that same energy out there on pool deck in a couple of days." Campbell took last year off after missing out on a medal in her signature event at the Rio Olympics and her absence was sorely missed at the world championships in Budapest.

Australia, traditionally one of the sport's powerhouses, finished eighth on the table with 10 medals, their lowest tally since 1991, with a solitary gold to backstro-

ker Emily Seebohm. While the Games should provide a massive boost for coach Jacco Verhaar's planning as they build towards the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, they are not expected to have it all their own way.

Olympic and world champion breaststroker Adam Peaty will lead a fired-up England squad, while the rejuvenated Canadian women's team that includes 100m backstroke world record holder Kylie Masse and 100m freestyle Olympic champion Penny Oleksiak are expected to provide some thrilling racing.

"There are always a lot of medals involved in a campaign like this," Verhaar said. "(But) to think it will be an easy run would be underestimating what is coming towards us."

### Psychological boost for the home team



### TOUGH CONDITIONS

The outdoor venue, a rarity for a major international championship, is also likely to throw up some challenges for the swimmers, particularly the backstrokers, who have no visual cues to follow. "It's a huge challenge and is a bit frustrating," said Masse, who has been incorporated to the conditions.

"You can be doing a really fast set then all of a sudden, wham, you hit the lane rope, it's a bit frustrating, to say the least." The wind, sun and expected rain will also affect the swimmers, with the light-skinned Peaty jokingly worrying about his complexion.

"I'm a ginger kid from Uttoxeter, so it might be a bit



**GOLD COAST:** Australia's Matt Wilson trains ahead of the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games at the Optus Aquatic Centre swimming pool in Gold Coast yesterday. — AFP

difficult in the heat," he told Britain's Guardian newspaper. The water temperature, however, has created some issues with Olympic 400m freestyle champion Mack Horton overheating during the Australian trials and the team looking to utilise ice baths for the distance swimmers. "It's just about managing my body temperature,

trying to stay cool before I race and cooling down faster after heats," said Horton, who will race the 200m, 400m and 1500m freestyle.

"I think we will have ice baths at the pool and we've got some in the basement of the village as well, so when we get back we can cool down." — Reuters

## Kyokushin Karate championship begins on Friday

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Chairman of the Higher Organizing Committee of the Second All-Asia Weight Category Championship I.K.O (International Kyokushin Organization) karate Khalid Abdellatif Al-Munaye said all is ready for the championship on Friday which will be held at Kuwait Sports Club under the patronage of Public Authority for Sports (PAS).

Al-Munaye was speaking during a press conference in the presence of the Kyokushin Committee Duaa Hussein, International Kyokushin Organization representative Bahaa Omran and Committee rapporteur Dr Haidar Kamal.

Al-Munaye said delegations will start arriving today as the draw will be made tomorrow. He added a course will be held for referees in presence of the President of the Asian Federation of the game, as well as the secretary general.

Al-Munaye thanked PAS and its Director General Dr Humoud Fulaiteh for approving



and supporting the championship. He also thanked Kuwait Sports Club and its Deputy Chairman Khalid Al-Ghanim to ensure the success of the tournament.

Meanwhile, Duaa Hussein said the Asian championship in one of the strongest that qualify for world championship and Tokyo 2020 Olympics. She said twelve countries will participate, including Saudi Arabia,

Singapore, Bahrain, India, UAE, Mongolia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malaysia, Iran and host country Kuwait.

Bahaa Omran said there will be four weights under 70kg, 80kg, 90kg and over 90kg in the competition, adding that Kuwait is the first Arab country that organizes such an event. Competitions will start at 3 pm on Friday at Kuwait Sports Club Hall.

## Norway's legendary Bjorndalen to retire at 44

**OSLO:** Norway's biathlon superstar Ole Einar Bjorndalen, the most decorated male Winter Olympian in history, said yesterday he would retire at the end of the season, at the age of 44. "I would have liked to continue a few more years, but this is my last season," a tearful Bjorndalen told a news conference, citing health and family time as reasons behind the retirement.

Since making his professional debut in March 1993, Bjorndalen went on to win 13 Olympic medals (eight gold, four silver and one bronze). That leaves him as the men's record medal holder in the Winter Olympics and number two overall behind compatriot Marit Bjorgen, the cross-country skier who set a new record of 15 medals after starring at last month's Pyeongchang Games in which he didn't compete.

He realised a remarkable "grand slam" at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic Games, winning four gold medals in each of the events. Bjorndalen said the "rawest experience of (his) life" was four years earlier during the Nagano Games in Japan.

While tough weather conditions deprived him of a first Olympic title on the 10-kilometre (six-mile) sprint, he managed to overcome his disappointment and win the race the following day. This was also around the time that his fierce duels with France's Raphael Poiree started, drawing broad media attention to the sport. During his exceptional career, Bjorndalen, dubbed "the Cannibal", amassed



**OSLO:** File photo shows Norway's Ole Einar Bjorndalen with his championship's medals after the Men 15 km Mass Start event at the IBU World Championships Biathlon competition in Oslo Holmenkollen, on March 13, 2016. — AFP

95 individual victories in the World Cup, including one in cross-country skiing, and 179 podium finishes. He also claimed the overall World Cup biathlon title six times.

### PYEONGCHANG DISILLUSIONMENT

But poor results this season meant he missed out on a seventh Olympics in Pyeongchang. Instead, he coached his Belarusian wife (and biathlete) Darya Domracheva, who left South Korea with a relay gold medal and an individual silver medal. "The season did not go as planned with performances not as good as I and others had expected," Bjorndalen told a news conference on Tuesday. The Norwegian, known for his thoroughness and diligent preparation, said he had been diagnosed with

atrial fibrillation, which could lead to blood clots, stroke and heart failure.

"I would have liked to say that I'm fed up and jaded, but I'm not. Now, I wish to slow down on the advice of the medical team and my family," he added. Thomas Bach, president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), hailed Bjorndalen as a "role model".

"Ole Einar Bjorndalen is one of the greatest of all time," Bach told AFP. "He has proven this time and again in competition, but more importantly, he has established himself as a true Olympian and a role model for young athletes around the world." While some already see Bjorndalen as a candidate to head up the International Biathlon Union (IBU), he said he wanted to spend some time thinking about his future. — AFP

## Indian doctor reprimanded for needle infringement

**GOLD COAST:** An India boxing team doctor was found by a Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) Court to have breached the event's "No Needle Policy" by failing to store syringes properly in the run-up to the quadrennial showpiece in Australia.

The needles, which are banned without specific medical exemptions as part of the fight against doping, were discovered in a plastic bottle over the weekend. The doctor, Amol Patil, had administered a Vitamin B complex injection to an unwell boxer and left needles in the room in contravention of CGF rules, the authority said in a statement yesterday.

"The Federation Court found that there was a breach of Paragraphs I and II of the No Needle Policy in that the Doctor left needles in the room while he went to the Polyclinic to obtain sharp bins for the disposal of the needles," it said. "Under the No Needle Policy, nee-

dles are required to be stored in a central secured location, access to which is restricted to authorised medical personnel of the CGA (Commonwealth Games Association) delegation. "The needles in question were not disposed of until he had made two trips to the Polyclinic."

The Court added that the doctor had failed to provide a mandatory declaration form for the needles but had provided "information substantially similar" to what was required. "In the circumstances, the Federation Court's decision is that CGF should issue a strong written reprimand to the Doctor for the breaches," the statement added.

"A copy of the letter of reprimand should be served on the Chef de Mission of the Indian Team, who should be advised to ensure that no further infractions of CGF Policies occur by any member of the Indian Team."

The matter was not defined as an anti-doping rule violation, the CGF said on Monday. India's boxing high performance director Santiago Nieva told local media on Monday that one of his athletes felt ill and received a "vitamin substance" from a doctor. The 21st Commonwealth Games for mostly former British colonies get underway at Gold Coast today and run to April 15. — Reuters

## Australian diver retires on eve of Games over paralysis fears

**GOLD COAST:** Heartbroken Australian diver Taneka Kovchenko retired on the eve of her home Commonwealth Games yesterday after medical experts warned that she risked severe paralysis if one more dive went wrong.

The 23-year-old, who was a serious medal contender in the women's synchronised 10m platform at the Gold Coast, has been suffering chronic headaches and neck pain since the end of last year. Scans showed two vertebrae have compressed her spinal cord and her doctor and neurologist said another bad landing could leave her quadriplegic and dependent on a ventilator. "I have had an amazing 14 years diving, chasing my dream of representing Australia," said Kovchenko, who hails from nearby Brisbane. "I am grateful for every experience and opportunity I have been given. I am leaving the sport as an athlete proud of my accomplishments and with so many life skills."

Kovchenko, who with team-mate Melissa Wu finished fifth at last year's world championships in Budapest in the synchronised 10m, described the threat of

serious injury as "super scary". "I thought of every scenario to try and continue diving till at least the end of the season, however the risks highly outweighed the options of continuing to dive and sadly had to make the heartbreaking decision to stop diving," she wrote on Instagram.

Australian team diving manager Michael Hetherington said that he suspected Kovchenko was still in shock at her sudden forced retirement. "She has been amazing, she really has," Hetherington said. "Whether it has sunk in, I'm not fully sure as yet. She came and spoke to the team in camp and very emotionally broke the news to the team. "But she also realises there wasn't really a choice... it wasn't like she was just injured. Unfortunately the choice was made for her." Kovchenko and Wu had been expected to light up their event at the Commonwealth Games, having taken gold at November's FINA Diving Grand Prix at the Gold Coast.

"I'm going to miss you so much up on the platform... I'm so proud of you and everything you've achieved," an emotional Wu told Kovchenko following her sudden retirement. "This is only the beginning of what you will continue to achieve in life. Thanks for being such a great team-mate and for always inspiring me to get the best out of myself." Teju Williamson will replace Kovchenko in the 10m individual event, and could also join up with Wu in the synchronised discipline. — AFP

## Sports

# Philander bowls South Africa to record win over Australia

## Australia's second biggest defeat against any opponent

JOHANNESBURG: Vernon Philander grabbed six wickets in a devastating spell of seam bowling as South Africa crushed Australia by a record 492 runs to clinch the four-match series 3-1 yesterday, leaving the tourists with much soul-searching to do.

The scandal-hit tourists had promised to fight for a draw on the final day to end a controversial tour on a positive note but their resistance lasted just 83 minutes as Philander ripped through the batting order to finish with career-best figures of 6-21. Australia were bowled out for a paltry 119 in their second innings to succumb to their heaviest ever loss to South Africa in terms of runs, their second biggest defeat against any opponent and the fourth biggest loss in Test cricket.

By contrast, South Africa completed their biggest victory over the Australians in tests by runs, and sealed their first home series win over the demoralised visitors since 1970.

The Australian side have been rocked by a ball-tampering scandal in which former captain Steve Smith, his deputy David Warner and batsman Cameron Bancroft were sent home after the third test before being slapped with hefty bans. Since that incident in Cape Town, they scored 447 runs for the loss of 30 wickets as the "mental disintegration" they are so famous for inflicting on opponents proved to be their own downfall. "I don't think it was one day too many, it was probably a few \_ but there has been enough spoken about the week that we have had and we are disappointed with the way we handled it," new captain Tim Paine told reporters.

"This group had a chance to show some fight and determination today and we weren't able to because mentally we weren't quite there.

"At the moment there is a fair bit of disappointment and borderline embarrassment in our change room."

Paine conceded that South Africa had been the better side since Australia claimed a 118-run win in the opening test in Durban and that the tourists had wilted under the pressure. "The performance is concerning, no doubt about that. From the Durban test match, South Africa outplayed us purely on skill," he said.

"But we have also got some guys here who have

played international cricket for a very long time and they will have to step up again now that we have lost two of the best players in the world for the foreseeable future."

### MORKEL WICKETLESS

Philander took six wickets for three runs in 32 balls to carve through the tourists and keep fellow seamer Morne Morkel (2-28) wicketless on his final morning of international cricket before his retirement.

Australia resumed on 88 for three, but lost the Marsh brothers in the opening over as Shaun (seven) got an inside edge on to his pad and was caught by Temba Bavuma, and Mitchell was snatched by wicket-keeper Quinton de Kock, both off Philander. Peter Handscomb (24) was bowled after chopping

on to his stumps and Paine (seven) edged to De Kock as the tourists struggled to cope with Philander's seam movement. Pat Cummins (one) left a delivery that cannoned into his off-stump and Chadd Sayers (zero) edged to Dean Elgar at gully as the Australian innings ended in a rush of failures.

The match ended when Nathan Lyon (nine) was run out, a chaotic end to what has been a shambolic series for the Australians.

"This means a lot to us," South Africa captain Faf du Plessis said. "And I believe this is the best we have been right through a series. Credit to everyone that played their part, at various times a lot of guys put their hands up so we can say this was a collective team effort.

"We all know there were a lot of incidents in this series, but after each day I would sit in the dressing-room and sense that there was a calmness to our emotions and we were really just focused on winning games of cricket." Tempers boiled over in the series on a number of occasions, but Paine said he was looking forward to sharing time with the South Africans. "We have been invited in (for a beer), though it's a bit early, it might be a coffee," Paine said.

"We have got some young players in our team who will learn a lot from going to have a beer with some of the experienced players in the South Africans have got. We are very happy to do that." — Reuters



### Home side clinch controversial series 3-1



JOHANNESBURG: South African team celebrates winning the fifth Test cricket match between South Africa and Australia and the Test Series against Australia for the first time since admission at Wanderers cricket ground yesterday in Johannesburg. — AFP

### SCOREBOARD

JOHANNESBURG: Final scores on the fifth day of the fourth Test between South Africa and Australia at the Wanderers Stadium yesterday:

<b>South Africa, first innings, 488</b>	N. Lyon run out (Markram)	9
<b>Australia, first innings, 221</b>	C. Sayers b Philander	0
<b>South Africa, second innings, 344-6 dec</b>	J. Hazlewood not out	9
	Extras (lb1, nb7)	8
	Total (46.4 overs)	119
<b>Australia, second innings (overnight 88-3)</b>	Fall of wickets: 1-21 (Renshaw), 2-34 (Khawaja), 3-68 (Burns), 4-88 (S. Marsh), 5-88 (M. Marsh), 6-95 (Handscomb), 7-99 (Paine), 8-100 (Cummins), 9-100 (Sayers)	
M. Renshaw lbw b Morkel	5	
J. Burns lbw b Morkel	42	
U. Khawaja lbw b Maharaj	7	
P. Handscomb b Philander	24	
S. Marsh c Bavuma b Philander	7	
M. Marsh c De Kock b Philander	0	
T. Paine c De Kock b Philander	7	
P. Cummins b Philander	1	
	Bowling: Rabada 8-3-16-0 (4nb), Philander 13-5-21-6 (1nb), Maharaj 13-2-47-1 (1nb), Morkel 10.4-5-28-2 (1nb), Markram 2-0-6-0.	
	Result: South Africa won by 492 runs	
	Series: South Africa won 3-1	

## Cricketers' union wants Smith, Warner 'disproportionate' bans reduced

SYDNEY: Bans handed to Steve Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft should be reduced, the Australian cricketers' union said yesterday, arguing the punishment was disproportionate to previous ball-tampering cases. Disgraced former captain Smith and his deputy Warner were suspended from international and domestic cricket for 12 months and Bancroft for nine months over a plot to alter the ball during the third Test against South Africa in Cape Town.

All three players have apologised and accepted responsibility in emotional press conferences after being kicked off the tour and returning home last week. Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA) president Greg Dyer said "justice which is rushed can sometimes be very flawed", referring to Cricket Australia (CA) handing out its punishment so soon after the incident. He urged a relaxation of the bans to allow the men to return to domestic action sooner, saying of the dozen or so previous cases the ACA had studied, the most severe punishment was a ban for two one-day internationals.

"These proposed penalties are disproportionate relative to precedent," he told a press conference. Dyer pointed to the International Cricket Council sanction, which suspended Smith for one Test and docked him his match fee after he admitted responsibility for the ball-tampering scandal.

He also said the contrition expressed by players has been "extraordinary" and should be taken into account. A wave of sympathy for Smith, in particular, has been gathering pace since a heart-wrenching public apology on Thursday, in which he broke down in tears. "Their distressed faces have sent a message across the globe as effective as any sanctions could be. I think Australia cried with Steve Smith last Thursday, I certainly did," said Dyer.

"We consider that the players need to return to domestic cricket earlier and as part of their rehabilitation." With the 2019 World Cup and an Ashes series in 2019, supporters of the players believe they need to be playing state cricket to be in the type of form that could warrant selection. All three men have until tomorrow to inform Cricket Australia whether they accept their punishment or will opt for a hearing, as is their right. Dyer also said the "win-at-all-costs" culture of Australian cricket must be addressed by independent inquiry examining the game from top to bottom, reporting to both the ACA and CA.

"Organisational culture comes from its leadership and it comes from the top. It cannot be grafted onto the bottom," he said, as pressure grows for cricket's top brass to also come under the spotlight. "Let us identify all the causes of the tipping point that occurred in Cape Town." — AFP

## Sodhi, Wagner 'heroes' as draw gives NZ series win

CHRISTCHURCH: Ish Sodhi and Neil Wagner were hailed as heroes yesterday after their gritty 188-ball stand secured a second Test draw and series win for New Zealand against England. Battered and bruised after a torrid time from a desperate England attack, the pair hung on until bad light stopped play with Wagner's dismissal in the penultimate over.

The second Test draw in Christchurch gave New Zealand the series 1-0 after they won the first Test by an innings and 49 runs and it stretched England's winless away record to 13 Tests. "Neil Wagner and Ish Sodhi were heroic," captain Kane Williamson said. "If it wasn't for them putting their hand up, weathering the storm bumps and bruises and all, this series result could have been so different." Any hopes New Zealand had of reaching 382 to win disappeared when they slumped to 42 for two at the start of the final day when England took two wickets with the first two balls.

England had New Zealand six for 182 when the second new ball was taken before tea, but the series-defining final session belonged to New Zealand. After Colin de Grandhomme (45) was the seventh wicket to fall, Wagner and Sodhi added 37 runs in 31.2 overs, but by that stage only survival mattered for New Zealand who finished on 256 for eight when the close came after Wagner's dismissal. Sodhi, who feared he may have finished with a broken finger, said it was a difficult period to bat through.

### 'A BIT OF LUCK'

"I was trying to figure out which balls to play and which to get under and it started to become a bit difficult through the middle period when the odd one would jump," he said. "There was a bit of luck. I had a couple of balls went through the slips and over the gully a couple of times and you could sense their frustration as a bit of fortune went our way." It ended an arduous and unsuccessful tour for England who lost the Ashes series 4-0 before coming to New Zealand. "It's been very disappointing in terms of results... we've not performed to our ability and not got the results we wanted," said captain Joe Root. But, despite England holding the upper hand for two sessions on the final day, Root did not believe they could have done any more to win. "We tried a number of different things and we couldn't have tried much more," he said.

### 'VERY FRUSTRATING'

"It's very frustrating. I thought we had a very good opportunity coming into today, we had fantastic start and we threw absolutely everything at them." After Stuart Broad dismissed Jeet Raval and Kane Williamson with the first two balls, Tom Latham was the first to stand up for New Zealand with a patient 83.

De Grandhomme and Sodhi put on 57 for the seventh



CHRISTCHURCH: New Zealand players celebrate winning the NZ Cricket Test series after day five of the second cricket Test match between New Zealand and England at Hagley Oval in Christchurch yesterday. — AFP

### SCOREBOARD

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand: Completed scoreboard at the end of the second and final Test between New Zealand and England in Christchurch yesterday:

<b>England first innings 307</b> (J. Bairstow 101, M. Wood 52; Southee 6-62, Boulton 4-87)	B. Watling c Anderson b Wood	19
<b>New Zealand first innings 278</b> (B. Watling 85, C. de Grandhomme 72, T. Southee 50; Broad 6-54, Anderson 4-76)	C. de Grandhomme c Leach b Wood	45
England second innings 352-9 dec (J. Vince 76, M. Stoneman 60, J. Root 54, D. Malan 53; De Grandhomme 4-94)	I. Sodhi not out	56
	N. Wagner c Vince b Root	7
	Extras: (lb2, nb1)	3
<b>New Zealand second innings (overnight 42-0)</b>	Total: (for 8 wickets: 124.4 overs)	256
T. Latham c Vince b Leach	Fall of wickets: 1-42 (Raval), 2-42 (Williamson), 3-66 (Latham), 4-91 (Nicholls), 5-135 (Watling), 6-162 (Latham), 7-219 (de Grandhomme) 8-256 (Wagner)	
J. Raval c Stoneman b Broad	Anderson 26-8-37-1 (1nb), Broad 24-6-72-2, Wood 22-10-45-2, Leach 32-15-61-2, Root 12.4-5-28-1,	
K. Williamson c Bairstow b Broad	Malan 4-1-9-0.	
R. Taylor c Cook b Leach	Did not bat: T. Southee, T. Boulton	
H. Nicholls c Cook b Anderson	Result: Match drawn	
	Series: New Zealand 1-0	

wicket and then Sodhi and Wagner saw New Zealand through to stumps.

Sodhi ducked, weaved, slashed and took hits to the body as he produced his third Test 50, facing 168 balls, while Wagner faced 103 balls for his seven. Joe Root stacked fielders round the bat, and spinner Jack Leach had eight in close catching positions as the number of remaining overs sank below six. But edges flew just wide of outstretched arms, adding to England's frustration. After Broad's early breakthrough, which included the first

golden duck for Kane Williamson in his 65-Test career, wickets fell at regular intervals. Ross Taylor avoided the hat-trick, was dropped on six by James Vince and progressed to 13 when he saw Leach place Alastair Cook at short backward leg and promptly chipped the ball straight to him.

Henry Nicholls went for 13 and BJ Watling was out for 19. Vince, who had dropped Latham on 23, made amends with a diving catch at square leg to end Latham's near five-hour stay in the middle. — AFP

Sports

# Make your own European history, Klopp challenges Liverpool

## City can wrap up title earlier than any team has done before

**LIVERPOOL:** Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp urged his players to write themselves into the club's storied European history when they face runaway Premier League leaders Manchester City in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final today.

While City currently have the upper hand domestically as they sit 18 points clear of third-placed Liverpool in the Premier League and just one win away from a third title in seven seasons, five-time European champions Liverpool have far more pedigree in continental competition.

However, the Reds haven't reached the Champions League last four for a decade and Klopp wants modern day memories created at Anfield.

"This club is already so full of history and we have to write our own history," said the German yesterday when quizzed whether he was seeking inspiration from Liverpool's glory days in Europe.

"People meet me in the street and they can tell me each goal Liverpool who scored 37 years ago in the 56th minute... we need to be proud of our history but we need to create our own history."

"I did that a lot in the past with my former teams, but at one point you need to do your own things. The boys are ready, they are really looking forward to it."

City can wrap up the title earlier than any team has before if they beat local rivals Manchester United on Saturday, with Pep Guardiola's men's march to the finish

line drawing comparisons with the all-time great Premier League sides.

However, their only league defeat of the season came at Anfield in a thrilling 4-3 Liverpool win in January and Klopp welcomed the challenge. "I like the difficult jobs, that is the most interesting thing for a manager," added Klopp. "What to do in this or that moment? How to prepare your boys as good as possible from the mental and physical side?"

Guardiola has won all seven of his previous Champions League quarter-finals as a coach at Barcelona and Bayern Munich.

However, no opposing coach has beaten Guardiola more in his trophy-laden career than Klopp. In 12 previous meetings, Klopp has six wins to Guardiola's five.

The Liverpool boss played down the significance of that personal record, but did cite it as reason to believe that beating what he described as possibly the best side in Europe at the moment is feasible. "I didn't beat Pep, my teams did and I was lucky with them doing what they did," said Klopp.

"It's really difficult, but I think we can beat the best. But only if we work really hard and smart."

Klopp confirmed centre-back Joel Matip will miss the rest of the season with a thigh injury, while Adam Lallana will miss both legs against City due to a hamstring injury suffered in Saturday's 2-1 win at Crystal Palace. German midfielder Emre Can missed that match and remains a doubt with a back injury. —AFP



**LIVERPOOL:** Liverpool players attend a team training session on the eve of the UEFA Champions League first leg quarter-final football match between Liverpool and Manchester City, at Melwood Training Ground in Liverpool, north west England yesterday. — AFP

“

I like the difficult jobs

”

## Indonesia's footless goalkeeper kicks home powerful message

**INDRAMAYU:** When Eman Sulaeman begged his parents to let him play football, the couple worried their young son-born with no feet and just one full leg would be mocked. But two decades later, the 30-year-old Indonesian goalkeeper is wowing crowds at home and abroad with his "cat-like" reflexes, and sending a powerful message about people with disabilities.

"I cried for days, begging them (my parents) to buy me a ball," he told AFP at a recent match in the small town of Indramayu, some 220 kilometres (135 miles) east of Jakarta. "They relented and went out to find me a cheap plastic ball." Sulaeman's fans came out in force at a recent match at a local court for futsal—a five-a-side game played on a hard pitch with hockey-sized goals and a less bouncy ball.

They snapped pictures and cheered as Sulaeman protected his net by shifting quickly on stumps and his one leg—the other limb is missing from the knee down. Cheers turned into a roar as he kicked the ball into the back of the other team's net, capping off a win for his side. Young fans waited for a selfie with their hero. "He is very inspiring," said 18-year-old Muhammad Faisal Bahri. "Although he's physically very different from the rest of us, his spirit remains strong. He really motivates me." It hasn't been easy for Sulaeman—a big fan of former Manchester United keeper Edwin Van Der Sar and Real Madrid star Cristiano Ronaldo—who had to train tirelessly to get where he is. "I spent a long time learning to walk in balance before I was able to kick the ball," he said.

### 'REALLY TOUCHED'

Sulaeman's perseverance paid off, with friends asking him to join the local football team as he completed an electronic engineering degree. "Football for me is just like my wife. My girlfriend is even jealous of it because I love it too much," he laughed.

Still, some were not convinced. "At my first tournament, the other team's manager doubted me and asked if I really could play," he said. Despite the challenges posed by his birth defect, Sulaeman never considered wearing prosthetic legs.

"I don't even like wearing shoes. The only time I



**INDRAMAYU:** This picture taken on February 3, 2018 shows goalkeeper Eman Sulaeman (C) attempting possession of the ball during a futsal (five-a-side indoor football) match in Indramayu, West Java. —AFP

wore shoes was for a match in Scotland," he said, adding that it was to allay organisers' safety concerns. In 2016, he joined the Indonesian team at the Homeless World Cup in Glasgow. The annual football tournament is aimed at raising awareness about homelessness and usually involves homeless players as well as drug addicts, asylum seekers and disabled athletes.

An instant sensation, Sulaeman was crowned the competition's best goalkeeper. "It was unreal. My first time ever being abroad and I was named the best goalie," he said. "The crowds and even all the organising committee members clapped for me. I was really touched." British media at the time praised Sulaeman and his "cat-like reflexes". "Football really embraces every part of our society," he said. "People with disabilities like me and poor people can all unite without being looked down upon or stigmatised."

Sulaeman's talents have caught the attention of West

Java's sports agency, lifting hopes that the government might boost its so-far lacklustre support for disabled athletes.

"We've recently learned that our disabled athletes have extraordinary skills and they have opened our eyes that if they're given equal opportunities, they can achieve anything," said agency spokesman Dani Ramdan. Sulaeman—who runs an electronics repair shop—is determined to spread his love for the sport by establishing a futsal lover's community in his hometown Majalengka and coach football at several local junior high schools. He dreams of competing in a major event like the Paralympic Games one day, and hopes that he will continue to be an inspiration for other disabled athletes. "We must stay confident and motivated to bring out the potential in ourselves," he said. "Although we (disabled people) have limitations, within those limitations there are extraordinary things." —AFP

## Returning emperor Messi can put Roma to the sword

**BARCELONA:** "Welcome Romans, 100,000 gladiators await you," warned Barcelona in a preview video ahead of their Champions League quarter-final first leg against AS Roma yesterday. One warrior stands head and shoulders above the rest.

Lionel Messi is fit again and expected to start against the Italian side after rising from the bench to rescue Barcelona a point in a 2-2 draw with Sevilla on Saturday. Messi missed Argentina's friendlies during the international break with muscular problems, a 2-0 win over Italy and a humiliating 6-1 thrashing by Spain in Madrid.

Thrown on by Ernesto Valverde just before the hour mark as Barcelona trailed Sevilla 2-0, Messi turned the tide in his team's favour and drove home an 89th-minute equaliser from outside the area.

"He didn't start the game as a precaution," coach Valverde said. "We think he will be fine for Wednesday but we will see how he feels after tonight's effort. "Of course, he's an important player. He makes a difference every time he touches the ball."

The last time Roma faced Barcelona was in the Champions League group stage in November 2015, with the Catalans registering a thumping 6-1 home win over the Italians. Messi made his return from a two-month injury layoff in that game, running the show and scoring twice, as well as setting up Gerard Pique. Luis Suarez, who also struck twice against Roma in that match, was pleased with the team's attitude against Sevilla. "It's to Messi's credit that he keeps on demonstrating (his class)," the Uruguayan forward said. "But the work of the whole team, to keep going and not give up, is what stays with me."

Barcelona looked lost at Sevilla until Messi arrived, especially without Sergio Busquets anchoring the team and controlling the game. The Catalan holding midfielder is back in training after a toe injury and could also start as Barcelona welcome Roma to their Colosseum for the first leg.

"Andres Iniesta, our Michelangelo, Leo Messi, our emperor," Barcelona declared in the video. While veteran playmaker Iniesta's brush strokes in midfield paint the path, it is only with Messi leading the charge Barcelona can be confident of putting Roma to the sword and taking another step towards a potential treble. — Reuters

## Media rights ensure another big pay day for Indian board

**MUMBAI:** The world's richest cricket board is poised to get even wealthier after media rights to Indian cricket for the next five years brought spirited bidding yesterday.

The e-auction of television and digital rights, a first in cricket, was not concluded but the Indian board (BCCI) received a bid of 44.4 billion Indian rupees (\$683 million) for consolidated global rights from an unidentified bidder. "The online auction will now resume on Wednesday...from the same stage," the BCCI said in a statement. Star India paid 38.5 billion rupees for the rights to broadcast India's home matches for the 2012-2018 cycle. The BCCI had consolidated its position as the world's richest cricket board in September with the game's biggest TV deal when it sold Indian Premier League's (IPL) global media rights to Star India for a staggering \$2.52 billion.

Six companies, including Facebook and Google, initially entered the fray to bid for 102 matches in India from June, 2018 to March, 2023. "Following scrutiny, Star India Private Ltd, Reliance Industries Limited, and Sony Pictures Networks India Private Limited were found eligible to submit online financial bids," the BCCI said. — Reuters

## Shanghai Shenhua crash out of AFC Champions League

**SEOUL:** Big-spending Chinese club Shanghai Shenhua were eliminated from the 2018 AFC Champions League with a game to spare yesterday after drawing 2-2 with Kashima Antlers of Japan at home.

Giovanni Moreno shot Shanghai ahead from the spot after 13 minutes and Mao Jianqing, an early replacement for injured striker Obafemi Martins, headed home a second just before the half-hour. But Yuma Suzuki and Leandro hit back for Kashima after the break to send the Japanese team into the knockout stages and Shanghai out of the tournament that sees 32 teams from around Asia divided into eight groups of four. Only the top two progress to the next round.

Suwon Samsung Bluewings stay second in Group H despite losing 4-1 at home to Sydney FC, a first win for the Australians in the tournament. Goals from Milos Ninkovic, Alex Brosque, Adrian Mierzejewski and Bobo delivered the points for the A-League champions who now move into third with five points, two behind Suwon with the final group game taking place on April 17.

It was a disappointing evening all-round for China as seven-time champions Guangzhou Evergrande failed to seal their progress to the second stage after being held to a 1-1 draw with Buriram United in Thailand.

A first half-goal from Zheng Long looked to have given the Group G leaders and two-time winners the points in a hard-fought clash. The Thai champions were rewarded deep into injury time however as Yoon Jun-su fired home the equaliser.

Buriram moves onto six points after five games to drop to third, two behind Cerezo Osaka in second. The Japanese team defeated Jeju United 2-1 to eliminate the South Koreans to ensure that a victory in the final group game at Guangzhou will be enough to move into the knockout stages. —AFP

Live		
Matches on TV		
(Local Timings)		
<b>ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE</b>		
Benevento v Hellas Verona	18:00	beIN SPORTS HD 5
Chievo Verona v Sassuolo Calcio	19:30	beIN SPORTS HD 3
orino FC v Crotone	19:30	beIN SPORTS HD 7
Milan v Internazionale Milano	19:30	beIN SPORTS HD 4
<b>FRENCH LEAGUE</b>		
Stade Rennais v Monaco	19:45	beIN SPORTS HD 6
<b>UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE</b>		
Barcelona v Roma	21:45	beIN SPORTS HD 1
Liverpool v Manchester City	21:45	beIN SPORTS HD 2

**13** Australia's swimmers can ride wave of home crowd to glory



**14** Philander bowls South Africa to record win over Australia



**15** Indonesia's footless goalkeeper kicks home powerful message



## Ronaldo's bicycle kick caps Real win

### Red card for playmaker Paulo Dybala



TURIN: Real Madrid's Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (C) scores during the UEFA Champions League quarter-final first leg football match between Juventus and Real Madrid at the Allianz Stadium in Turin yesterday. — AFP

**TURIN:** Cristiano Ronaldo scored with a bicycle kick which was outrageous even by his standards to lead Real Madrid to an emphatic 3-0 win away to Juventus in their Champions League quarter-final, first leg yesterday.

With his back to goal, Ronaldo launched himself into the air to meet Dani Carvajal's chipped ball and produced a perfectly-executed bicycle shot which flew past keeper Gianluigi Buffon and put Real 2-0 ahead.

Ronaldo had got Real off the mark with a third-minute goal, scoring for a record 10th successive Champions League game, and Marcelo was also on tar-

get as Juve's five-year unbeaten home record in European competition crumbled.

A red card for playmaker Paulo Dybala completed a miserable evening for the Serie A champions, beaten 4-1 by Real in last season's Champions League final. Juventus had not lost at home in Europe since Bayern Munich's 2-0 win in April 2013, a 27-match run, but that record was quickly under threat as their usually impregnable defence was split open with nonchalant ease after only three minutes.

Marcelo flicked the ball between two defenders to set Isco free on the left and his low cross to the near

post was flicked into the net by Ronaldo for his eighth goal in six meetings against Juventus.

Juventus responded well to the setback, launching a series of dangerous attacks, and Real goalkeeper Keylor Navas prevented what seemed a certain goal with a superb point-blank save from Gonzalo Higuain's volley.

Defender Giorgio Chiellini also missed a good chance when he misdirected a header from a corner but Real were always menacing and Toni Kroos thumped a rising shot against the bar from 25 metres.

Juve also began the second half in lively mood but lost their way in a dramatic eight minutes. An uncharac-

teristic mix-up between Buffon and veteran defender Chiellini started a Real attack which ended with Ronaldo's astonishing goal in the 64th minute.

Two minutes later, Dybala, booked in the first half for a dive in the penalty area, was given a second yellow card for a clumsy challenge on Carvajal. Marcelo applied the coup de grace in the 72nd minute as he switched passes with Isco and then Ronaldo before rounding Buffon to score into an empty net.

Ronaldo nearly grabbed a hat-trick and although Juve escaped further damage they face an almost impossible task in next week's return. — Reuters

## Bayern come from behind to beat Sevilla

**SEVILLE:** Bayern Munich fought back with a deflected own goal and a late header from Thiago to claim a 2-1 win at Sevilla in an exciting Champions League quarter-final, first leg clash yesterday.

Pablo Sarabia had put Sevilla ahead in the 32nd minute when he got the better of Juan Bernat to control Sergio Escudero's cross and fire home at the back post. However, five minutes later Bayern levelled when Sevilla's Jesus Navas deflected Franck Ribery's cross past home goalkeeper David Soria at the near post.

With Sevilla tiring, five-time European champions Bayern took advantage and Thiago headed the winner with the help of a deflection off Escudero in the 68th minute. Vincenzo Montella's Sevilla were unlucky to go in level at the break, having had the better of the first half and demonstrating the spirit that saw them knock out Manchester United in the last 16.

Despite the absence of suspended playmaker Ever Banega, the Andalusians defied their underdog label and might have been

awarded a penalty when Joaquin Correa was felled by Jerome Boateng but instead he was booked for diving.

Sarabia should then have put the hosts ahead but fired just wide after the ball dropped perfectly for him in front of goal. The Spanish attacking midfielder made amends with the opening goal before Navas's own goal levelled the scores.

With Bayern's usual left-back David Alaba injured, Bernat was given a torrid time by Sarabia who he was booked for fouling shortly after the opener before being withdrawn at halftime.

The hosts nearly scored just after the break but Javi Martinez made a superb tackle on Franco Vazquez in the area. After that Sevilla ran out of steam and Soria had to make a fine save to deny Martinez before Thiago grabbed the winner.

Having let the lead slip, as they did in the 2-2 draw with Barcelona in La Liga on Saturday, Sevilla never looked like pulling level and Bayern's Robert Lewandowski fired narrowly wide as the visitors, now in control, looked for a third.

Sevilla now need an unlikely triumph against the experienced Jupp Heynckes' side in Munich in next Wednesday's second leg to reach the Champions League semi-finals for the first time. — Reuters



SEVILLE: Bayern Munich's Polish forward Robert Lewandowski (L) vies with Sevilla's French defender Clement Lenglet during the UEFA Champions League quarter-final first leg football match between Sevilla FC and Bayern Munich at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium in Sevilla yesterday. — AFP



## Business

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4, 2018

**18** UK manufacturing growth cools to 1-year low: Survey**20** Wall Street higher as tech, consumer stocks recover**21** VIVA and Careem sign strategic partnership with exclusive offers

LILLE: Students demonstrate with striking SNCF (French National Railway Corporation) employees near the Lille Flandres railway station yesterday in Lille, on the first day of a two-day strike. — AFP

# French unions kick off huge rail strike

## Three-month-long strikes a litmus test for Macron

PARIS: Commuters across France faced severe disruption yesterday as rail workers launched three months of rolling strikes, a major test of President Emmanuel Macron's resolve to reshape the country through sweeping reforms.

More than three-quarters of train drivers joined the first day of the walkout, according to the SNCF, the heavily indebted state rail operator which Macron wants to overhaul.

Only one in eight high-speed TGV trains and a fifth of regional trains were running on what French media have dubbed "black Tuesday". And with stoppages planned two days out of five until June 28, weeks of disruption lie ahead for France's 4.5 million daily train passengers.

"We have been asking for the same thing for several weeks—that the government completely reconsider its plan. They need to start again from scratch," Philippe Martinez, head of the CGT trade union, told France Inter radio.

### Big test for Macron

The strike was accompanied by demonstrations by several hundreds of rail workers in Paris and other cities and represents the biggest wave

of industrial unrest since Macron came to power last May. The railways are a bastion of trade unionism in France and have forced governments into U-turns in the past during major stoppages.

"For Macron, the test is really starting today," labor market economist Andrea Garnero from the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) told AFP. "Unions are still able to gather support when they go on strike in France, although maybe less so than in the past," he added. Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said yesterday that the government would push ahead with its planned overhaul for the SNCF, which he said required 14 billion euros (\$17.2 billion) of public money each year. "I must say that I hear the strikers, who speak fervently at times, as much as I hear those who do not accept this strike," Philippe told lawmakers in parliament. A second day of strikes today is set to cause a similar level of disruption as the first day, the SNCF warned.

Staff at Air France, garbage collectors and

some energy workers staged separate walkouts yesterday in a growing atmosphere of social strife 11 months after 40-year-old Macron came to power. Public support for the rail strike stands at just below half, according to an Ifop poll



### Travellers across France frustrated

released Sunday, and commuters expressed a mixture of sympathy and frustration with the reduced service.

"I start work at 1:00 pm. Do you know what time I had to get up? 5:00 am," complained Jean Nahavua, a manager at a wholesale company

who lives in Lille and commutes to Paris. Pascal Lasnier, a banker waiting at the same station, added: "I understand that they want to defend their piece of the pie, but maybe there are other ways of doing it." As commuters took to the roads instead, the streets of Paris were snarled with an "exceptional" 370 kilometers (230 miles) of traffic jams during the morning rush hour before easing, according to traffic website Sytadin. At the capital's busy Gare du Lyon station, the platforms were so crammed that a woman fell onto the tracks and had to be helped out by fellow passengers.

But major regional stations including Nice, Lille and Marseille were virtually deserted as travellers anticipated cancellations. Three-quarters of Eurostar trains to London and Brussels were running yesterday and Thalys trains towards Belgium and the Netherlands were operating almost normally, but there were none at all to Spain, Italy or Switzerland. At Air France, where staff are striking for the fourth time in a month to demand a pay rise, managers said 75 percent of flights

would operate. Further walkouts are planned at the airline for April 7, 10 and 11.

### Huge debts, high stakes

Thanks to the internet and mobile phone apps, many French commuters were able to work from home or arrange car-pools—though extra seats were in high demand. On the Blablacar car-pooling site Tuesday morning, 80 of the 95 listed trips from the northern city of Lille were booked solid. "I kept updating the site to find a ride and as soon as this one came up I clicked immediately," said Pierre, a 24-year-old in Lille on his way to Paris. Macron says the SNCF, saddled with 46.6 billion euros of debt, needs to drastically improve its efficiency and cut running costs as EU countries prepare to open passenger rail to competition by 2020.

His government is planning to stop granting the rail workers' special status—which guarantees jobs for life and early retirement—to new SNCF hires. It also wants to combine the three bodies that make up the SNCF into a single state-owned company, prompting fears among unions that it could be a step towards privatizing the rail operator. — AFP

## China notifies WTO of tariffs against US

GENEVA: China has notified the World Trade Organization it is imposing \$611.5 million worth of retaliatory tariffs on \$2.75 billion worth of US imports including pork, nuts and ethanol in response to US duties on aluminium and steel, a WTO document showed. The document, dated last Thursday but posted only after the Easter public holidays, came after China said late on Sunday it has increased tariffs by up to 25 percent on 128 US products, escalating a dispute between the world's biggest economies. China has fulfilled its legal duty to notify the WTO and other member states of its retaliatory measures.\* China's premier pledges market opening in bid to avert US trade war.

Meanwhile, Premier Li Keqiang said China and the United States should maintain negoti-

ations and he reiterated pledges to ease access for American businesses, as China scrambles to avert a trade war. Li told a conference that included global chief executives that China would treat foreign and domestic firms equally, would not force foreign firms to transfer technology and would strengthen intellectual property rights, repeating promises that have failed to placate Washington.

The United States asked China in a letter last week to cut a tariff on US autos, buy more US-made semiconductors and give US firms greater access to the Chinese financial sector, the Wall Street Journal reported on Monday, citing unidentified sources.

Alarm over a possible trade war between the world's two largest economies has chilled financial markets as investors anticipated dire consequences should trade barriers go up due to President Donald Trump's bid to cut the US deficit with China. Chinese officials are also working to finalize rules by May - instead of the end of June - to allow foreign financial groups to take majority stakes in Chinese securities firms, the Financial Times said.

"I anticipate that for political reason it

would be logical for China to respond, because countries do," Blackstone Group Chief Executive Stephen Schwarzman told Reuters on Monday on the sidelines of the Beijing conference at which Li spoke, the China Development Forum.

"That's why I view this more as a skirmish, and I think the interests of both countries are served by resolving some of these matters."

Fears of a trade war mounted this month after Trump imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, and then on Thursday specifically targeted China by announcing plans for tariffs on up to \$60 billion of Chinese goods.

Alex Wolf, senior emerging markets economist at Aberdeen Standard Investments. "This could put US companies such as Apple, Microsoft, Starbucks, GM, Nike, etc in the firing line," Wolf said in a note.

China can increase the regulatory burden on US companies through new inspections and rules; ban travel; stop providing export licenses of key intermediate goods; raise the tax burden on US multinationals in China; or block US companies from the government procurement market, he said. — Agencies

## Half of European flights face delays after computer failure

BRUSSELS: European air travellers faced mass disruption yesterday with around half of all flights at risk of delays following a technical problem at Eurocontrol, the agency in charge of the continent's skies. Several of the EU's biggest airports, including Amsterdam's Schiphol, warned of problems and advised passengers to check on their flights because of the computer breakdown.

"Today 29,500 flights were expected in the European network. Approximately half of those could have some delay as a result of the system outage," said a statement from Eurocontrol. The Brussels-based agency, which coordinates

European air traffic control operators, said the cause "has been identified and action is underway to return to normal operations" but that that would not happen until "late this evening". The breakdown comes a day after the Easter holidays when many travellers are on the move around Europe, and as commuters across France faced disruption from a massive rail strike in protest at President Emmanuel Macron's reforms.

"We have never had anything like this before," a Eurocontrol spokesman said. Brussels airport said departures were limited to 10 flights an hour. The Belgian airport manages 650 flights a day, according to its website. Several airports across the continent warned of problems, with Schiphol saying that the "system failure" at Eurocontrol could have "possible consequences" for departures. Helsinki, Prague and Copenhagen airports also said traffic was facing delays. Eurocontrol said that there had been a "failure of the Enhanced Tactical Flow Management System", which tracks and manages traffic demand across the continent. — AFP

Business

# UK manufacturing growth cools to 1-year low: Survey

## Price pressures easing across British factories

LONDON: Britain's buoyant manufacturing industry lost some steam in the first three months of 2018, according to a survey yesterday that suggested the economy remains on a slow but steady course a year ahead of Brexit. The IHS Markit/CIPS UK Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) inched up to 55.1 in March from a downwardly revised 55.0 in February, beating the 54.7 consensus forecast in a Reuters poll of economists. But January's reading was also revised lower and for the first quarter as a whole, the PMI was its lowest in a year, though above its average since Britain exited recession in the third quarter of 2009 following the financial crisis.

This suggested factory output rose at a quarterly rate of about 0.4 percent to 0.5 percent, slowing from 1.3 percent in the fourth quarter of 2017, IHS Markit said.

Manufacturing, which accounts for about 10 percent of Britain's economy, was a relative bright spot late last year, when economic growth was the weakest among the Group of Seven rich nations.

The slowdown was due in large part to weaker consumer demand caused by higher

inflation after June 2016's Brexit vote knocked sterling lower. A PMI published earlier yesterday showed growth in euro zone manufacturers slid to an eight-month low in March, although they continued to outpace their British peers.



### Economy on steady course ahead of Brexit

Sterling and British government bonds were little moved by the figures. "Despite the resilient March performance, the overall impression is that the manufacturing sector had a decent first quarter but has lost some momentum compared to the strong performance seen through the second half of 2017," said Howard Archer, chief economic adviser

to the EY ITEM Club consultancy. At 55.1, the British factory PMI remains comfortably above its post-financial crisis average of 53.4. "The outlook for manufacturing looks decent on the foreign demand side, but domestic conditions could prove challenging over the coming months," Archer said. The PMI's new business index hit a nine-month low in March, marked by a tailing-off in growth in export orders—possibly reflecting sterling's recent rally.

The pound has gained more than 4 percent against the US dollar since the end of 2017. A Confederation of British Industry survey last month also suggested growth in manufacturing moderated recently. Yesterday's PMI showed growth in cost pressures for factories and their selling prices cooled in March, something that may reassure Bank of England officials who are keeping an eye on inflation pressures.

Most economists polled by Reuters think the central bank will raise interest rates to a post-financial crisis high of 0.75 percent in May. "With cost inflationary pressures also moderating to provide some respite for mar-



LONDON: HSBC's headquarters stands beyond Billingsgate Fish Market in east London. Scandal-hit bank HSBC said yesterday it would cut its global headcount by up to 50,000 as part of a restructuring that entails its withdrawal from Brazil and Turkey, while it also mulls abandoning London as its HQ. — AFP

gins, the sector looks set to make further slow and steady progress as we head through the spring," Rob Dobson, director at

PMI compiler IHS Markit, said. PMIs covering the construction and services sectors are due today and tomorrow. — Reuters

## Global equities continue negative performance closing Q1 in red

KUWAIT: Global equities closed the month of March broadly in the negative. The MSCI All Country World Index dropped 2.4 percent closing Q1 2018 in the red down 1.4 percent. US equities continued their downward trend as both the S&P 500 and Dow Jones Indices posted losses of 2.7 percent and 3.7 percent respectively. The negative performance for the past two months has wiped out the gains of January, with Q1 2018 performance at -1.2 percent for the S&P 500 and -2.5 percent for the Dow Jones Index. The Global markets sell-off and subsequent volatility were triggered by the announcement by President Trump of his intention to impose tariffs steel and aluminum imports to the US. This was mostly directed at China, which threatened to do the same on a list of US imports.

This sparked fears of a global trade war. Adding to the worries was the resignation of the top white house top economic advisor and the replacement of Rex Tillerson signaling a more aggressive US foreign policy. Moreover, and as expected, the Fed increased rates by 25 bps in its first meeting under Chairman Powell. It also increased its forecast of economic growth over the coming years as indicated a slightly steeper rate hike path for 2019 and 2020. Powell also indicated that he expects inflation to reach the Fed's target of 2.0 percent over the medium term.

In Europe, the Stoxx Europe 600 posted a loss of 2.3 percent in March with the Q1 2018 performance coming in at a negative 4.7 percent. The two largest markets within continental Europe also performed poorly during March, with the DAX 30 Index shedding 2.7 percent and the CAC 40 Index shedding 2.9 percent. Over in Italy, and as the election didn't result in a clear winner,

negotiations are underway to form a coalition government. On the monetary policy front, the ECB's Mario Draghi assured market participants of continued monetary easing well into the year-end at least. In terms of economic activity, the Eurozone's Markit Manufacturing PMI and Services PMI for March, on a preliminary basis, came in lower than previous readings although remain above 50 at 56.6 and 55.0, respectively.

### Brexit woes

In the UK, the FTSE 100 posted a loss of 2.4 percent in March, marking its third consecutive month of poor performance. On a year to date basis, the index is down 8.2 percent, making it one of the worse developed markets in terms of performance. The Bank of England held interest rates at 0.50 percent but did signal tightening is not far out. On Brexit, the UK has agreed with Europe to a 21-month Brexit transition beginning in March 2019, brining relief to

date basis, the index is still positive at 1.1 percent, due to the stellar performance early in the year. China's Shanghai Composite Index dropped 2.8 percent during the month, bringing its Q1 2018 performance to -4.2 percent. South Korea's KOSPI 200 Index was slightly positive up 0.6 percent although on a year to date basis the index is down 3.1 percent. China has responded to US tariffs by introducing its own set of tariffs on US products. Over the course of the month, the US Treasury has indicated that both governments have been in negotiations to avoid a trade war. In China, the Non-Manufacturing PMI came in slightly higher than the previous month at 54.6 while the Caixin Manufacturing PMI registered a slight drop from 51.6 to 51.0.

### Oil bullish

Brent Oil, unlike equities, ended March in the green up 6.8 percent. Year to date, March has been the best month in term of performance, with Q1 2018 closing up 5.1 percent. During the month, Brent prices fluctuated between a high of \$71.05pb on March 26 and a low of \$63.19pb on March 1. Brent performed well on the back of an unexpected draw on crude inventories in the US, talk of a long-term cooperation between OPEC and Russia, and on the back of a continued weak dollar. Gold also closed in the green in March slightly up 0.5 percent with year to date performance up 1.7 percent.

GCC equities recovered following last month's losses posting gains of 3.9 percent as measured by the S&P GCC Index. This was mainly driven by Saudi Arabia, up 6.1 percent, followed by Kuwait, up 0.43 percent, given the recent developments with the FTSE Russell stock market status upgrades.

The rest of the GCC equity markets ended the month in the red. The worst performing index was Oman's MSM 30 Index down 4.6 percent, followed by Dubai down 4.2 percent, Bahrain down 3.8 percent. Qatar and Abu Dhabi retreated by 0.9 percent and 0.3 percent respectively. MENA equities, as measured by the S&P Pan Arab Composite Index, also recovered in March up 3.5 percent with Egypt's EGX 30 registering significant gains of 12.8 percent.

## Al-Najma account offers the biggest draw prize in world for KD 1,500,000

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced the launch of the 2018 revamped prize scheme of Al-Najma Account by adding several benefits to the prizes of Al-Najma Account which now provides its customers the chance to win the biggest annual cash prize offered by a bank in Kuwait and over the globe as much as KD 1 million and half (1,500,000) so that customers' dreams can easily turn to reality.

Commenting on the revamped prize scheme of Al-Najma Account, Sahar Al-Rumaih General Manager - Corporate Credit Division & Acting GM - Retail Banking Division explained that the Bank always endeavors to improve & revamp its retail product offerings & services with a view to meet customers' aspirations & expectations and this led the Bank to revamp Al-Najma prize scheme to offer the biggest prize ever provided by a bank in the world (KD 1,500,000), in addition to other valuable prizes offered throughout the year.

According to Sahar Al-Rumaih Al-Najma Account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prizes as well as diversity of the prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly & monthly prizes and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 for which the draw will be held on 1st July 2018 in addition to the grand prize (the biggest prize in the world) of KD 1,500,000 for which the draw will be held in January 2019.

Speaking about Al-Najma Account and how to open it and the eligibility for entering the draws and winning the valuable prizes, Sahar Al-Rumaih said that anyone can open Al-Najma Account by depositing KD 100, emphasizing that the customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all



draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, Al-Rumaih explained that the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, referring to the other additional benefits of Al-Najma Account like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

Al-Rumaih further said that CBK existing customers can open Al-Najma Account through Al-Tijari Online and enter all draws without visiting the Bank branch. However, CBK non-customers can submit account opening application via the Bank's website where the Bank's Sales Unit will call them to arrange visit to the customers to complete the account opening formalities. Customers can obtain further information on Al-Najma Account by either calling the Service Center or by visiting the Bank's website www.CBK.com and they can also visit their nearest CBK branch where the Bank staff will be ready to serve them and respond to their queries. It is known that all details and information related to the latest offers & services launched by the Bank is also available on the Bank's social sites.

## NBK CAPITAL

corporations that a hard exit is off the table. The UK economy has shown slight improvement in terms of consumer confidence with Gfk Consumer Confidence reading coming in at -7 compared to the previous reading of -10. Also, year on year GDP for Q4 was flat at 1.4 percent compared to the previous quarter's reading.

Japan's Nikkei 225 continued its negative performance for the second month running. In March, the index was down 2.8 percent bringing the Q1 2018 performance to a negative 5.8 percent.

During the month, the Bank of Japan maintained its key interest rate at 0.1 percent while holding overall policy steady. Japan's Nikkei Manufacturing PMI for March came in at 53.1, just under the previous month's reading of 53.2.

In terms of Emerging Markets, the MSCI Emerging Market Index posted a loss of 2.0 percent in March, its second month in a row with negative performance. On a year to

## EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.		Euro		Japanese Yen		Bangladesh Taka		Asia	
<b>ASIAN COUNTRIES</b>		373.570		3.840					
Japanese Yen	2.857	Sterling Pound	427.630	Syrian Pound	1.585	Bangladesh Taka	0.003189	0.003773	
Indian Rupees	4.631	Canadian dollar	234.790	Nepalese Rupees	2.892	Chinese Yuan	0.046331	0.049831	
Pakistani Rupees	2.640	Turkish lira	76.120	Malaysian Ringgit	78.580	Hong Kong Dollar	0.036210	0.038960	
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.922	Swiss Franc	318.960	Chinese Yuan Renminbi	48.185	Indian Rupee	0.004120	0.004761	
Nepali Rupees	2.897	Australian Dollar	233.780	Thai Bhat	10.595	Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023	
Singapore Dollar	229.850	US Dollar Buying	299.100	Turkish Lira	75.740	Japanese Yen	0.002751	0.002931	
Hongkong Dollar	38.265	<b>GOLD</b>				Korean Won	0.000273	0.000288	
Bangladesh Taka	3.591	20 Gram	249.070			Malaysian Ringgit	0.073694	0.079694	
Philippine Peso	5.749	10 Gram	127.450			Nepalese Rupee	0.002999	0.003169	
Thai Baht	9.654	5 Gram	64.570			Pakistan Rupee	0.002499	0.002789	
<b>GCC COUNTRIES</b>		Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd		<b>BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL</b>		Philippine Peso	0.005671	0.005971	
Saudi Riyal	80.133	<b>Rate for Transfer</b>		<b>BUY</b>		Singapore Dollar	0.223896	0.233896	
Qatari Riyal	82.534	<b>Selling Rate</b>		<b>SELL</b>		Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001605	0.002185	
Omani Riyal	780.405	US Dollar	299.850	British Pound	0.416689	Taiwan	0.010185	0.010365	
Bahraini Dinar	797.930	Canadian Dollar	233.465	Czech Korune	0.006565	Thai Baht	0.009279	0.009829	
UAE Dirham	81.837	Sterling Pound	426.935	Danish Krone	0.045552	<b>Arab</b>			
<b>ARAB COUNTRIES</b>		Euro	373.535	Euro	0.364417	Bahraini Dinar	0.790717	0.799217	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.300	Swiss Frank	286.765	Georgian Lari	0.124699	Egyptian Pound	0.014076	0.019794	
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.026	Bahrain Dinar	797.410	Hungarian 0.001091	0.001281	Iranian Riyal	0.000083	0.000084	
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.206	UAE Dirhams	82.040	Norwegian Krone	0.034046	Iraqi Dinar	0.000202	0.000262	
Tunisian Dinar	126.980	Qatari Riyals	83.270	Romanian Leu	0.062355	Jordanian Dinar	0.419359	0.428353	
Jordanian Dinar	423.600	Saudi Riyals	80.855	Russian ruble	0.005222	Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000	
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.002	Jordanian Dinar	424.195	Slovakia	0.008923	Lebanese Pound	0.000148	0.000248	
Syrian Lira	0.000	Egyptian Pound	17.000	Swedish Krona	0.031767	Moroccan Dirhams	0.023282	0.047285	
Morocco Dirham	33.330	Sri Lankan Rupees	1.923	Swiss Franc	0.307933	Omani Riyal	0.774461	0.780141	
<b>EUROPEAN &amp; AMERICAN COUNTRIES</b>		Indian Rupees	4.622	Australian Dollar	0.227733	Qatar Riyal	0.078277	0.083217	
US Dollar Transfer	300.300	Pakistani Rupees	2.598	New Zealand Dollar	0.210768	Saudi Riyal	0.079073	0.080373	
		Bangladesh Taka	5.740	<b>America</b>		Syrian Pound	0.001273	0.001493	
		Philippines Peso	5.740	0.227733	0.236733	Tunisian Dinar	0.122076	0.130076	
		Cyprus pound	17.850	0.297000	0.300920	Turkish Lira	0.070705	0.081005	
				US Dollars Mnt	0.300920	UAE Dirhams	0.080417	0.082117	



# Wall Street higher as tech, consumer stocks recover

## Tesla rises after robust Model 3 production numbers

**NEW YORK:** Wall Street's main indexes were higher yesterday, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average rising more than 100 points, helped by a recovery in the battered technology and consumer discretionary stocks. Amazon and Tesla, the top dragers on Monday, rose, with the Dow and the S&P opening above their 200-day moving averages.

The S&P 500 on Monday broke below that important level for the first time since Britain's vote to leave the European Union in June 2016. At 9:34 a.m. ET, the Dow was up 0.4 percent at 23,738.31.

The S&P 500 rose 0.37 percent to 2,591.43 and the Nasdaq Composite gained 0.57 percent to 6,909.08. Amazon.com rose nearly 2 percent, after closing down more than 5 percent on Monday after President Donald Trump's latest attack on the online retailer. Tesla shares gained 2.6 percent after the electric automaker said it need not raise more capital this year while announcing it built 2,020 of its cheaper Model 3 sedans in the last seven days of March. "At some point you have to return to fundamentals and we're still looking at a pretty good earnings growth," said Scott Brown, chief economist at Raymond James in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Investors have also been wary about a trade war after China decided to impose extra tariffs on 128 US products over the weekend, in retaliation to Trump's decision to impose tariffs on steel and aluminum.

The Trump administration is expected sometime this week to publish a list of Chinese goods that could be subjected to new US tariffs. "What's going on with the trade policy is a real concern for investors," said Brown. "It goes back and forth almost everyday and when you back away from the paradigm of free trade, then the markets move unfavorably."

Nine of the 11 major S&P sectors were higher, led by a 0.75 percent gain in the consumer discretionary index. Investors will be able to buy and sell shares in the

Swedish music streaming service Spotify in the New York Stock Exchange's first-ever direct floor listing.

Viacom Inc fell 4.2 percent after Reuters reported CBS Corp planned to make an all-stock offer that valued the media company below its current market valuation. CBS shares rose 0.9 percent.

World markets battled to regain their poise yesterday after another round of tech and trade war worries had clobbered shares and oil prices tumbled on signs of rising Russian supply and Saudi price cuts.

### Europe down

Europe's main markets in London, Paris and Frankfurt were all down more than 0.5 percent, after being closed on Monday when the pace of selling had pushed US markets below pivotal technical levels.

Tech stocks remained the pressure point, dropping more than 1 percent, after more criticism of Amazon by US President Donald Trump and as reports that Apple intended to make more of its own parts burnt European chipmakers like ams AG and STMicroelectronics.

Some signs of stability were emerging, though. Wall Street futures pointed higher, the dollar steadied against the yen after three days of decline and gold and government bonds were in reverse.

"There is actually very little contagion from all the equity market moves that are grabbing all the headlines," said Saxo Bank's head of FX strategy John Hardy.

Asia's shares had stumbled overnight, too, although less than Wall Street, where the S&P 500 closed below its 200-day moving average for the first time since Britain's 2016 vote to leave the European Union. As well as the tech problems, investors were also wary after China imposed extra tariffs on 128 US products, deepening a dispute between the world's two biggest economies and stoking concerns about the impact on global growth.



**HONG KONG:** Pedestrians walk past an electronic sign displaying the closing stock numbers for the Hang Seng Index in Hong Kong yesterday. — AFP

Japan's Nikkei ended down 0.45 percent, after falling as much as 1.6 percent. China's Shanghai Composite index eased 0.9 percent and the blue-chip CSI300 was off 0.7 percent. US Treasuries, German Bunds and UK Gilts all saw a bit of selling, with yields on 10-year notes off two- to three-month lows. "The big question is how far the current tremor in the equity market will affect bonds, given it is driven by a single company - even if it is a tech giant having a huge market weight," said DZ

Bank strategist Christian Lenk.

Among the main commodities, Brent oil futures nudged back up towards \$68 a barrel. They had fallen more than 3.7 percent on Monday after news of rising Russian output and the escalating US-China trade dispute weighed on sentiment. US crude gained 14 cents to \$63.15, copper jumped 1.4 percent for its fourth straight gain and spot gold ticked down 0.2 percent to \$1,338.08 an ounce. — Reuters

## Discontent towards Macron's reforms spreads beyond French railways

**PARIS:** Rail workers began a three-month rolling strike yesterday, causing travel chaos and presenting the toughest challenge yet to President Emmanuel Macron's resolve to reform the French economy.

However, discontent towards the former investment banker's economic policies spreads beyond the railways. Yesterday, university students protested at new, tougher entry requirements, garbage collectors blocked access to incinerators, and a small number of energy workers downed tools.

### Here's a rundown on the SNCF and other protests:

Nearly one in two train drivers, conductors and signal-box workers went on strike yesterday, bringing widespread disruption to Paris commuter lines and France's high-speed TGV network.

Macron wants to transform the heavily-indebted, state-run SNCF into a profit-making public service able to stand up to foreign competition when its monopoly ends in line with EU regulations. The SNCF loses 3 billion euros (\$3.7 billion) annually. The government wants an agreement on scrapping special employment benefits enjoyed by rail workers, including job-for-life guarantees and early retirement, before discussing how much SNCF debt the Treasury absorbs.

SNCF boss Guillaume Pepy estimates each strike day will cost the SNCF 20 million euros.

## Start-ups, smartphones help French dodge rail strike

**PARIS:** French railway unions used to be able to cripple the country by blocking the train network. But when workers walked off the job yesterday, new technology helped reduce the misery for commuters and companies. In 1995, when drivers and other staff on the national network downed tools, commuters faced hellish traffic jams for nearly three weeks, while companies struggled with absent staff and lost working hours.

Some Parisians remember hitch-hiking around the capital, standing on roads with their thumbs up and waiting for a ride. Just over twenty years later, the internet, mobile phones and new ways of

working meant that staff and travellers were better informed and better prepared as the massive rail disruption began. After days of warning travellers about mass cancellations, state rail giant SNCF issued real-time



**STRASBOURG:** Trains stand stationary along the tracks on the outskirts of the eastern French city of Strasbourg, yesterday at the start of three months of rolling rail strikes. — AFP

### Air France

A strike by Air France workers added to travel misery. The national airline said it was operating 75 percent of flights, with long- and medium-haul out Paris Charles De Gaulle the hardest hit. Unions are calling for a 6 percent salary hike. One in three pilots were expected to join cabin crew and ground staff in the walk-out. Company bosses reject the demand and have instead offered to compensate workers for any reduction in spending power since 2011. They say the unions' demands are impossible to meet without compromising its growth strategy.

### Garbage collectors

Rubbish collectors from the hard-left CGT union went on strike in greater Paris yesterday. They blocked access to three out of the four incinerators serving the Ile de France region. Rubbish processing sites were also blocked in the Bouches-du Rhone, Seine-Saint-Denis, Yvelines and Seine-Maritime areas.

Garbage workers say they object to "government announcements on the breakup of public services and public workers' benefits".

### Students

Student demonstrations against university reforms continue. In the southern city of Montpellier, where protesting students were violently ejected from university buildings on March 22, the law faculty reopened yesterday under police surveillance after a 10-day occupation by students.

At Montpellier's Paul-Valery University and Toulouse University, students are preventing access to lecture halls. They are protesting against reforms to university enrolment. Students in France who pass high school exams have the right to go to university in their home area. But this led to popular subjects being oversubscribed and prompted the introduction of an unpopular lottery system where demand is highest. — Reuters

## US seeks China trade moves on autos, financials, chips

**WASHINGTON/BEIJING:** Top Trump administration officials are asking China to cut tariffs on imported cars, allow foreign majority ownership of financial services firms and buy more US-made semiconductors in negotiations to avoid plans to slap tariffs on a host of Chinese goods and a potential trade war. A person familiar with the discussions said these were among the asks from Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer as they pursue talks with Beijing. The Wall Street Journal first reported the demands from US officials, saying they came in a letter sent to Beijing last week.

White House trade adviser Peter Navarro confirmed that President Donald Trump asked Mnuchin and Lighthizer to try to resolve trade differences with China. "We're hopeful there that China will work with us to basically address some of these practices," Navarro told CNBC television.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said China's door was always open to talks, but that this needed to happen on the basis of equality and mutual respect with a "win-win" outcome. Premier Li Keqiang said earlier on Monday that China and the United States should maintain negotiations and repeated pledges to ease access for American businesses to China's markets.

Li told a conference that included global chief executives that China would treat foreign and domestic firms equally, would not force foreign firms to transfer technology and would strengthen intellectual property rights, repeating promises that have failed to placate Washington.

Despite a steady stream of fierce rhetoric from Chinese state media lambasting the United States for being a "bully" and warning of retaliation, Chinese and US officials are busy negotiating behind the scenes.

### Tariffs to proceed

In an interview aired on Sunday, Mnuchin told Fox News that he was pursuing an agreement with the Chinese "for them to open up their markets, reduce their tariffs, stop forced technology transfer. These are all the things we want to do." "We are proceeding with these tariffs, we're not putting them on hold unless we have an acceptable agreement that the president signs off on," Mnuchin added.

China has offered to buy more US semiconductors by diverting some purchases from South Korea and Taiwan, the Financial Times reported, citing people briefed on the negotiations. China imported \$11 billion of semiconductors - comprising chips, diodes and transistors - from the United States last year. Chinese officials are also working to finalize rules by May - instead of the end of June - to allow foreign financial groups to take majority stakes in Chinese securities firms, the Financial Times said.

"I anticipate that for political reasons it would be logical for China to respond, because countries do," Blackstone Group Chief Executive Stephen Schwarzman told Reuters on Monday on the sidelines of the Beijing conference where Li spoke.

"That's why I view this more as a skirmish, and I think the interests of both countries are served by resolving some of these matters."

China called on World Trade Organization members on Monday to unite to oppose Trump's proposed tariffs targeting alleged intellectual property theft, saying they should "lock this beast back into the cage of WTO rules." On Friday, China responded to the US tariffs on steel and aluminum by declaring plans to levy additional duties on up to \$3 billion of US imports, including fruit, nuts and wine.

China could also inflict pain on US multinationals that rely on China for a substantial - and growing - portion of their total revenues, said Alex Wolf, senior emerging markets economist at Aberdeen Standard Investments. "This could put US companies such as Apple, Microsoft, Starbucks, GM, Nike, etc in the firing line," Wolf said in a note.

China can increase the regulatory burden on US companies through new inspections and rules; ban travel; stop providing export licenses of key intermediate goods; raise the tax burden on US multinationals in China; or block US companies from the government procurement market, he said.

### Car tariff differential

The Trump administration has demanded that China immediately cut its \$375 billion trade surplus with the United States by \$100 billion. China has a 25 percent tariff on US cars and has talked recently of lowering it, while Trump has often complained that the US import tariff on passenger vehicles is only 2.5 percent. China's imports of US-built motor vehicles totaled \$10.6 billion in 2017, about 8 percent of the country's overall US imports by value, according to US government data.

On the reported offer to increase US semiconductor imports, it is unclear how US chips would replace South Korean and Taiwanese chips, since there is minimal overlap between US chips and those of the two Asian producers. — Reuters

Business

# VIVA and Careem sign strategic partnership with exclusive offers

## Customers to get 25% off on first 10 trips

**KUWAIT:** VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, and Careem the region's leading ride-hailing company and only Middle East tech unicorn, signed a strategic partnership agreement that offers exclusive discounts and promotions to VIVA customers in Kuwait, allowing them to use the ride hailing app at preferential rates. Customers to Careem in Kuwait will be entitled to 25 percent off their first ten trips.

Commenting on the partnership, Abdulrazzaq Bader Al-Essa, Corporate Communications Director at VIVA said: "As VIVA heads towards its first decade of operation, we believe it is vital to continue to foster close partnership with prominent leads such as Careem. Augmented by our customers' trust in us, VIVA formulates creative solutions that address the specific telecom needs of customers."

On his part, Khaled Nuseibeh, Careem's General Manager, said: "After several months of operation in Kuwait, we are turning our focus into making an impact on the local communities. What better way to make ourselves a part of people's lives than to tie up with the leading telecom company and add value to their customers."

Many more customers will discover our service and how it can positively impact their day to day routine." VIVA's quest is to be the mobile brand of choice in Kuwait by being transparent, engaging, energetic and fulfilling. VIVA continues to take a considerable share of the market by offering an innovative range of best value products, services and content propositions: a state of the art, nationwide network and world-class service.

VIVA offers internet speeds of more than 100 Mbps, due to the implementation

of the most advanced fourth generation "4G LTE" network in Kuwait resulting in superior coverage, performance and reliability, and has been recognized as "Speedtest Award Winner 2017 - Kuwait's Fastest Mobile Network", based on Ookla's analysis of Speedtest Intelligence data in Q2-Q3 2017.

Careem is the region's leading ride-hailing service that provides reliable, safe and affordable transportation choices via a mobile app, on the web and through a call centre. Careem is a pioneer in the region's 'sharing economy' - its mission is to make people's lives simpler and build an institution that inspires. Established in July 2012, Careem is now the only unicorn in the region and operates in more than 90 cities across 13 countries in the broader Middle East, including North Africa, Turkey and Pakistan.



VIVA's CCO Andrew Hanna shakes hands with Careem's GM Khaled Nuseibeh.

## Nissan Al-Babtain aftersales service campaign continues!

**KUWAIT:** Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co, the sole authorized agent of Nissan in the State of Kuwait, announces the special aftersales service campaign that is applicable on all Nissan models prior to March 2015 will end mid-April. Exceeding customer expectations and needs, the new offer is part of an ongoing effort to facilitate the requirements of all of its owners.

Owners of Nissan models prior to March 2015 owners will now be entitled to a 30 percent discount on car parts, 15 percent off on service labor with 13 points free checkup. Nissan Al Babtain provides the perfect opportunity for customers to equip their car before the summer.

Nissan Service centers are equipped with the latest tools and devices and is managed by skilled, and trained service advisors. Nissan Al-Babtain in an effort to accommodate its

loyal customers, the popular brand presently owns 9 Nissan service centers and 14 Parts Outlets located in strategic locations around Kuwait. Al-Babtain Group was founded in 1948 to present a model of honesty, integrity and total dedication and to gain bright reputation in Kuwait and the Middle East area.

Al-Babtain Group has licensing rights for some of the world's leading brands stretching the globe from the USA to the Far East. For more than 60 years Al-Babtain Group has experienced continued success, and large measure of this success came from the Group's advanced flexible management style and long term vision. These astounding results were achieved due to a versatile strategic formula focusing on growth amongst its sphere of activities; including automotive, technology, investment, information, industrial and Finance.



## Eurozone bond yields off lows as surveys signal solid growth

**LONDON:** Eurozone government bond yields nudged off recent multi-month lows yesterday as manufacturing surveys from the bloc's largest economies showed that expansion remains broad-based. Government debt across the single currency bloc has been in demand on concerns over a potential trade war between the United States and other major economies.

But solid economic data has taken the edge off the rally. Though a Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) survey showed the bloc's manufacturing boom stumbling in March, output was robust. Manufacturing surveys from the four largest eurozone economies also showed expansion, even if the Italian and German PMIs were slightly below expectations. "We had a strong phase of economic acceleration late last year, this has eased somewhat in the first three months of the year so that's why you are seeing the PMIs still healthy but not as strong as they were a few months ago," said Mizuho strategist Antoine Bouvet. In late trade, 10-year eurozone bond

yields were up 1-3 basis points on the day. The yield on Germany's 10-year government bond, the benchmark for the bloc, was up 2 bps at 0.51 percent, having hit a 2-1/2 month low of 0.473 percent last week. Bouvet attributed some of this to profit-taking, after a strong rally in bond prices in March, when 10-year Bund yields dropped nearly 17 bps.

"The outlook for rates is still fairly benign but over a short period of time it makes sense we get this pullback," he said.

Earlier in the session, bond yields had dipped as a global stock market sell-off led by US tech giant Amazon sparked interest in safe-haven assets. Shares of Amazon.com Inc fell 6 percent on Monday after US President Donald Trump attacked the online retailer over the pricing of its deliveries through the US Postal Service and promised unspecified changes. Ten-year US Treasury yields dropped to a near two-month low of 2.71 percent on Monday, but were also higher yesterday as stock markets recovered ground.

"The big question is how far the current tremor in the equity market will affect bonds given it is driven by a single company - even if it is a tech giant having a huge market weight," said DZ Bank strategist Christian Lenk. Elsewhere, Olli Rehn, a former top EU economic official, said he will seek to become Finland's central bank governor and a member of the European Central Bank's Governing Council from July when Erkki Liikanen completes his second and final seven-year term as Finnish central bank chief. — Reuters

## Dollar gains as risk appetite improves, but outlook remains weak

**NEW YORK:** The dollar rose yesterday, led by gains against the yen and Swiss franc, as risk appetite improved and Wall Street's main indexes advanced, helping the currency stabilize after sharp declines the previous day. The outlook for the dollar, however, remains murky due to global trade tensions. The greenback has lost 2 percent in the year so far.

"At the moment, support from high expectations for further monetary policy tightening from the Federal Reserve has been offset by ongoing political pressures and global trade uncertainties," Fawad Razaqada, market analyst at Forex.com in London, said.

China on Sunday announced tariffs on \$3 billion in imports of US food and other

## Al-Roudan honors KGL for sponsoring retirement ceremony of Ahmad Al-Jasim

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait and Gulf Link Transport Company (KGL) was honored by the Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudan for sponsoring the retirement ceremony of the former Al-Arabi and Kuwait national football team goalkeeper Ahmed Al-Jasim during the friendly match between Kuwait and Cameroon at the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium.

Engineer Fahd Al-Awadhi, received the honorary plaque on behalf of KGL during the opening ceremony of the friendly match



between the two teams in the social media channels. Al-Jasim said that this slogan is the least he could've done in remembering his late mentor, one of the most prominent goalkeepers in the history of Kuwait Samir Said, who helped lead the Al-Arabi team and the Kuwait national team to win several titles, notably the 1990 Gulf Cup, during which he was chosen as the best goalkeeper in the tournament.

great attention to sports, specifically football", said Al-Awadhi when accepting Al-Roudan's honoring; noting that "the sponsorship of Kuwaiti football players is the least that KGL can offer for their efforts to shine Kuwait's name, and KGL is a firm believer in the support and development of the Kuwaiti youth talent in sports."

The ceremony was attended by a number of KGL officials, along with other companies, in addition to a large number of Al-Jasim and Samir Said's fans and supporters of the Kuwait National Football Team. "KGL pays

At the end, Al-Awadhi hoped that the youth would utilize their sports passion or other developmental disciplines that support His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's vision to achieve a prosperous society with the youth's help.



## KFH.com/cars unique electronic platform to all KFH auto services and offers

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) uniquely offers an electronic platform that represents a destination for browsing through a wide range of vehicles, KFH auto financing services, offers and much more. This platform KFH.com/cars comes as part of the Bank's strategy of embracing technological innovation and utilizing it for the best interest of customers especially that technology is paramount to superior customer service.

The main menu of this platform encompasses new cars, used cars, lease with maintenance, lease to own, insurance, offers, subscribe, showrooms, sell your car and finance calculator.

Lease with maintenance service offers wide range of benefits. It gives the opportunity to customers to ride a brand new cars of their choice from different models.

Maintenance is covered throughout the leasing period with full Takaful insurance and road assistance service, in addition to providing alternative car when necessary. Customers may also travel and cross the borders as per terms and conditions.

Lease to own program offers brand new cars with suitable monthly installments up to 5 years, in addition to benefits of full Takaful insurance valid throughout the contract duration, and the guarantee of the agent. By end of leasing period, customers can own the car by paying the remnant value or simply return back the car.



## Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah daily draws

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank held its Al-Danah daily draw on Sunday announcing the names of its winners for the week of 25 - 29 March, 2018. The Al-Danah daily draws include draws every working day for two prizes of KD 1,000 per winner. However, from 15 April onwards, Al-Danah's draw lineup will be replaced with weekly draws, in which five winners will receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

**The winners are:**  
(Sunday 25/03): Mariam Fakher Sayed Jawad Al-Naser, Murtaza Hakeem Aldeen Vaseen (Monday 26/03): Sabeeha Othman Essa Al-Asfoor, Kholoud Sultan Bekhit Al-Bekhit (Tuesday 27/03): Bader Mohammad Al-



Sayed Abdulrahman Mahmoud, Wafaa Mamdouh Al-Hraki (Wednesday 28/03): Maleeha Salem Al-Dalmay, Taibah Nader Abdulaziz Al-Nouri (Thursday 29/03): Salah Sulaiman Othman Al-Nasralla, Munahi Sultan Rafaa Al-Mutairi Gulf Bank Al-Danah's 1st quarterly draw for KD 200,000 prize, was held on 28 March, and the 2nd Al-Danah quarterly draw, for the prize of KD 250,000 will be held on 27 June while

the 3rd quarterly draw for the prize of KD500,000, will be held on 26 September. The final Al-Danah draw for KD 1 million will be held on 10 January 2019, where the Al-Danah millionaire will be announced. Gulf Bank encourages you to increase your chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into your Gulf Bank account using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's Online and Mobile Banking.

goods in response to US tariffs on imports of aluminum and steel, a skirmish that investors fear is a prelude to a broader trade war. The Trump administration is expected to announce this week US tariffs on \$50 billion to \$60 billion in Chinese imports. Yesterday China's ambassador to the United States said Beijing will take counter-measures of the "same proportion" and scale if Washington imposes further tariffs.

In mid-morning trading, the dollar rose 0.2 percent against a basket of currencies to 90.218. Analysts said investors were also focused on US payrolls data and comments

by Fed Chairman Jerome Powell at the end of the week, which should help determine the short-term direction of the dollar.

Against the yen, which tends to benefit in times of economic uncertainty, the dollar snapped three days of losses to trade 0.5 percent higher at 106.43 yen.

Traders though are still betting on a stronger yen and a broadly weakened dollar if the trade tensions escalate.

"US protectionist measures implicitly signal the administration's desire for a weaker dollar - and such expectations are likely to be entrenched in FX markets until credibly broken," said Viraj Patel, currency

analyst at ING in London. The dollar also advanced versus another safe haven, the Swiss franc, rising 0.3 percent to 0.9584 franc. The euro tumbled after a survey showed the euro zone's manufacturing boom faltered for a third month in March, although output remained robust.

The euro was last down 0.3 percent at \$1.2258. The Australian dollar, meanwhile, rose 0.4 percent to US\$0.7685 versus the Reserve Bank of Australia's decision to keep its cash rate at a record low 1.5 percent as expected yesterday. — Reuters

## Technology

# With paper and phones, Atlanta struggles to recover from cyber attack

## City officials decline to discuss extent of damage

ATLANTA: Atlanta's top officials holed up in their offices on Saturday as they worked to restore critical systems knocked out by a nine-day-old cyber attack that plunged the Southeastern US metropolis into technological chaos and forced some city workers to revert to paper. On an Easter and Passover holiday weekend, city officials labored in preparation for the workweek to come.

Police and other public servants have spent the past week trying to piece together their digital work lives, recreating audit spreadsheets and conducting business on mobile phones in response to one of the most devastating "ransomware" virus attacks to hit an American city.

Three city council staffers have been sharing a single clunky personal laptop brought in after cyber extortionists attacked Atlanta's computer network with a virus that scrambled data and still prevents access to critical systems.

"It's extraordinarily frustrating," said Councilman Howard Shook, whose office lost 16 years of digital records. One compromised city computer seen by Reuters showed multiple corrupted documents with "weapologize" and "imsorry" added to file names. Ransomware attacks have surged in recent years as cyber extortionists moved from attacking individual computers to large organizations, including businesses, healthcare organizations and government agencies. Previous high-profile attacks have shut down factories, prompted hospitals to turn away patients and forced local emergency dispatch systems to move to manual operations.

“Everything on my hard drive is gone”

Ransomware typically corrupts data and does not steal it. The city of Atlanta has said it does not believe private residents' information is in the hands of hackers, but they do not know for sure. City officials have declined to discuss the extent of damage beyond disclosed outages that have shut down some services at municipal offices, including courts and the water department. Nearly 6 million people live in the Atlanta metropolitan area.

The Georgia city itself is home to more than 450,000 people, according to the latest data from the US Census Bureau. City officials said that police files and financial documents were rendered inaccessible by unknown hackers who demanded \$51,000 worth of bitcoin to provide digital keys to unlock scrambled files. "Everything on my hard drive is gone," City Auditor Amanda Noble said in her office housed in Atlanta City Hall's ornate tower.

City officials have not disclosed the extent to which servers for backing up information on PCs were corrupted or what kind of information they think is unrecoverable without paying the ransom. Noble discovered the disarray on March 22 when she turned on her computer to discover that files could not be opened after being encrypted by a powerful computer virus known as SamSam that renamed them with gibberish. "I said, 'This is wrong,'" she recalled.

City officials then quickly entered her office and told her to shut down the computer before warning the rest of the building. Noble is working on a personal laptop and using her smart-

phone to search for details of current projects mentioned in emails stored on that device. Not all computers were compromised. Ten of 18 machines in the auditing office were not affected, Noble said.

### Old-school analog

Atlanta police returned to taking written case notes and have lost access to some investigative databases, department spokesman Carlos Campos told Reuters. He declined to discuss the contents of the affected files. "Our data management teams are working diligently to restore normal operations and functionalities to these systems and hope to be back online in the very near future," he said. By the weekend, he added, officers were returning to digital police reports. Meanwhile, some city employees complained they have been left in the dark, unsure when it is safe to turn on their computers. "We don't know anything," said one frustrated employee as she left for a lunch break on Friday.

### Feeble

Like City Hall, whose 1930 neo-Gothic structure is attached to a massive modern wing, the city's computer system is a combination of old and new. "One of the reasons why municipalities are vulnerable is we just have so many different systems," Noble said. The city published results from a recent cyber-security audit in January, and had started implementing its recommendations before the ransomware virus hit. The audit called for better record-keeping and hiring more technology workers.

Councilman Shook said he is worried about how much the recovery will cost the city, but that he supports funding a cyber-security overhaul to counter future attacks. For now his staff are temporarily sharing one aging laptop. "Things are very slow," he said. "It was a very



ATLANTA: A view of Atlanta's City Hall, in Atlanta, Georgia. — Reuters

surreal experience to be shut down like that." Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, who took office in January, has declined to say if the city paid the ransom ahead of a March 28 deadline mentioned in an extortion note whose image was released by a local television station.

Shook, who chairs the city council's finance subcommittee, said he did not know whether the city is negotiating with the hackers, but that it appears no ransom has been paid to date. The Federal Bureau of Investigation, which is helping Atlanta respond, typically discourages ransomware victims from paying up. FBI officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

A Department of Homeland Security spokesman confirmed the agency is helping Atlanta respond to the attack, but declined to comment further.

Hackers typically walk away when ransoms are not paid, said Mark Weatherford, a former senior DHS cyber official. Weatherford, who previously served as California's chief information security officer, said the situation might have been resolved with little pain if the city had quickly made that payment. "The longer it goes, the worse it gets," he said. "This could turn out to be really bad if they never get their data back." — Reuters

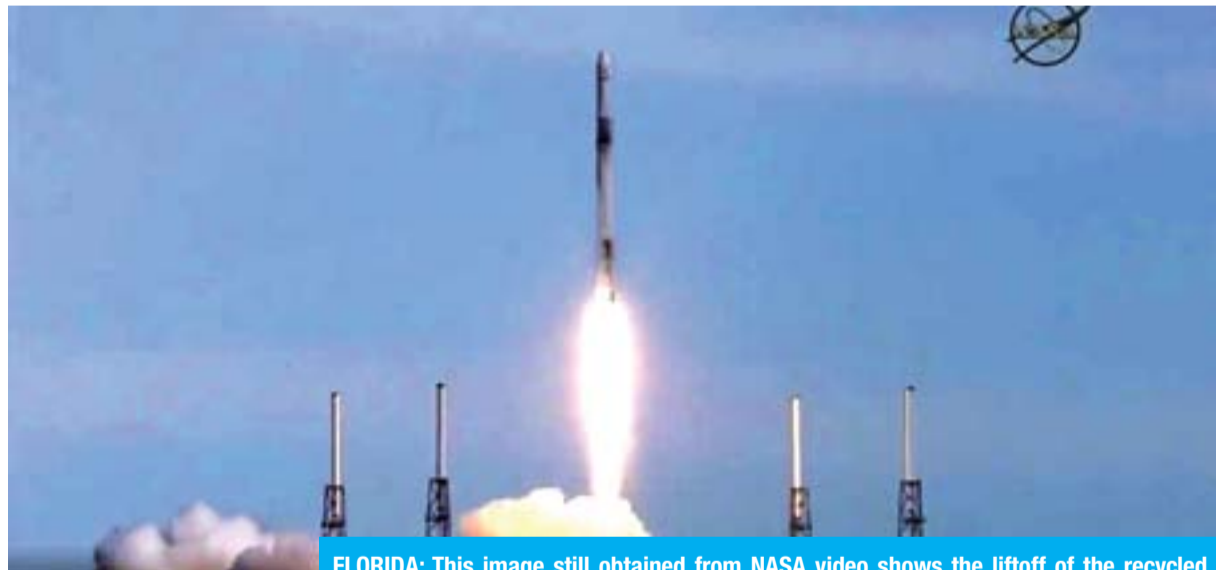
## SpaceX launches cargo to space station using recycled rocket, spaceship

TAMPA: SpaceX blasted off a load of supplies Monday for the International Space Station aboard a rocket and a cargo ship that have both flown before, marking the second such flight for the California-based company. "Falcon 9 is on its way," a SpaceX commentator said as the white rocket surged skyward over Cape Canaveral, Florida at 4:30 pm.

SpaceX's Jessica Jensen, director of Dragon mission

management, said the booster had previously launched in August 2017, and the Dragon flew to the space station in April 2016. SpaceX's first such double-recycle resupply mission for NASA flew to the orbiting outpost in December 2017. The effort is part of SpaceX's mission to lower the cost of space flight by re-using costly, multimillion-dollar components that typically have been discarded into the ocean after each launch. "What is really neat about this is it is becoming the norm," Jensen said.

Monday's trip marked SpaceX's 14th resupply mission for NASA under a \$1.6 billion contract that aims to guarantee much-needed supplies and equipment to the astronauts living in orbit. The capsule is packed with about 5,800 pounds of food and science experiments, including one to study thunderstorms and another to test drug development in space. The cargo ship is scheduled to latch onto the space station early today, and will stay in orbit for about a month before returning to Earth.—AFP



FLORIDA: This image still obtained from NASA video shows the liftoff of the recycled Falcon 9 rocket and unmanned Dragon cargo ship from Cape Canaveral, Florida. — AFP

## Google employees organize to fight cyber bullying at work

SAN FRANCISCO: About 100 Google US employees concerned about cyber bullying inside the company have organized into a group proposing new policies for conduct at the unit of Alphabet Inc. Five people involved in the effort said in recent interviews. Three current employees and two others helping to organize the group said it formed last fall. They said that among its proposals, which have not previously been reported in detail, are that Google should tighten rules of conduct for internal forums and hire staff to enforce them.

They said they want to stop inflammatory conversations and personal attacks on the forums and see punishment for individuals who regularly derail discussions or leak conversations. The group also wants Google to list rights and responsibilities for accusers, defendants, managers and investigators in human resources cases. The group also desires greater protection for employees targeted by what it views as insincere complaints to human resources used as a bullying tactic and goading.

The organizers said Google should be more attuned to when people seeking to stir animosity or expressing views opposite the company's stated values try to take over discussions about race, gender and other sensitive subjects. The group is speaking informally to mid-level executives, hoping they will take up the cause with senior management, organizers said. Self-described conservatives at Google have also

raised their own concerns. The split among Google employees reflects growing polarization across the United States since President Donald Trump was elected. Other companies and industries have also been hit by corporate scandals involving diversity and harassment. Google counts on open dialogue to strengthen products and morale, and prides itself on fostering an environment in which subordinates can challenge managers. Debates about politics and science flow freely on its private, online discussion boards.

But discussions have become more hostile and abusive since an engineer on internal forums last summer wrote that women are biologically unsuited for technology jobs. Google fired the engineer, James Damore, for perpetuating stereotypes, sparking more heated conversations. Organizers of the campaign said at least 100 employees have taken part in private and online discussions of potential fixes. —Reuters



SAN FRANCISCO: Silhouettes of laptop and mobile device users are seen next to a screen projection of Google logo.—Reuters

## Gay dating app Grindr scorched for handling of HIV data

SAN FRANCISCO: Gay dating app Grindr was under fire on Monday for sharing information about users' HIV status or locations with two companies enlisted to optimize its software. Grindr chief technology officer Scott Chen said in a Tumblr post that sharing data with partners such as Apptimize and Localytics was "industry practice" and that steps were taken to protect people's privacy.

"As a company that serves the LGBTQ community, we understand the sensitivities around HIV status disclosure," Chen said. "Our goal is and always has been to support the health and safety of our users worldwide." Grindr users have the option of sharing their HIV status and when they were most recently tested. Researchers worried that including the health information with other data such as location and email address could result in people being identified.

Online rights champion Electric Frontier Foundation called Grindr's response "disappointing." The Los Angeles-based company said that it uses Apptimize and Localytics to test and validate its platform, and that data it shares with them could include users' HIV status or location fields. Sensitive data are encrypted when sent, and vendors are under strict contractual terms to keep it secure and confidential, according to Chen.

Norwegian nonprofit research group SINTEF uncovered the data sharing, and concern spread in the US after BuzzFeed reported the findings. "Grindr has never, nor will we ever sell personally identifiable user information—especially information regarding HIV status or last test date—to third parties or advertisers," Chen said. He noted though that Grindr is a public platform, and that should be kept in mind when deciding what to put in profiles.

The AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) called Grindr's data sharing "an egregious breach of confidentiality laws," demanding it "immediately cease and desist the reckless practice." "It is extremely unfortunate that those men who have been courageous enough to share their HIV status, be it positive or negative, on their Grindr profiles, may have now had that most personal data indiscriminately shared by Grindr," said Michael Weinstein, the AHF president.

"We laud those Grindr members for their courage and challenge Grindr to quickly get its act together to restore the confidentiality all members deserve." News website Axios reported that Grindr's security chief said the company has stopped sharing users' HIV status with its third-party vendors. "You guys should just close up now," read one of the few comments in an online chat forum under the Grindr post at Tumblr. "No one cares about your efforts or industry standards. You betrayed the LGBT community in more than just the one way." —AFP



CHICAGO: Pedestrians walk past a Tesla showroom in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

## Elon Musk makes light of Tesla's woes in April 1 Twitter prank

WASHINGTON: Elon Musk, the flamboyant boss of Tesla and SpaceX, took to Twitter on April Fool's day to joke the electric car-maker, which has been rocked by bad news, was going bankrupt. "Despite intense efforts to raise money, including a last-ditch mass sale of Easter Eggs, we are sad to report that Tesla has gone completely and totally bankrupt. So bankrupt, you can't believe it," he wrote.

He later posted a picture of himself pretending to be passed out with his head on a Tesla Model 3 while holding a sign that read "Bankrupt!" The prank came amid reports of significant risks ahead for the manufacturer, which is heavily indebted and has not turned a profit since it began operating in 2003. It has lost about a quarter of its share value since the end of February, and is also currently under investigation by the US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) following a fatal accident involving one of its cars in California on March 23rd.

Tesla confirmed on Saturday its "Autopilot" feature was engaged during the accident but said the driver ignored repeated visual and audio warnings and his hands were not detected on the wheel for six seconds prior to the vehicle's collision with a highway barrier. The car caught fire before two other cars struck it.

The driver was identified by The Mercury News as a 38-year-old man, Wei Huang, an engineer for Apple. He later died in hospital. According to reports in the US media, the NTSB was unhappy that Tesla had released information before a final investigation was completed. A spokesman told The Washington Post: "At this time the NTSB needs the assistance of Tesla to decode the data the vehicle recorded."

"In each of our investigations involving a Tesla vehicle, Tesla has been extremely cooperative on assisting with the vehicle data. However, the NTSB is unhappy with the release of investigative information by Tesla." The NTSB previously investigated a crash involving an autopilot-equipped Tesla in Florida in 2016.—AFP

Health

# Oh deer: Japan park issues tips as animals nibble tourists

Visitors advised to avoid teasing animals while feeding

**TOKYO:** Faced with a growing number of injuries from deer bites, authorities in Japan's Nara Park have issued tips on feeding the hundreds of animals that attract tourists from around the world. The picturesque park in Japan's ancient capital is home to more than 1,000 deer, which can even be found roaming the streets in search of special tasty crackers offered by tourists. But their cute and calm demeanor can be deceptive and tourists can find themselves surrounded by aggressive animals when they try to feed them.

So authorities have erected a sign written in Chinese, English and Japanese entitled: "A polite request from the deer when feeding them" at the stalls where crackers are sold. Small children should be accompanied by adults and "deer sign language" should be employed, showing both hands to the animals when feeding time is over. "As they are wild animals, they get angry if people tease them," Nara official Yuichiro Kitabata said.

"For example, if you keep them waiting when feeding, they can bite you ... but not all of tourists know they are wild, believing they are kept in the park," he added. The sprawling park that also includes wooden temples and shrines built centuries ago is a major tourist attraction, welcoming some 13 million visitors annually. But with a rise in the number of foreign tourists, the number of those injured by deer surged to a record 180 in the last fiscal year to March from 118 the previous year, according to Kitabata. The deer at the park—numbering on average about 1,200—are protected as a national treasure.—AFP



TOKYO: This picture shows foreign tourists taking a picture with a deer at the Nara Park in Nara.—AFP

## Baby believed snatched by monkey in India is found dead

**NEW DELHI:** Indian police say a 16-day-old baby boy believed to have been snatched by a monkey has been found drowned in a well. The infant was sleeping under a mosquito net at his home in the eastern state of Odisha on Friday when he was taken by a rhesus macaque, a species with a reddish-pink face common across India. "The mother is saying that she saw a monkey take away her child. She raised an alarm but the monkey quickly leaped

over the roof and vanished out of sight," police sub-inspector S M Baral said.

"We launched a search along with the forest officers. On Sunday, the baby was spotted inside the well dead," she said. A post-mortem showed the infant died of asphyxia due to drowning, Baral said. "Since there were no injury marks on the baby, maybe the monkey dropped him in the well." No case was registered as the "family is convinced it's the monkey that killed their child", the officer said. The incident happened in the village of Talabasta in Cuttack district.

Media reports said monkeys have become a growing nuisance in the area where the child was taken. In March last year, schools were closed in Odisha's Kendrapada district because of frequent monkey attacks, the Hindustan Times said.—AFP

## Indonesians nabbed over sun bear slaughter

**PEKANBARU, Indonesia:** A group of Indonesians has been arrested after a video emerged of them skinning and cooking four sun bears that they had slaughtered, police said yesterday. The men on the island of Sumatra were charged under Indonesia's environment law and could face five years in prison and 100 million rupiah in fines, if convicted, authorities said.

The sun bear—listed as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature—is the smallest of the bear species and lives in Southeast Asia's tropical forests and swamps. But their population is in decline in

Indonesia because of rapid deforestation, which has led to habitat loss. The four bears were caught in traps set by the suspects who later beat or shot them to death, said local police chief Christian Rony.

The men, who range in age from 33 to 51, skinned the bears and cooked their meat. "They also distributed the meat to other villagers," Rony said, adding that police had seized a gun and air-gun pellets from the suspects. Human-animal conflicts are common across the vast Indonesian archipelago, especially in areas where the clearing of rainforest to make way for palm oil plantations is destroying animals' habitats and bringing them into closer contact with people.

But attacks by the bear are rare in Indonesia. Last October a sun bear mauled a couple in Sumatra, killing the wife and seriously injuring her husband. In 2015 a man died when a sun bear mauled him in South Sumatra and in 2009 another lost his fingers and left eye in an assault.—AFP



INDONESIA: A suspect shows the remains of a sun bear in the village of Kerta Tunas Jaya in Riau province after being caught by authorities.—AFP

# CLINIC PAGE



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## Global Medical Center Welcomes Dr. Marzouq Al-Bader

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What's On

# Ibtikar Al-Kuwait contest announces its winners



**B**ayan Girls Secondary School won the first place in the Ibtikar Al-Kuwait contest of researches and projects for secondary students, and were qualified for the contest at the gulf level. Al-Surra Girls Intermediate School won the intermediate stage contest in "recycling electronic leftovers", while Ishbelia Elementary School bagged the first place in the elementary stage contest "science fiction stories".

Chairperson of Alsaad knowledge and Scientific Research Foundation Sheikhha Fadiya Saad Al-Abdallah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said that the contest will further expand to reach Arab horizons under the patronage of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-

Sabah in order to support Arab students and express their talents in the field of innovation and scientific research.

She added that HH the Amir supports the initiative that includes three contests on school level. After overcoming the challenges, the contest has reached to its current level and has a new management to help develop it further. She said the development in management of the initiative was clearly seen with the number and quality of projects that were presented this year, as well as the way they were dealt with.

Sheikha Fadiya said 37 participations were accepted by the officiating committee on three school levels, out

of 123 projects which were presented by 288 students in the Ibtikar Al-Kuwait for students research and projects. She thanked all those who contributed towards this activity at the local level. As well as the education ministry and Gulf University who sponsored the award and hosted it for the third consecutive year.

She appreciated the students' efforts for participating in the contest which seeks to enhance their knowledge. She said that the two most important sectors in the country that needs continuous efforts and development are education and health because they touch the human life directly.



Sheikha Fadia Al-Saad Al-Sabah



# 'Shining Hope 6' Festival and Exhibition

**T**he Commercial Real Estate CO (Al-Tijaria) concluded "Shining Hope 6" Festival and Exhibition for the special needs - highlighting their slogan for the event - "Building Hope Together... Share Their Joy With Us". With this celebration a fruitful partnership resulted between private and governmental schools along with Public Benefit Associations. Symphony Style Mall was decorated with the talents and creations of the special needs kids. The Event took place under the patronage of Sheikhha Al-Abdullah Al-Khalifa Al-Sabah, and with the presence of the Honorary Chairperson of Kuwaiti Disabled Sports Club and Al-Tijaria chairman Abdulfatah M R Marafie.

This celebration was coincided with the Mother's Day and Family Day in recognition of all the mothers and the fundamental role they play in shaping Kuwait's society. The festival included showcasing the talents and creations of people with special needs, which was admired by the visitors. Guests and participants also enjoyed theater and artistic performances by the children and adults of special needs. The festival was successful with the participation of many private and governmental schools.

The event helped in creating a fruitful partnership between the sponsors and all the participants in the event and this led to successful contribution towards creating better environment and brighter future for the special needs kids. Rawan Adnan, Marketing and Leasing Department Manager stated that: "The presence and participation of more than 30 governmental and community bodies emphasizes the importance and success of this festival. Aiming to direct the private sector in allocating their resources to serve, support and care for the special needs in Kuwait.

As part of Al-Tijaria's commitment to our 'We Care'-Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, we in Al-Tijaria, recognize the importance of integrating citizens with special needs in society to emphasize the important role they play in the development of society. It is worth mentioning that the Sixth version of the festival achieved a great success on all levels thanks to the massive efforts undertaken by the amazing team and the relevant bodies to support this social group, in addition to the media support, the sponsoring companies and the participant companies.

The festival was concluded by thanking all the sponsors, participants and media sponsors. To name a few: Marafie Foundation, Media Consultant: Thamer Al Dakheel (Known as Bou Rashed), Kuwait Resorts Company, Al Mutajara Real Estate Company, Al-Salmiya Group for Enterprise Development, United Entertainment Company, Different Vision Media and Advertising Agency, Symphony Style Hotel, Six Senses Spa, Al Salam Hospital, Dr Nael Al Hazeem Clinic, Fatima Clinic, Care Direct and Regional Center for Development of Educational Software "Red Soft".

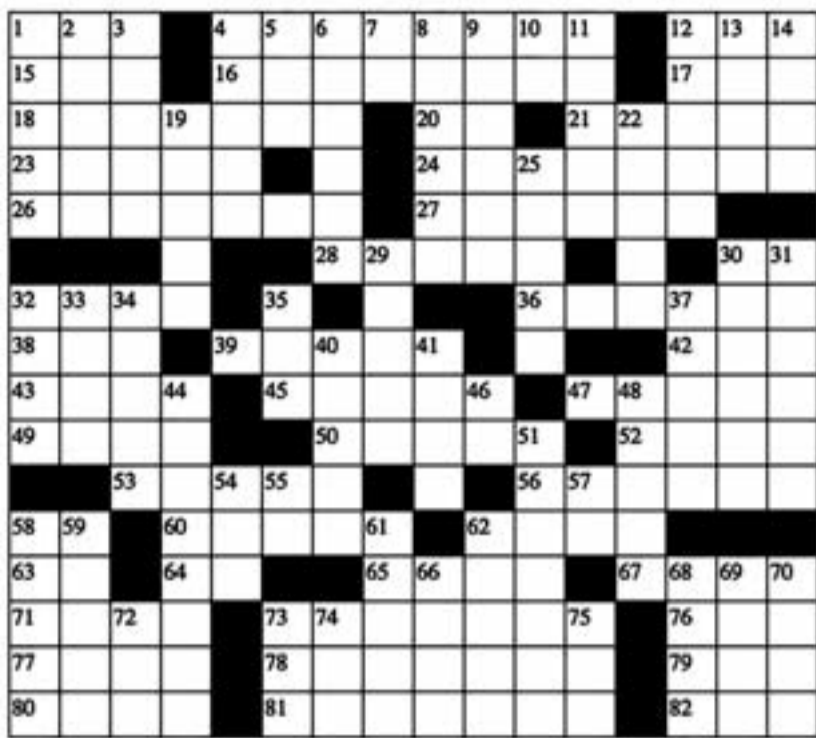






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ACROSS

- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- Hindu sacred text instructing the Brahmins to perform the Vedic rituals.
- Blood cells that engulf and digest bacteria and fungi.
- A member of the Shoshonean people of Utah and Colorado and New Mexico.
- Not treated with lead.
- 10 hao equal 1 dong.
- Late-spring-blooming rhododendron of eastern North America having rosy to pink-purple flowers.
- Unknown god.
- A Bantu language spoken in southern coastal Tanzania.
- Administer an oil or ointment to.
- Hypothetical universal solvent once sought by alchemists.
- Someone who has retired from active working.
- Of or relating to the spleen.
- Short and fat.
- Shift from one side of the ship to the other.
- Apathy and inactivity in the practice of virtue (personified as one of the deadly sins).
- An implement used to propel or steer a boat.
- The capital of Morocco.
- Black tropical American cuckoo.
- (informal) Exceptionally good.
- The capital and largest city of Yemen.
- (a dated Britishism) A serious difficulty with which one is suddenly faced.
- Any tree or shrub of the genus Inga having pinnate leaves and showy usually white flowers.
- South African plant widely cultivated for its showy pure white spathe and yellow spadix.
- Harsh or corrosive in tone.
- (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Reticulum and Pictor.
- A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
- English scholastic philosopher and assumed author of Occam's Razor (1285-1349).
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
- A translucent mineral consisting of hydrated silica of variable color.
- (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
- A dull persistent (usually moderately intense) pain.
- A periodic paperback publication.
- The act of scanning.
- Of or relating to or composed of fat.
- The address of a web page on the world wide web.
- Stable gear consisting of either of two curved supports that are attached to the collar of a draft horse and that hold the traces.
- A flat tortilla with various fillings piled on it.
- A run that is the result of the batter's performance.
- Israeli religious philosopher (born in Austria) (1878-1965).
- A nucleic acid that transmits genetic information from DNA to the cytoplasm.
- Midwife toads.
- A very light colorless element that is one of the six inert gasses.
- A mountain in the Himalayas in Nepal (27,790 feet high).
- A port city in southwestern Turkey on the Gulf of Antalya.
- A colorless odorless gaseous element that give a red glow in a vacuum tube.
- Someone whose business is advertising.
- A simple machine consisting of a circular frame with spokes (or a solid disc) that can rotate on a shaft or axle (as in vehicles or other machines).
- Gymnastic apparatus consisting of two parallel wooden bars supported on uprights.
- An outer garment that has sleeves and covers the body from shoulder down.
- Leave or strike out, as of vowels.
- A very large person.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- Silklike nylon fabric.
- Small yellowish moths whose larvae feed on wool or fur.
- The arrangement of the hair (especially a woman's hair).
- An account describing incidents or events.
- (Norse mythology) God of poetry and music.
- The state of matter distinguished from the solid and liquid states by.
- The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
- An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
- An exchange of ideas via conversation.
- A volatile flammable mixture of hydrocarbons (hexane and heptane and octane etc.) derived from petroleum.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
- Any of various insects that feed and form galls on conifers.
- (informal) Of the highest quality.
- A radioactive element of the actinide series.
- A Russian river.
- Genus of tropical plants with creeping rootstocks and small umbellate flowers.
- (sociology) The conventions that embody the fundamental values of a group.
- The basic unit of money in Nigeria.
- The fleshy part of the human body that you sit on.
- An Asian river between China and Russia.
- An aggressive remark directed at a person like a missile and intended to have a telling effect.
- Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
- Thigh of a hog (usually smoked).
- Standard time in the 7th time zone west of Greenwich, reckoned at the 105th meridian west.
- A member of the Siouan people inhabiting the valleys of the Platte and Missouri rivers in Nebraska.
- Fiddler crabs.

DOWN

- 100 auro equal 1 krona.
- Make amends for.
- Device for resetting instruments or controls v.1.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

A deep need and desire to be shown respect could cause you to do something you wouldn't normally do; remember that some people are only takers and can't give without resentment. A social event interests you but you could undergo problems if your accept. Going against the wishes of a controlling person could result in an unpleasant confrontation; be aware that you're the one in charge of your life. The energy of improvement is prominent at this time; this pertains to your environment as well as yourself. You're at your best when working with others who admire your practical views and effective methods. Someone complements your looks and fine belongings; this confirms that you have found the correct path to abundance and health.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

A certain circumstance threatens to block your journey of evolution and enlightenment. You learn a hard lesson involving someone older and very difficult. Even a feeling of being blocked doesn't stop the progress you make today; your ambitions and determination are most admirable. You become aware of someone trying to thwart you behind your back; this person soon understands you're a force to be reckoned with. You could feel stressed because someone doesn't appreciate your political or religious views; this person is well known for being a closed-minded fanatic. Looking back over your life shows you how far you have come; positive changes are empowering. You spend the evening with a person who loves and respects you.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

An urge to travel or spend more time outside is indicated. Routine seems almost offensive and you work hard to find new, refreshing ways to do things. You're able to gain understanding about what makes something work. As a new cycle starts for you, intimacy and close relationships become more important; you become thankful for your connection to those you can trust with anything! You could find yourself being too concerned about what people think. You step in and make a bad situation better for those involved; you're a true friend. A group you're a member of holds a special event you find yourself deeply involved in; your talents and approach to things become valuable. Good food, fun and friends for you tonight.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Taking a different path may not serve your best interests at this time; think this one over very carefully. Compassion for others is prominent and could lead you to help someone you barely know. Circumstances occur that demand you become more conservative. You could feel shy about confiding in someone that wants to help; listen to it and do what feels right! You consider a hardship a teacher and friend instead of feeling sorry for yourself; you have come to understand that this is a far more productive way of thinking. Someone seems petty, complaining about nothing. You want things to be balanced and not favoring one side; a boss or supervisor may disagree with this opinion. You accept an invitation to join friends in a fun outing.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Daydreams could be prevalent as you force yourself to work on a domestic task; you could actually come up with a fabulous new idea. Reality doesn't appeal to you until you learn something new about your situation; there's nothing like good news to snap you back into reality. You're able to complete something someone else started and gain the respect of someone on your team; enjoy this well-deserved praise. Someone who enjoys high drama tries to pull you into it; you make your feelings against this well known. Taking the high road means more to you now than ever. You're tapped into the feelings of someone you care for and this makes you happy. You decide to step out with someone new and discover some very interesting information.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Feeling stressed out seems prominent but you're able to deal with this by focusing on the tasks at hand. You accept an invitation from someone who always lifts your spirits. An interesting new recipe entices you enough that you go shopping for the required ingredients. A mentor contacts you regarding investments or another new endeavor you definitely want to know more about. You may decide to have a massage later when you just need a little help getting over the hump. You're forming a new attitude about, and opinion of, someone who's slowly winning you over; this could be to your advantage. Wanting more out of life leads you to a certain place for more information about getting it. You demand some time to yourself this evening.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your opinions are highly respected and appreciated by someone you have gotten out of some trouble. A kind person comes to your rescue when you find yourself in need of something you can't take care of. Changes through the years have made you who you are now; you work really hard not to have a regrettable event you attend let's people see who you really are; this is very complimentary for you! Taking a certain route at the right time creates positive energy. Learning something new holds your attention; this could indicate organic gardening or some other type of interaction with things that're alive. Nothing makes you happier than being able to broaden your knowledge. Someone tries to engage you in an argument about something controversial.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You could feel a need to remove yourself from someone on an emotional level; this could be best for both parties. You have an opportunity to become involved in some major drama; you can avoid having anything to do with this if you choose. Your independence extends to the growth you're experiencing in spiritual areas; new beliefs aren't welcomed by those who're close-minded. An elder or someone in authority rubs you the wrong way causing insult and some pretty negative energy! Your mood is one of being talkative and casual, even when your work is involved. You're in a good place regarding an investment you researched heavily; this could indicate finances or investing time and energy. Relish your many successes tonight.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You have a strong need to grow things; this could indicate gardening, children or pets. When you let a need be known, someone steps up; this person also benefits from your assistance. You figure out how to make your dreams come true. Making professional or domestic decisions should be held off until a better time. You do a beautiful job representing your company and receive praise for a job well done. You experience a rare moment of self-appreciation. Looking at your own life and taking a different view proves interesting. A break in routine is indicated. Being kind to someone you dislike is hard, but you manage it. An exotic person from a foreign land captivates you. A peaceful evening spent with someone dear brings laughter.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You long for the stimulation of new theories and ideas; you could find this in a most unexpected place. If you want drama, it's made available with a capital d! Keeping your distance from petty people and their issues is what you have wanted, isn't it someone would like to rattle your cage regarding politics, religion or some other controversial topic; you're able to keep your cool while standing your ground! You come across modern ideas as you research a certain topic; this could pertain to methods of spiritual or physical healing. As the day unfolds you see progress in the area of health. Someone shares a funny story. Plans for the evening come together easily. You're able to laugh, spend valuable time with like-minded people.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Your mind is on go; ideas, theories, possibilities of all kinds are abundant. The fast progress you make is impressive and you become more certain you have made a correct choice. You're happy listening to new ideas from many places about how to make things work better; like-minded people have a lot of power! Your journey up the career ladder is rising to new heights and you're finally beginning to feel secure; congratulations! You become certain you're capable of attracting any outcomes you desire. An interesting career move could become known; when it rains, it pours! You couldn't care less about opinions; cold, hard facts are you seek. A new invention that could change the lives of many is presented later tonight.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your planning and budgeting skills shine brightly as a long-awaited event takes place; your exemplary representation of the company doesn't go unnoticed. Energy flows easily as you clearly explain things to interested parties; being involved on this level recharges your self-esteem and confidence. There may be a sensitive topic of conversation at home; if you avoid this remember that it keeps coming up and doesn't see to go away! Not reaching personal goals doesn't mean failure; every attempt is a step in the right direction. You unknowingly help someone that you have barely met; isn't it amazing how karma works without our being aware later, you try something new with a friend; new memories being made become treasures.

Wordsearch Puzzle

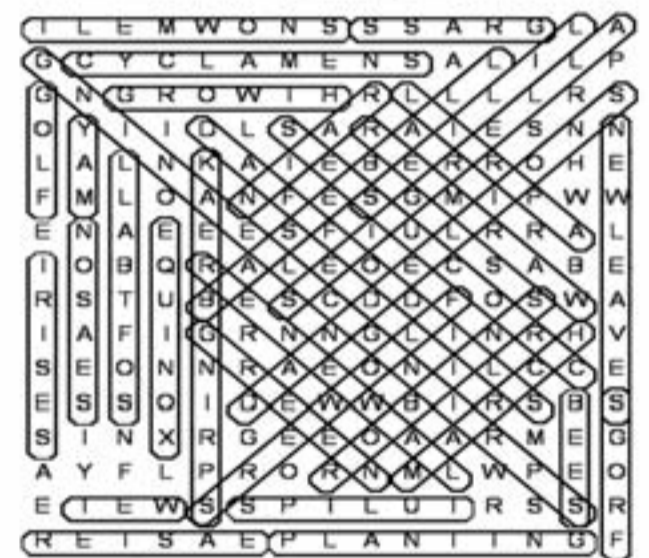
St. Patrick's Day

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 34 letters spell a secret message.



- |              |           |              |             |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|
| BEER         | DANCING   | HOLY DAY     | POTATOES    |
| BELFAST      | DUBLIN    | IRELAND      | SEVENTEENTH |
| BISHOP       | EVENTS    | IRISH        | SHAMROCK    |
| CABBAGE      | FEAST DAY | LEPRECHAUN   | SNAKES      |
| CELEBRATION  | FESTIVAL  | LIMERICK     | SODA BREAD  |
| CELTIC CROSS | GREEN     | MARCH        | TRADITION   |
| CHRISTIAN    | GUINNESS  | MISSIONARY   | YEARLY      |
| CLOVER       | HERITAGE  | MUSIC        |             |
| CORK         | HISTORY   | PARADE       |             |
| CORNEBEEF    | HOLIDAY   | PATRON SAINT |             |

Spring



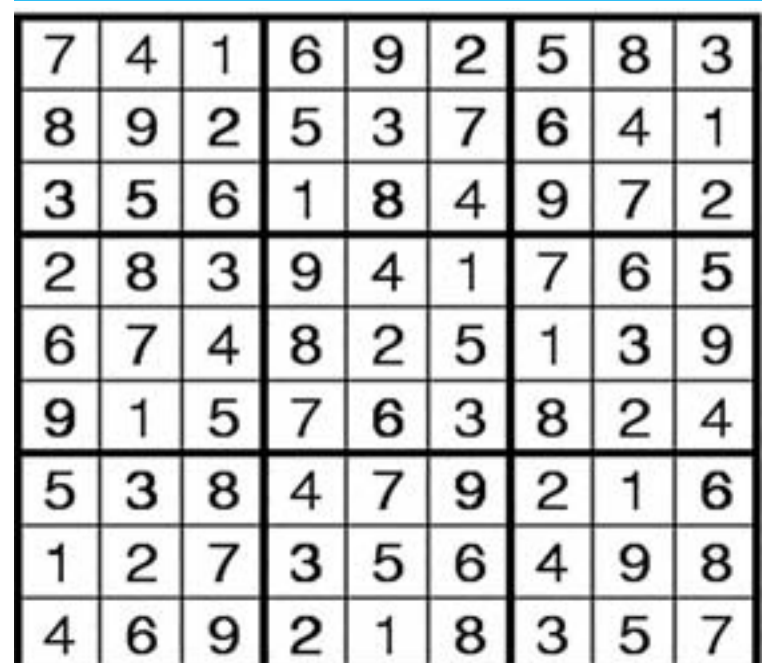
- |            |            |                 |
|------------|------------|-----------------|
| ALLERGIES  | FROGS      | RAIN            |
| APRIL      | GOLF       | RENEWAL         |
| BASEBALL   | GRASS      | ROBINS          |
| BEES       | GREEN      | SEASON          |
| CROCUSES   | GROWTH     | SNOWMELT        |
| CYCLAMENS  | IRISES     | SOFTBALL        |
| DAFFODILS  | LILIES     | SPRING BREAK    |
| DANDELIONS | MARCH      | SPRING CLEANING |
| EASTER     | MAY        | TULIPS          |
| EQUINOX    | NEW LEAVES | WARMER          |
| FLOWERS    | PLANTING   | WET             |

The hidden sentence is: APRIL SHOWERS BRING MAY FLOWERS

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





## Steps happy to prove people wrong

Claire Richards is delighted Steps have proven people wrong with their comeback. The 40-year-old star thinks audiences were skeptical when the five-piece got back together for their 20th anniversary last year for a tour and new LP 'Tears on the Dancefloor' - which hit number two on the UK charts - but admitted that happened throughout their career. She said: "I think when everybody first heard we were releasing another album, they were like, 'Pfft'. But they just have to eat their words, which has kind of happened throughout our career. The statistics speak for themselves." The '5.6.7.8' hitmakers will be hitting the road again this summer and Claire - who has Charlie, 10, and Daisy, eight, with husband Reece Hill - is pleased her family will be able to join them for most of the dates. She said: "I think [they'll come] because most of the dates are at the weekends." Daisy said 'Mummy, it will be fine because we're coming with



you." "It was really difficult last year when they were at school." "They love it - Charlie said he'd rather come to a Steps gig than go to his football presentation." "Reece loves it as well, which is a bit embarrassing! Someone posted a video from our show at Wembley and he was doing all the moves." While Claire's kids like singing, she would never push them into following in her footsteps. She told Britain's OK! magazine: "They do like it but they don't go to stage school and I'm not pushy. I feel quite uncomfortable about it. I feel protective - I don't want them to ever be criticized, I can't bear it. I just want to keep them at home with me all the time! Whatever they want to do, we'll support them, but I think it's important to be realistic. If they're tone deaf, then I'm going to sit down and say, 'Listen, it's not going to happen for you. You can go and embarrass yourself on 'X Factor' if you want but I'm not coming."

## MEGHAN TRAINOR WANTS HARRY STYLES DUET



Meghan Trainor is desperate to record a duet with Harry Styles. The 24-year-old singer previously teamed up with the former One Direction star to pen 'Someday' for Michael Buble, on which she thinks they had "chemistry", so she'd love for them to collaborate further in the future. She said: "My manager works with Harry Styles so this is great. We already wrote a song together so the chemistry is already there we just need to put out a song together. One day Harry! If you can hear this, that would be amazing. Any one of [One Direction], they're all so talented, but Harry is my fave." And the 'No Excuses' singer admitted there are "so many" other artists she'd love to work with - though she's not convinced she could stay composed in front of them all. Asked who she'd like to work with, she exclusively told BANG Showbiz: "So many people, yes! Miley Cyrus, Rihanna, Adele,

Beyonce, like everybody. Justin Timberlake - I'm dying to work with him. "Bruno Mars - legend. I'm not going to be OK when I meet him one day, I'm just going to crumble and ruin the whole thing." Meghan almost got her chance to approach Bruno recently, but when he got locked in conversation with broadcasting legend Oprah Winfrey, she was too afraid to interrupt. She explained: "I was at Ellen DeGeneres's 60th birthday party and I saw Bruno Mars talking and I was like 'This is my night, I can feel it, I'm going to go up to him and start talking' because I'd spoken to everyone else but he was talking to Oprah for so long! "And I'm not going to be that girl who was like 'Excuse me Oprah, I need to meet him' like no. So it just didn't happen that night. "And I want it to be professional, I want his manager to take him and be like 'You have to meet Meghan' not just me being like 'Yo! Please look over here.'

## Sheryl Crow slams music industry



Sheryl Crow doesn't think she would have succeeded as a music artist if she started out now. The 'If It Makes You Happy' hitmaker thinks everything is "so brand-orientated now" and says she "couldn't stomach" the idea of "selling her life" in order to make popular music. She said: "Everything is so brand-orientated [now]. You practically have to prostitute your personal life in order to have people interested in you - and then hope they like your music. If I had to come out now, I know I wouldn't [succeed]. I couldn't stomach the scrutiny selling my life in order for someone to care about my songs." And Sheryl doesn't think the "traditional" song exists anymore. She added: "There aren't really very many songs anymore in the popular world - it's more

beats and top-lines. I really love the tradition of songwriting and rocking out so you know it is what it is. I still love the kind of music I listened to my whole life." The 56-year-old singer desperately wanted her most recent release 'Be Myself' to feel "authentic". She told New Zealand's Stuff: "I wanted to make a record that felt authentic and that had the spunk and the spontaneity of the old records. We literally went in and a month later come out with something that's inspired by what's happening here in America and the urgency that I felt being a mom of two kids who are going to inherit the mess that we've created. But it is also fun. It's a very celebratory record, it's upbeat and it talks about social media and how difficult that is to navigate."



## Kylie Minogue's new album is about 'accepting' herself

Kylie Minogue's new album is about "accepting" herself. The 'Dancing' hitmaker insists her new LP 'Golden' isn't a heartbreak album but instead is about learning to live herself and accepting herself for who she is. Speaking in The Dan Wootton Interview podcast, she said: "I love singing those lyrics. I probably could not have sung them at the beginning of the year but certainly, once I was feeling great, I was so happy to sing them. It was just taking a very honest look at where I am in my life. I'm definitely not alone. People understand. That's part of life. People want to simplify it and say it's a heartbreak album, it's actually not. There's some songs about that but I think it's about acceptance of yourself. That to me is what the strongest emotion is." Meanwhile, Kylie previously revealed she felt the "weight" of her heartbreak leave her

when she started penning new music. She said: "When I first went into the studio [this time], I was a bit broken. I wasn't so heartbroken - I was just a bit broken. And there's a difference there. I just needed to get a few songs out, get the words out of my system. I suppose it's like, in any situation, if you hold onto something, as soon as you say it out loud to a friend or a therapist or a stranger, it just takes the weight off once you verbalize it." And Kylie had likened songwriting to "therapy". She explained: "I hadn't been there. I said to a few people, 'I'm going to Nashville. Have you been there?' They spoke with such excitement and love for the city, literally. They were giving me advice on which bar to go to and where to eat and blah blah blah ... Songwriting can be a bit like therapy: you have to feel comfortable to talk about personal things."

## TRAMPOLINE DIDN'T TELL PETE DOHERTY ABOUT LIAM GALLAGHER GIGS



Trampoline didn't tell Liam Gallagher's sworn enemy Pete Doherty they were supporting the Oasis star. The Welsh group's frontman Jack Jones, who is also Libertines rocker Pete's guitarist in his band Puta Madres, decided to keep his lips sealed when Trampoline opened for Liam on his tour in support of his debut solo LP 'As You Were' last year. Speaking exclusively to BANG Showbiz at their Red Stripe gig in London last month, Jack confessed: "I don't know if Pete knows. I am sure he does. He's always been really supportive of me and Trampoline. He's like an older brother to me." Asked what he talked about with the 'Some Might Say' singer at the gigs, Jack said: "We had a good man to-man. He was very complimentary. "Most people mention my poems and the poetry side of the band which gave us a foot in the door I suppose, but the first thing he wanted to talk about was the guitar playing and how we are keeping the fight for rock 'n' roll going." And when asked if he's offered to help Liam with his second solo album, he replied: "Of course, along with the 50,000 other people, can you imagine the list? "I'd love to do that though, I've been thinking about it and writing some songs and hopefully I'll get to play some of the songs to him before makes the next record." Liam and Pete have been at loggerheads for years, most recently the 'Can't Stand Me Now' hitmaker said he was stressing out because Liam has pinched his Babyshambles bass player Drew McConnell for his touring band. He said: "Stressification on the band front, Drew playing bass guitar for Liam Gallagher's new tour." The pair have another mutual person in common as they both have children by 90s indie rocker Lisa Moorish. The 'Live Forever' hitmaker has 20-year-old daughter Molly with the former Kill City singer and Pete has 14-year-old son Astile. They have feuded several times over the years, one of the most notable though was at V Festival in 2005. Liam labelled the Babyshambles star "one big c\*\*\*" on stage after he didn't turn up for his support slot with Oasis at the Rose Bowl in Southampton, South West England. He said on stage at the event held in Chelmsford, Essex: "It's good to see Pete Doherty turned up. One big c\*\*\*."

## Ne-Yo's new album will drop on June 8

Ne-Yo's new album will drop on June 8. The 'So Sick' hitmaker hasn't released an LP since 2015's 'Non-Fiction' and, although it was initially thought his new set of tracks would be available to download last year, the 38-year-old singer has finally revealed 'Good Man' will be out this summer. Taking to his Twitter account, Ne-Yo updated his bio to read: "New album, #GOODMAN out June 8th. Watch the new lyric video for 'Push Back', featuring @BebeRexha and @StefflonDon (sic)" The announcement comes just hours after his new single 'Push Back' was released and he recently admitted that Bebe Rexha and Stefflon Don, who feature on the new track, weren't the only artists he's worked with on 'Good Man'. He said: "We came up with a lot of good stuff, actually. "There's actually a collection of songs that I have, that I'm holding on to for a little side project later on, but there was one of that bunch that I liked so much, that I decided to put on this album. Myself, PartyNextDoor, and Eric Bellinger are on that record..." This album focuses on the journey of what it is to be a good man: a good man to your spouse, a good brother to your brother, a good person to the world. I am not proclaiming to be perfect. A good man makes mistakes, learns from those mistakes, therefore to not then repeat those mistakes. Being a good man is a journey." Last year, Ne-Yo debuted four new singles - including 'On Your Mind', 'Push Back', 'Nights Like These' and 'Good Man' - during his gig at London's O2 Brixton Academy.



## RUN - D.M.C. DONE WITH ALBUMS

Run-DMC won't release anymore albums. The legendary hip-hop duo - comprised of Joseph 'Run' Simmons and Darryl 'D.M.C.' McDaniels - don't feel its necessary to add tunes to their back catalogue as they are able to live off their huge hits, including 1986 Aerosmith collaboration 'Walk This Way' and 'It's Tricky' from their seminal LP 'Raising Hell'. Speaking exclusively to BANG Showbiz, Joseph 'Run' Simmons said: "People want to see the hits and when I come to town I bring what I know they want to hear. "Our legacy lies within the catalogue." Asked if there is any desire to release any new songs, he replied: "No. I don't need to. I have the arsenal of 'Walk This Way', 'My Adidas', 'It's Like That'. "It's pretty solid. I don't need to try to make something else. "I don't see myself making a Run-DMC album." As for who is carrying on their torch in the hip-hop world, Run says power couple Jay-Z and Beyonce, who recently announced a second 'On The Run II World Tour'. He said: "Jay-Z is really doing good. "I am loving that he put out this '4:44' album and it was very age-appropriate for him, talking about stuff that is going on in his life now. "But he's one to watch and then the 'On The Run II' tour with his wife Beyonce, so it's very exciting watching someone who has matured and at the place Jay-Z is at, still playing huge places and making an impact and still have people pay attention to what he is rapping about." Run-DMC split in 2002, following the murder of third member Jam Master Jay - real name Jason William Mizell - but the pair reunited at Jay-Z's Made In America Festival in September 2012, and have made select performances ever since. Run-DMC will return to the UK this summer where they'll perform at London's Hammersmith Eventim Apollo on July 5 and at NASS Festival in South West England on July 6.

Lifestyle | Gossip

**LEGALLY BLONDE ALMOST HAD DIFFERENT ENDING**



**L**egally Blonde' almost had a completely different ending. The popular 2001 romcom followed pink-loving diva Elle Woods (Reese Witherspoon) as she attempted to win back her ex-boyfriend Warner Huntington (Matthew Davis) by proving she's intelligent enough for him by studying law. But, after she succeeds at Harvard Law School, she realizes she's far too good for her ex, bags herself a new man called Emmett Richmond (Luke Wilson), makes some new friends and gives a graduation speech in front of a standing ovation. However, co-writer Karen McCullah has revealed the movie almost ended differently. Speaking to Entertainment Weekly, she said: "Originally it ended at the courthouse right after the trial. Everyone was congratulating Elle, and Emmett came up and gave her a big kiss. Then there was a tag where it was a year in the future and she and [Elle's friend] Vivian, who was now blonde, had started the Blonde Legal Defense Fund and they were in the quad handing out pamphlets. "The

test-screening audience didn't feel like it was an exciting enough ending for her, success-wise. The kiss made it seem like it was a rom-com. They knew that this was not a movie about a girl getting a guy." After the disappointing response, McCullah, the film's director Robert Luketic and producer Marc Platt spent hours coming up with the graduation speech to finish with. She explained: "The whole movie is painstakingly written over many drafts in two years and then the ending is quick." But that wasn't the only dilemma they faced. McCullah added: "At that point [Reese] was in England shooting 'The Importance of Being Earnest'. She'd cut off her hair because it had gotten damaged from all the hot rollers, so they put her in a wig ... Luke [Wilson] had on a wig because he'd shaved his head for 'The Royal Tenenbaums'. "The whole graduation scene is shot in London, but all the reaction shots were in Burbank in a soundstage. If you look really closely, you'll notice the lighting's a little bit different. But the new ending was way more satisfying."

**Cena wants to join Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson in Fast and Furious franchise**



**J**ohn Cena would love to join Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson as part of the 'Fast & Furious' franchise. The 'Blockers' actor and WWE superstar - who feuded with the Hall of Famer in the build-up to Wrestlemania 28 and 29 - has admitted he and his on-screen rival have "chemistry", and he would love to share the screen with him as he continues to branch out into the world of Hollywood. On the possibility of joining the 'Fast & Furious' film saga, he told EW: "That stuff is beyond my control, but I would absolutely love that opportunity. That, for me, would be a dream. "I'm never really like, 'Oh, I'd like to work with this person,' but I just think between our chemistry in the live performance setting, there's something certainly there with The Rock. So that would be my one name

on the wish list." Although Cena has focused on comedies more recently - including the likes of 'Daddy's Home 2' and 'Ferdinand' - he is set to join the world of action blockbusters in 'Transformers' spin-off 'Bumblebee' as Burns. He added: "It's going to be a wonderful piece of this franchise that I think people are going to enjoy. I was very intrigued being able to meet the team around the movie. "[Director] Travis [Knight] is such a passionate man. The role they were talking to me about doing was very intriguing to me because it's a road I've never been down before, but a road I felt like I could accomplish. "And then put that together with the context of the movie, the way that the consumer will now view Bumblebee, all of that stuff was very interesting to me. And then they were stupid enough to say yes."



**Bryan Cranston not worries about box office success**

**B**ryan Cranston doesn't worry about ratings or box office success. The 'Breaking Bad' star holds his own work to a "high standard" so is only interested in taking on projects that bring him personal satisfaction, rather than what will be a hit critically and commercially. He said: There's so much product out there, all the time, it's 'Do this!' 'Do this!' 'Do this!' "But, for me, it's not about how much a movie makes or the TV ratings or the awards. "I hold myself to a high standard. "I want to reach a level of accomplishment with the characters I take on and the stories I tell. "I can only be true to myself, so my measure of success is entirely personal." The 62-year-old actor voices Chief in Wes Anderson's new animation 'Isle of Dogs' and he jumped at the chance to work on the movie,

even though he didn't know at the time he wouldn't appear on screen. He told Radio Times magazine: "I absolutely loved Anderson's 'The Grand Budapest Hotel' so when the word came through that West wanted me, I was more than ready. "It was only later I found out it was stop-motion animation." But Bryan insists the news didn't come as a disappointment. He said: "Not for a moment. I don't have that sort of prejudice, which regards animation as only for kids. "Good storytelling is good storytelling and this material is best told in an animated version. "If you tried to do it as live action, I don't think it would work so well as a parable. "It opens you up to a different culture, a different language and environment and that's exactly what art should be doing."



**Lena Waithe is always learning**

**L**ena Waithe "learns" from people every day. The 'Ready Player One' star loved watching director Steven Spielberg work on the set of the hit movie. She said: "I got to kind of watch Steven at work, and he really is a master. He's really just fun to watch because he also just has a wonderful time directing and doing what he does ... I continue to be a student. I learn from people every day. There's places of inspiration everywhere, and so my thing is to always be authentic and be myself and put in the work." And with this being the 33-year-old actress' first big role, she thinks "patience" in this industry is "extremely important". She told MTV News: "I think patience is extremely important, especially for anybody who wants to be in this business. Sometimes people, you know, write a script and go, 'Where's my million bucks?' The truth is, this is a lot of time and energy you gotta put into it. You gotta fall down a few times before you learn to walk, and then you start to run." Meanwhile, Lena previously revealed how helping people in the film and TV industry felt like part of her activism. She said: "I have a ton of mentees [people that I mentor]. They're all people of color. Some of them are poor. And I'm just trying to help them learn how to be great writers; and for those that have become really good writers, I help them get representation; and those that have representation, I want to help get them jobs. That to me is a form of activism. I was doing this before Time's Up was created. I am doing it now. Activism is me paying for a writer to go to a television-writing class." — Bang Showbiz



**Naomi Harris backs Danny Boyle for James Bond**

**N**aomie Harris would "love" Danny Boyle to direct the next James Bond movie. The 41-year-old actress has portrayed Eve Moneypenny in the most recent outings of the spy saga, 'Skyfall' and 'Spectre', and though she insists she's "easy" about who she works with behind the camera, she'd be thrilled if speculation the 'Trainspotting' filmmaker has landed the job on the 25th film in the series are true. But Naomie would be just as happy if 'Spectre' director Sam Mendes came back for another stint. She told Total Film magazine: "I'd love it if Danny Boyle would [direct 'Bond 25']. He's extraordinary. I think he'd have an amazing twist. "I'd love to have Sam back as well. But yeah, who knows. "Just as long as they're brilliant and they understand what Bond's about and they understand what the fans want and they're nice to work with, I'm easy really." And the 'Rampage' actress' wish might come true as Danny recently revealed he's working on a script for the film, which will see Daniel Craig return again as the suave spy. He said: "We are working on a script right now. And it all depends on that really. "I am working on a Richard Curtis script at the moment. We hope to start shooting that in six or seven weeks. "Then Bond would be right at the end of the year. But we are working on them both right now. Boyle - who won the Best Director Oscar in 2009 for his drama 'Slumdog Millionaire' - is currently working on a musical based around the music of the Beatles for Curtis. But revealed he has an idea for a story for the iconic British 007 spy but refused to give any spoilers away. He said: "We've got an idea, John Hodge, the screenwriter, and I have got this idea, and John is writing it at the moment. "And it all depends on how it turns out. It would be foolish of me to give any of it away."

**Emily Blunt thinks Mary Poppins is 'creepy'**



**E**mily Blunt thinks Mary Poppins is "creepy." The 35-year-old actress is playing the iconic English nanny in an upcoming Disney film, but has admitted she finds her alter-ego slightly unnerving. Speaking on 'The Late Show', the program's host Stephen Colbert said: "I always thought Mary Poppins seemed a little sinister." To which Emily replied: "Well, I think she's creepy." Stephen said: "She is, because she comes unannounced, takes over the house." Emily joked: "Disney right now are just like, 'Noooooo!' But I loved doing it, it was just the best. It really was awesome." The film will hit the big screen at the end of this year but Emily is concerned about how her children - Hazel, four, and 22-month-old Violet - will react to her portrayal. Emily - who is married to John Krasinski - said recently: "Hazel loves Julie [Andrews] so much that I worry she's

just gonna reject my version of Mary Poppins. I think it's strange for the kids of actors to see their parents in stuff ... I think it's weird for Hazel 'cause she's also young - they're really young, my kids, and so it's disconcerting for them to see you as someone else behaving in a way that's not natural." The upcoming 'Mary Poppins Returns' also features an appearance from Academy Award-winning actress Meryl Streep. The duo both previously starred alongside each other in 2006's 'The Devil Wears Prada', and Emily has joked that the acclaimed actress is now stalking her. Teasing Meryl's role in the new film, Emily said: "We have really set a tone that we never play characters that like each other very much. And so we are continuing with that tradition in this. I don't know if we could ever play like best pals in something. It's just not what works for Meryl and I."

**JESSICA CHASTAIN WANTS REAL ROLES**



**J**essica Chastain wants to play "real" women. The 'Zero Dark Thirty' actress thinks movies portray female characters in an "unrealistic" way and she is furious a lot of films don't have "strong" ladies depicted in them because that isn't true to life. She said: "I want to play characters that are real. The film industry portrays women in an unrealistic way. Movie theatres are full of women, which do not at all remind me of the women I have around me in my life... "I regard every woman to be strong and it makes me mad that the cinema hasn't portrayed them as strong in the past." The 41-year-old actress blames filmmakers for the lack of realistic representation of women on screen and called for more of a "balance" between genders working behind-the-scenes. She added to Germany's GQ magazine: "Filmmakers are responsible. There's rarely any women sit-

ting in the rooms where decisions are made. "We don't have many female directors and few screenwriters. I don't know about the exact statistics of the past year, but I know that the number of women in those positions is just too low. "I firmly believe: If we create a balance there, then we'll also see stories about women on the big screen that are realistic." The 'Molly's Game' actress recently spoke of her own plan to direct one day. She said: "Every day I feel like there is something new I never imagined I'd be doing. "If anything, I think in the future I'm going to step back and I'm probably going to produce more. I may even direct. "I'm interested in taking the light that has been shined on me and maybe shining it on some other people. I don't feel like I'm having to sacrifice anything because in reality this world is bigger than what my dream was."

# 'Chappaquiddick' retells scandal that changed America



In this file photo Director John Curran arrives on the red carpet for the premiere of 'Chappaquiddick' at the Samuel Goldwyn Theater in Beverly Hills, California.



This file photo taken on August 01, 1968 shows US Senator Edward M. Kennedy. — AFP photos



In this file photo (From left) Jason Clarke, Kate Mara, Entertainment Studios CEO/Co-Founder Byron Allen and Ed Helms arrive on the red carpet for the premiere of 'Chappaquiddick' at the Samuel Goldwyn Theater in Beverly Hills, California.

**US** Senator Edward Kennedy went to his death in 2009 haunted by his role in the drowning of a young woman 40 years earlier after he crashed their car. The accident at a bridge on Chappaquiddick Island, an upscale resort off Cape Cod, Massachusetts, indelibly stained Kennedy's reputation and destroyed his chances of entering the White House. "It was the event that changed the course of Teddy Kennedy's career," said John Curran, the director of "Chappaquiddick," a new movie delving into the mysterious events surrounding a tragedy that has enthralled America for half a century.

Speaking at the premiere in Beverly Hills ahead of the movie's US release on Friday, Curran described himself as a fan of Kennedy.

"I do realize I've had this sort of blind spot about this episode in his life and it just felt time to re-examine it honestly," said the 57-year-old film-maker. Kennedy boasted a rich family political legacy linked to an era of civil rights gains as brother of President John F. Kennedy and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy. The Massachusetts senator's own legislative achievements since his election in 1962 at age 30 helped craft his legacy as one of the most accomplished lawmakers in US history. In "True Compass," his memoir published weeks after his death in 2009, Kennedy stuck to his assertion that Mary Jo Kopechne's death on July 18, 1969 was an accident.

## Heavy drinking

Critics have long speculated that the last of the four Kennedy brothers was drunk-driving and left the dead or dying 28-year-old campaign worker behind to cover his tracks and save his fledgling career. Kennedy, who had offered Kopechne a ride home from a party, swam to safety after the crash but left her trapped in his Oldsmobile, lying on its roof in shallow water. In his memoir Kennedy described his despair and heavy drinking after the assassinations of both John and Robert Kennedy, in 1963 and 1968. He admitted it was "inexcusable" that he did not report the accident to police until Kopechne's body was recovered the following day but denied driving under the influence of alcohol, or any affair.

He ultimately won sympathy for the extraordinary litany of tragedies in his family, but his hopes of following JFK into the Oval Office were figuratively and literally dead in the water. He did make a White House run in 1980, but failed in his bid to challenge then-president Jimmy Carter for the Democratic Party nomination. Before age slowed him down, Kennedy was known for years as a cavorter and skirt-chaser, infamous for his drinking and disastrous divorce after a stormy marriage to his first wife, Joan Bennett Kennedy.

## 'Hard to forgive'

"I was desperate to play this part and I'm very proud of

what we did, what we've made," said Jason Clarke ("Everest," "Mudbound"), who plays Kennedy. "This film is going to stand the test of time." Clarke, 48, described the senator's fleeing the scene as "hard to forgive, if it's forgivable" but added, "that's human and that's life." The actor said Kennedy's legislative accomplishments stood the test of time. "What he stood for is on the right side of history: education, civil rights, so many things."

Kennedy admitted leaving the scene of an accident at Chappaquiddick and received a suspended two-month jail sentence. Kopechne's parents—who both died before Kennedy—received a \$141,000 settlement from the senator's insurance company. But they revealed on the 25th anniversary of the accident in 1994 that Kennedy had nev-

er apologized directly to them for the death of their only daughter. "When I was sent this script I couldn't put it down," said Kate Mara ("Fantastic Four," "The Martian"), who portrayed Kopechne.

"I think like a lot of people from my generation, I didn't know very much about this specific incident and I thought it was an important story to tell," Mara, 35, said she was proud to be part of a movie providing a glimpse-albeit brief—into the life of a woman who, half a century after her death, has been largely forgotten by history. "I think she has been treated unfairly in the past with the press and the way she was portrayed after her death," Mara said. "So I'm happy to tell just a part of her story." — AFP

## 'Ready Player One' more-than-ready atop box office

Steven Spielberg's high-octane futuristic homage to films of the 1980s, "Ready Player One," debuted in top spot at the North American Easter Weekend box office, industry data showed on Monday. The film about a teenage gamer, who finds himself inside an addictive virtual reality world in the year 2045, scored \$41.8 million in its opening weekend, industry tracker Exhibitor Relations said. Starring Tye Sheridan as the gamer Wade Watts, the all-star support cast features Olivia Cooke, Ben Mendelsohn, TJ Miller and Simon Pegg.



Reviewers have framed "Ready Player One"—in which Wade encounters 1980s pop culture icons including Freddy Krueger—as something of a cinematic autobiography for Spielberg, the veteran director of a number of successes including "E.T." and "Jaws." Another newcomer, Lionsgate thriller "Tyler Perry's Acrimony," displaced Marvel's box office juggernaut "Black Panther" at number two, with \$17.2 million in receipts over the three-day weekend.

The film stars Taraji P. Henson as a vengeful wife. At third place, "Black Panther" pulled in \$11.5 million, bringing its cumulative total to \$650.9 million in the US and Canada. The Marvel smash hit, starring Chadwick Boseman, Michael B. Jordan and Lupita Nyong'o, had already overtaken "The Avengers" (2012) as the highest-grossing superhero film in US history.

Telling the story of Wakanda's King T'Challa, "Black Panther" was also the first film since "Avatar" (2009) to notch five consecutive top spots, and is the fifth-highest grossing movie ever in the United States. Low-budget faith-based drama "I Can Only Imagine," fell to fourth place, earning \$10.4 million. Made for a modest \$7 million, the movie stars J. Michael Finley as the lead singer of a popular Christian band. Dennis Quaid and Cloris Leachman also star.

Dropping from first to fifth place was smash-up sequel "Pacific Rim: Uprising," which has attracted mixed reviews and gained a measly \$9.4 million after a massive 67 percent drop on its first weekend earnings. Set 10 years after "Pacific Rim" (2013), "Uprising" follows a new generation of pilots of the first film's giant "Jaeger" military mechanoids fending off enormous Kaiju monsters aiming to end humanity. The Universal movie centers on "Star Wars" sensation John Boyega as Jake Pentecost, son of Idris Elba's character Stacker, who died to save the world in the first film.

Rounding out the top 5 were:  
"Sherlock Gnomes" (\$7 million)  
"Tomb Raider" (\$4.9 million)  
"A Wrinkle in Time" (\$4.8 million)  
"Love, Simon" (\$4.8 million)  
"Paul, Apostle of Christ" (\$3.5 million)—AFP



## Waked to visit the Premier Cinema Band in April

The Egyptian movie star, Amr Waked recently expressed willingness to visit Kuwait this April to present a workshop in collaboration with the Premier Cinema Band. In this regard, Waked said that he had heard about presenting the first workshop on acting in Kuwait last February through which he watched dozens of young talented actors and actresses.

"In view of the success achieved and in response to many young artists' wish to undergo further training, we agreed to hold a new workshop in April," he said.

Further, Waked stressed that the workshop would be on the French approach of acting which focuses on actor preparations, care for his/her physical fitness, facial impressions, body language and the ability to

focus on the inner feelings of the character played by the trainee. He added that the workshop would also focus on imagination, storytelling and improvisation skills as well as utilizing all physical potentials during the narration.

## PREMIERE FOR 'A QUIET PLACE'



Paramount Pictures premiere for 'A Quiet Place' at AMC Lincoln Square Theater on April 2, 2018 in New York City. — AFP photos



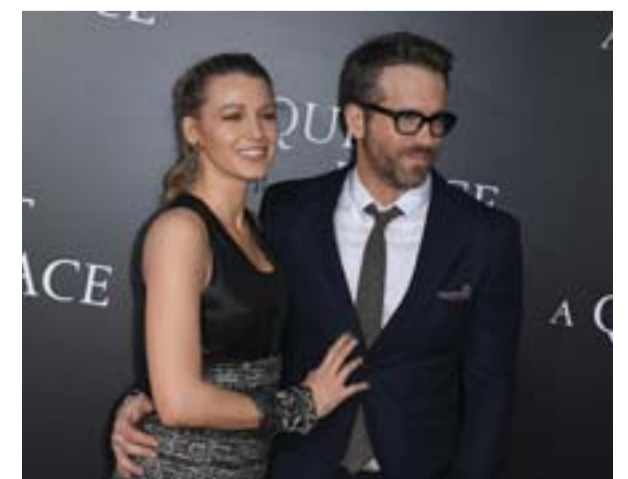
(From left) John Krasinski, Noah Jupe, Millicent Simmonds and Emily Blunt attend the Paramount Pictures premiere for "A Quiet Place" at AMC Lincoln Square Theater.



Paramount Pictures presents the New York premiere of 'A Quiet Place' Felicity Blunt and Stanley Tucci attend the Paramount Pictures premiere for "A Quiet Place" at AMC Lincoln Square Theater.



Brandon Victor Dickson attends the Paramount Pictures premiere for "A Quiet Place" at AMC Lincoln Square Theater.



Blake Lively and Ryan Reynolds attend the Paramount Pictures premiere for "A Quiet Place".



Salma Al-Majidi, acknowledged by FIFA as the first Arab and Sudanese woman to coach a men's football team in the Arab world, coaches the Al-Ahly Al-Gadaref club during a training session in the town of Gedaref, east of Khartoum. — AFP photos



Salma Al-Majidi poses for a photo with players of the Al-Ahly Al-Gadaref club after coaching a training session in the town of Gedaref, east of Khartoum.

# Sudan's 'sister coach' takes love of football to field



Salma Al-Majidi coaches players of the Al-Ahly Al-Gadaref club.

In Sudan, where a women's national football team remains a distant dream, Salma Al-Majidi knew the only way to take part in her beloved sport was to coach... and that the players had to be men. Majidi, 27, acknowledged by FIFA as the first Arab and Sudanese woman to coach a men's football team in the Arab world, is a pioneer in a sport that dominates the region.

"Why football? Because it is my first and ultimate love," said Majidi, clad in sports gear and a black headscarf, as she led players of the Al-Ahly Al-Gadaref club at a practice session in the town of Gadaref, east of Khartoum. "I became a coach because there is still no scope for women's football in Sudan," said Majidi, who is affectionately called "sister coach" by her team. Daughter of a retired policeman, Majidi was 16 when she fell in love with football. It came about as she watched her younger

brother's school team being coached. She was captivated by the coach's instructions, his moves, and how he placed the marker cones at practice sessions.

1983, six years after which President Omar al-Bashir seized power in an Islamist-backed coup. There is no legal ban on women's football in Sudan, but a conservative society coupled with the Islamist leanings of the government have left it in the shadows. Women do play football but there are no competitions or women's clubs, and they do not play much in public. "There are restrictions on women's football, but I'm determined to succeed," Majidi, whose dream is to coach an international team, said, as her players kicked up clouds of dust practising free kicks.

“My message to men in general is to give women a chance to do what they want”



Salma Al-Majidi coaches players of the Al-Ahly Al-Gadaref club.



Players from the Al-Ahly Al-Gadaref club take part in a training session coached by Salma Al-Majidi.



brother's school team being coached. She was captivated by the coach's instructions, his moves, and how he placed the marker cones at practice sessions.

"At the end of every training session, I discussed with him the techniques he used to coach the boys," Majidi told AFP, as she watched her own players practicing on a hot day at a dusty ground in Gadaref. "He saw I had a knack for coaching... and gave me a chance to work with him." Soon Majidi was coaching the under-13 and under-16 teams of Al-Hilal club in Omdurman, the twin city of Khartoum on the west bank of the River Nile.

### Limits on women players

Questions like whether she understood football or had the skills to coach men were all put to rest over time, said Majidi, speaking in a soft but confident tone. Named in the BBC's 2015 list of "100 inspirational women", Majidi has coached the Sudanese second league men's clubs of Al-Nasr, Al-Nahda, Nile Halfa and Al-Mourada. Nile Halfa and Al-Nahda even topped local leagues under her coaching. She currently holds the African "B" badge in coaching, meaning she can coach any first league team across the continent.

The only other woman to have gained recognition in Sudan's footballing world was Mounira Ramadan, who refereed men's matches in the 1970s. Sudan joined FIFA in 1948 and established the Confederation of African Football (CAF) along with Egypt, Ethiopia and South Africa. It won the CAF trophy in 1970. Women's football has faced an uphill task since the country adopted Islamic sharia law in



Salma Al-Majidi (left) coaches the Al-Ahly Al-Gadaref club during a training session.

### 'Kids of Salma'

Majidi's journey has not been easy. "Sudan is a community of tribes and some tribes believe that a woman's role is confined only to her home," said Majidi, a university graduate in accounts and management. "There was this one boy who refused to listen. He told me he belongs to a tribe that believed men should never take orders from women," she said. It took months before he finally accepted her as coach. "Today, he is a fine player," said Majidi, who works full-time and receives a salary that is equivalent to that of a male coach.

At first, "people in the streets used to call us 'Salma's kids!'" said Majid Ahmed, a striker and an ardent fan of Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi. "In school we have female teachers, so what's the problem having a female coach?" Majidi said her entrance to what was a male preserve is just a start. "My message to men in general is to

give women a chance to do what they want," she said as she prepared tea after a grueling practice session.

### 'She was different'

Coming from a traditional family, it was a challenge for Majidi to prove herself to their relatives, recalls her father, Mohamed Al-Majidi. "Then one day, her uncle who used to criticize her saw crowds shouting 'Salma! Salma!' during a match," he told AFP at the family's mud-and-brick home in Omdurman. "These same relatives now pray to Allah to support her." From early on, Majidi's mother knew her daughter was different. "She always preferred wearing trousers... And even when crossing the street, she would watch the boys playing football," said Aisha Al-Sharif. — AFP



Salma Al-Majidi coaches players of the Al-Ahly Al-Gadaref club during a training session in the town of Gedaref.



Salma Al-Majidi coaches players of the Al-Ahly Al-Gadaref club.



Players from the Al-Ahly Al-Gadaref club take part in a training session coached by Salma Al-Majidi.



Salma Al-Majidi coaches players of the Al-Ahly Al-Gadaref club.

# Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4, 2018



A view of the Kuwait Towers facing the Persian Gulf in Kuwait City. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



## Japanese enjoy *cherry blossom* viewing parties

**I**t is cherry blossom viewing season in Japan now. Until mid-April, the country is covered with pinkish cherry blossoms (Sakura), Japan's national flower. Many people enjoy cherry blossom viewing parties under the Sakura trees with their families, friends or colleagues and celebrate the coming of spring.

The blossoms usually reach their peak in only a week after blooming starts, and famous viewing spots are crowded with visitors on weekends at this time. According to the Japan Meteorological Agency, the cherry blossoms this year have bloomed about 10 days earlier than average in many parts of the country, due to the recent warm weather. — Photo feature by Miyoko Ishigami



## Kristen Bell narrates cuddly IMAX documentary 'Pandas'

**A**nyone who has seen Kristen Bell break down in (happy) hysterics over a sloth knows the actress' affinity for animals, especially those of the cute and cuddly variety. So when the people behind the new IMAX original film "Pandas" asked "The Good Place" star if she would consider narrating the documentary, it was a no-brainer. "I'm not unsecretive about the fact that I'm an animal lover, or an IMAX lover to be totally honest with you," Bell said. "I think they produce some of the best content out there and I take my kids to the science center every time there's a new IMAX movie. I just think the patience with which they produce particularly their animal documentaries is kind of astounding."

"Pandas," from David Douglas and Drew Fellman ("Born to Be Wild" and "Island of Lemurs: Madagascar"), takes audiences to the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding in China where scientists are working toward a goal of releasing captive-born pandas into the wild, where only about 2,000 remain-

ing pandas live. The film, out Friday, focuses on one, Qian Qian (pronounced Chen Chen), from cub stage to her supervised release in the wild and the humans trying to make that happen. Hou Rong, the director of research at Panda Base since 1994, has raised over 200 baby pandas during her tenure and hopes that one day their work will help pandas thrive outside of captivity. In an inspiring display of cross-cultural solidarity, she travels to New Hampshire to observe how a man named Ben Kilham has for 20 years been successfully raising orphaned black bear cubs for eventual release in the wild. At Kilham's suggestion, Panda Base hires American conservation biologist Jake Owens, whom Douglas calls "the Indiana Jones of biologists" to help supervise Qian Qian's transition from city panda to country panda.

Bell, who got involved later in the process, didn't get to meet the pandas but hopes that one day she will. But that didn't stop her from peppering the scientists like Owens with ques-

tions, like how much do they weigh ("150 pounds"), how much do they feel like they weigh ("about 300 pounds") and what do they smell like ("sweet grass and milk")? An avid watcher of nature documentaries, Bell said that she and her young daughters Lincoln and Delta particularly love David Attenborough and the "Planet Earth" series. The girls saw an early cut of "Pandas" and "loved it," which makes Bell all the more excited for additional kids and families to experience "Pandas," too. "It's inspiring the next crop of biologists and conservationists," she said. She thinks the film will connect beyond animal die-hards, too. "It makes you feel good," Bell said. "It's inspiring, it's beautiful, it's adorable, it's educational and personally I think currently the world could use more things that feel good, you know?" —AP



This image released Warner Bros Pictures shows giant pandas in a scene from the IMAX documentary "Pandas." — AP