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Kuwait expels Filipino envoy, recalls ambassador to Manila

MPs hail foreign ministry for upholding nation's sovereignty, laws, dignity

By B Izzak and Agencies

KUWAIT: Kuwait yesterday ordered the Philippines ambassador to leave within a week and recalled its own envoy for consultations after embassy staff tried to "rescue" Filipino domestic workers amid reports of abuse. An official at Kuwait's foreign ministry said Philippine Ambassador Renato Pedro Villa had been summoned to be informed of his expulsion. The decision was the latest episode in a three-month crisis sparked by reports that abuse by employers had driven several Filipinos to suicide. The Philippines had apologized on Tuesday for what Kuwait viewed as a "flagrant" violation of its sovereignty, with the Philippine foreign secretary saying the embassy was forced to "assist" Filipino workers who sought help as some situations were a matter of life and death.

The Kuwaiti foreign ministry deemed such illegal acts as a blatant violation of Kuwaiti law and international covenants and charters and tantamount to intervention in the state's domestic affairs and meddling in jurisdictions of the security apparatuses, it said in a statement. These acts also constitute a flagrant violation of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, namely Provision 41 that bars infringement on individuals' prerogatives and immunities, respecting states' laws and non-intervention in their local affairs.

The ministry statement noted that Philippine officials stated that the foreign ministry of the Asian nation dispatched "reinforcements to the embassy in Kuwait; comprised of seven teams affiliated with the foreign under-secretary for labor and immigration on the pretext of rescuing female housemaids in Kuwait". "The Kuwaiti gov-



Renato Pedro Villa

ernment affirms that such acts and statements constitute explicit breach of international principles and covenants," the official statement said.

These acts had prompted the Kuwaiti foreign ministry to summon the Philippine ambassador twice, lodging with him complaints expressing Kuwait's extreme dismay and denunciation of such dangerous transgressions. It added it had given the ambassador three days to provide the names of Filipino residents in Kuwait who had "kidnapped" domestic workers from their employers' homes, but it had yet to receive a response from the embassy. Kuwaiti security forces "will continue to chase down those

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Amir praises role of teachers



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attends a ceremony yesterday honoring a group of devoted teachers on the occasion of International Teacher's Day for the academic year 2016-2017. The Amir expressed appreciation of Kuwaiti teachers and praised their great sense of responsibility. — KUNA (See Page 3)

Astronomy to be revolutionized by Milky Way map

PARIS: Europe's Gaia satellite has produced a 3-D map, hailed as revolutionary, of more than a billion stars in our Milky Way galaxy - complete with their distance from Earth, color, and motion through space. The eagerly-anticipated catalogue, published yesterday, was compiled from data Gaia gathered on some 1.7 billion stars from its unique vantage point in space, about 1.5 million km from Earth. "The dataset is very rich and we believe it will revolutionize astronomy and our understanding of the Milky Way," Gaia's scientific operations manager Uwe Lammers told AFP of the massive data release. "This catalogue is the most precise, most complete catalogue that has ever been produced. It allows studies which have not been possible before."

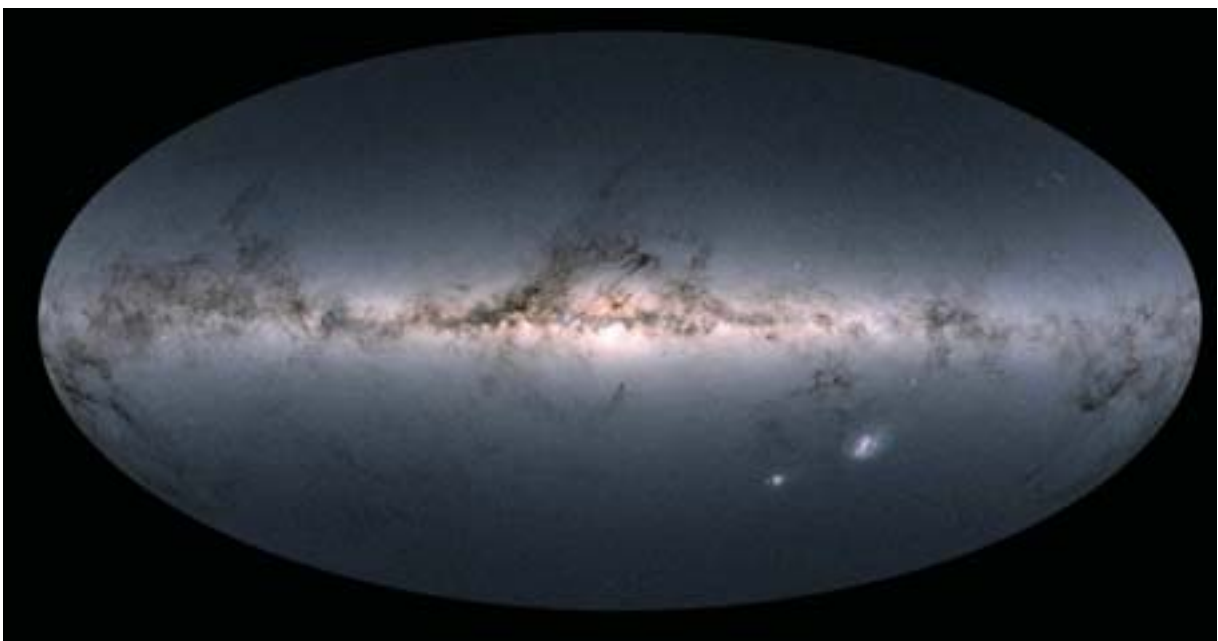
Launched in 2013, Gaia started operating the following year, gathering data on 100,000 stars per minute - some 500 million measurements per day. Its

first map was published in Sept 2016, based on a year's worth of observations of about 1.15 billion stars. An update, launched at the ILA international air and space show in Berlin, adds stars and provides more data on each one, from measurements taken over 22 months in 2014-2016. Some stars were measured as many as 70 times as the satellite, co-rotating with Earth around the Sun, continuously scanned the galaxy. "For some of the brightest stars in the survey, the level of precision equates to Earth-bound observers being able to spot a Euro coin lying on the surface of the Moon," said an ESA statement.

The new, improved map depicts 1.7 billion stars "for which we can tell where they are in the sky with very high accuracy, and how bright they are," said Anthony Brown of the Gaia Data Processing and Analysis Consortium. For 1.3 billion of those, "we know their distance and we know how they move through space". There is, furthermore, information on the radial velocities of some seven million stars - indicating the rate at which they are moving towards, or away from, Earth.

With all this data, "we can make a map of the whole night sky," said Brown, who described the end result as "stunning".

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Gaia's all-sky view of our Milky Way galaxy and neighboring galaxies, based on measurements of nearly 1.7 billion stars. — AFP

'Perception gap' threatens wider Middle East war

TEHRAN: Analysts fear a wider Middle Eastern war is brewing between Iran and its rivals, Israel and Saudi Arabia, warning that their failure to understand each other's intentions threatens to tear the region apart. "We will not allow Iranian entrenchment in Syria, no matter the price to pay," Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman declared this month. His comments followed air strikes on Syria's T-4 airbase, which killed seven Iranian personnel. Israel did not claim responsibility, but the raid was widely seen as its first direct attack on Iranian assets and a worrying sign of how Syria's seven-year conflict could escalate into a wider regional war.

The Middle East is mired in what the International Crisis Group calls a dangerous "gap in perceptions that has locked Iran and its rivals in an escalatory spiral of proxy fights that is destroying the region". With Iranian-backed militias entrenched in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, Iran's rivals worry it is seeking to dominate the region and gather forces for an attack on Israel. But the ICG said Iran sees quite the opposite, "a region dominated by powers with superior military capabilities", and only supported the Syrian government because it feared losing one of its few allies and being encircled by jihadist forces.

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Salah threatens Messi, Ronaldo stranglehold

LIVERPOOL: Mohamed Salah could be the man to finally break the Ronaldo-Messi duopoly at the top of world football after the Liverpool forward burnished his soaring reputation with a mesmerizing Champions League performance against Roma. Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo and Barcelona's Lionel Messi have locked down the Ballon d'Or award for a decade, winning five gongs apiece - for the past seven years they have occupied the top two slots.

But Salah is now second favourite with many bookmakers behind Ronaldo for this year's award after scoring his 42nd and 43rd goals of the season in a thrilling 5-2 victory for Liverpool in the Champions League semi-final first leg. After his first strike against his former club on Tuesday, the man dubbed by fans as the "Egyptian King" stood motionless, hands raised in apology, as bedlam broke out on a night for the ages at Anfield.

Salah's curling effort arrowed into the top corner with such accuracy his manager Jurgen Klopp labelled it "a genius strike". Soon after came the forward's signature finish, a cute dink over advancing Roma goalkeeper Alisson for his 43rd goal in 47 games for Liverpool. When Salah, 25, made the move from the Italian capital back to the Premier League just 10 months ago for €42 million (\$51 million), there were plenty who felt Roma had got the better deal. Salah after all was a talented player, but who often lacked an end product.



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah celebrates scoring their first goal during the UEFA Champions League first leg semi-final between Liverpool and Roma at Anfield stadium on Tuesday. — AFP

It also came just a few weeks before Neymar's move from Barcelona to Paris Saint-Germain for a world record €222 million revolutionized the transfer market. The Brazilian's desire to leave the Catalan giants was tied to his ambition to beat Messi and Ronaldo to the Ballon d'Or by stepping out of Messi's shadow. Now, though, it is Salah who has emerged as the pretender to

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Popular Indian guru jailed for life for teen rape

JODHPUR, India: An Indian guru with millions of followers was sentenced to life in prison yesterday for raping a teenage devotee on the pretext of ridding her of evil spirits, his lawyer said. Asaram Bapu, one of India's most charismatic and controversial "godmen", was given the maximum sentence at a closed jailhouse hearing in Rajasthan state, where hundreds of police were on high alert for any backlash from his disciples. "Asaram has been sentenced for life until death," Rajendra Singh, a defense lawyer, told AFP outside the court in the western city of Jodhpur.



Asaram Bapu

The white-bearded guru, 77, has always denied raping the then 16-year-old in 2013 during a spiritual retreat at his ashram in Jodhpur. His lawyer said they would appeal the sentence. Asaram is just the latest high-profile guru jailed for sex crimes, and his conviction comes as India reverberates with anger over a series of child rapes in recent weeks. Two of the four other co-accused, including a woman, were also found guilty and sentenced to 20 years. Two others accused in the case were acquitted.

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Local

Burgan Bank holds ‘ENGAGE’ Toy Drive Initiative for KACCH

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, a leading contributor to progress in the Kuwaiti society, recently held its dedicated ‘ENGAGE’ Toy Drive Initiative in participation of its staff. Engage Toy Drive is an internal collection and contributed gifts to Kuwait Association for Care of Children in Hospitals (KACCH).

Conducted for the first time within Burgan Bank, this initiative was aimed to draw smiles on the faces of the children and share an encouraging gesture on their journey to recovery. Investing in the betterment of Kuwait’s younger generations, Burgan Bank constantly strives to enhance lives of the most vulnerable groups and create meaningful experiences for all segments of the community.

Additionally, the gesture highlights the importance of volunteering and encourages employees to actively participate in causes driven by Burgan Bank. Drawing inspiration from the act of giving, the employees expressed their enthusiasm in sharing in the joy of the children undergoing treatment.

The toys were delivered to KACCH premises, who relayed their gratitude towards the initiative that brought happiness and excitement to all of the little ones. The toys were distributed to all of the clubs that have been allocated by the association in many public and private hospitals in Kuwait. The association has been effortlessly ensuring a healthy and entertaining environment for the benefit of the children.

Supporting the healthcare sector within pediatric facilities at various health institutions plays an integral part in the bank’s corporate social responsibility framework. Burgan Bank’s continued contributions have helped advance medical and pediatric facilities in several hospitals such as Bait Abdullah which is part of the KACCH, often supporting children and their families with fund treatment and recovery from fatal and terminal illnesses, as well as providing entertainment.

As a strong supporter for over sixteen years, Burgan Bank continues to build and maintain a lasting relationship with the volunteering organization through valuable initiatives. The KACCH is a non-governmental, non-profit organization registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour that aims to assist children in coping with the stress of being in hospital for treatment. The association pays great efforts to provide a healthy and entertaining environment to the children through the kids clubs that KACCH established in many hospitals in Kuwait. Bait Abdullah serves as a substitute home to children’s hospitals for patients suffering from terminal illnesses and their families, who need support to live a robust life. Facilities are available to provide daily care, including recreation and residential facilities for emergency or advanced cases.

Burgan Bank’s support of this initiative falls under its dynamic full-fledged community program entitled ‘ENGAGE’ - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural and health driven initiatives. Burgan Bank’s approach to ‘ENGAGE’ begins with a vital principle that as a leading Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the community.



KUWAIT: Winners of the Golden Wings of Mexico photo contest pose for a group photo with officials, including Mexican Ambassador Miguel Angle Isidro (fourth from left), during the awarding ceremony at Kuwait’s Museum of Modern Art. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Wings of Mexico fly away from Kuwait

By Jeri Al-Jeri

Yesterday, the winners of the Golden Wings of Mexico photo contest were awarded. Contestants were required to go to Kuwait’s Museum of Modern Art and take the best picture with the Golden Wings of Mexico. The installation was accompanied by a huge wooden platform and three steps that were positioned in the middle of the wings. These steps lead to nothing but empty space to enhance the illusion of anyone climbing these steps to be able to “lift off” at any moment.

I went to the museum, stood above the three wooden steps right in the center of the hall that had no roof above it, except for the heavens above, and turned my back to the two giant golden wings. I raised my head to face the sun in a moment of meditation, when I suddenly remembered that I had nobody to take a picture of me as this glorious winged being!

A random stranger offered to take a quick photo with my cellphone. Luckily, he was a professional photographer who enabled me to qualify to be among the five finalists, because his picture delivered all the four

judges’ measurements of “originality, quality and interaction with the sculpture”. The respected judges were Gustavo Ferrari, Tamara Saab, Rajat Kumar and Nawaf Najia.

The Mexican Embassy harnessed social media and the five finalists were supposed to get as many “likes” as possible for their photos that were posted on the embassy’s official Instagram account. Hilda Corona was declared the winner, Zahra Ali stood second and Francis Jr Javier third. The winner got two round-trip tickets to Mexico and the runner-up KD 500, while the third prize was an original sketch by the artist who sculpted the Mexican wings - Jorge Marin himself!

While I contemplate overdosing on sleeping pills after writing all what I have missed, I do want to use this opportunity to thank the amazing judges, Ambassador Miguel Angle Isidro and Mexican embassy official Paola Schietekat for this wonderful cultural activity that they shared with us. Their nation’s art is full with zest for life. However, what is the point of all of this? Or in other words, what is the use of the art itself that makes embassies and government institutions work so hard?

Art is the universal thread that connects all people from all walks of life, and the more we connect with each other, the more human we become to one another. Marin succeeded in giving me the feeling of enthusiasm and optimism for a better future that only comes when you see yourself with two golden wings behind your back, ready to “lift you up” from the



Mexican Ambassador to Kuwait Miguel Angle Isidro speaks during the event.

ground on which you stand - for that I am indebted. Expression is how a culture survives, and by the use of art, our expressions get ingrained in our culture’s history. It is safe to say that art is the only way to preserve a culture’s spirit. The Mexican Embassy in Kuwait did just that. “Muchas gracias!”

NEW

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Local

Amir stresses need for greater focus on quality of education

His Highness attends International Teacher's Day ceremony



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and other officials pose with teachers honored during a ceremony held yesterday on the occasion of the International Teacher's Day. —Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah speaks during the ceremony.



Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Hamed Al-Azmi delivers his speech.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a memorial gift marking the International Teacher's Day.



A general view of teachers honored during the event.

KUWAIT: Under auspices and with attendance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a ceremony for honoring a group of devoted teachers on the occasion of the International Teacher's Day for the academic year 2016-2017 was held at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) yesterday.

His Highness the Amir arrived at the venue where he was warmly received and welcomed by Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Hamed Mohammad Al-Azmi and the event organizers. The ceremony was attended by Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and senior officials.

It began with the national anthem and recitation of verses from the Holy Quran, after which His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah gave a

speech, expressing appreciation to Kuwaiti teachers on the occasion of an award ceremony for local teachers.

His Highness the Amir praised their great sense of responsibility as they strive to prove worthy of this great honor and worthy of the trust of their fellow citizens as the country seeks greater progress. "We look forward to a greater focus on the quality of education to meet students' needs and to match requirements of the labor market," His Highness said, stressing the role of education and equitable learning in achieving sustainable development.

Meanwhile, Dr Azmi also gave a speech welcoming the attendance of His Highness the Amir to honor his sons and daughter, the teachers, which reflects His Highness's deep passion and appreciation to them. He also stressed on the importance of education in modern societies, as teaching is one of the most respected jobs throughout history. The Minister thanked His Highness

the Amir for his patronage of the celebration, hailing His Highness' remarkable role in education.

On the other hand, Director of Al-Farwaniya High School for Girls Seham Hamad Al-Hamad in a speech she gave during the ceremony, appreciated the attendance and support of His Highness the Amir and recognizable support to the educational domain. She also thanked the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education, as well as the Ministry of Education staff for all the support they offer to the educational institutions and teachers.

Later on, a graphic show break was presented on the job of the teacher to the audience followed by a poetry recited by two students, as well as a drama show depicting the teacher's day. His Highness the Amir later honored the distinguished teachers. He was also given a memorial gift marking the occasion. —KUNA



Two students recite poetry during the ceremony.

Amir congratulates new presidents

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to the President of Bangladesh Mohammad Abdul Hamid on swearing in for a new term in office, expressing good wishes to him and hoping to see further elevation of bilateral relations. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to President Hamid.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to President-elect Mario Abdo Benitez for his victory in the presidential election in Paraguay. In his cable, His Highness the Amir expressed on his behalf and on behalf of the Kuwaiti government and people, his sincere sentiments and best wishes for securing the trust of the Paraguayan people, praising as well historic ties between the two nations. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister both sent similar cables to President Elect Benitez on the occasion. —KUNA

Kuwait stresses religious leaders role

NEW YORK: The State of Kuwait has stressed the importance of the role played by religious leaders in confronting acts of violence by terrorist groups under religious cove. "Religious leaders have a critical role to play in supporting peace. They have the capacity to build bridges between people and to spread essential values to the world, such as mutual respect, compassion, and forgiveness," member of Kuwait's Permanent Representation to the UN Nawaf Al-Ahmad told a Security Council Arria-Formula session Tuesday.

He said that strengthening the collaboration of religious leaders with international institutions, governments, and civil society has become pivotal to the successful implementation of vital UN recommendations and agendas related to global security, sustainable peace and prevention of conflicts. —KUNA



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Local

New housing projects' cost increased to KD 916.6 million

Three road projects suspended pending final review

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Recent reports released by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) showed that the cost of new housing projects increased in the new fiscal year to KD 916.6 million compared to KD 911.3 million in the previous year, with a difference of over KD 5 million, which might increase once the authority announces its future plans. The reports also showed that this budget will include 28 main projects including public facility buildings, road projects, various amenities, housing plots and services.

The reports showed that the project of building the infrastructure of 171 housing units of Abu Halifa residential project is complete. The reports also indicated that the cost of the main projects in Jaber Al-Ahmad and Mutlaa cities will increase from KD 336 million to KD 388 million. The housing authority's deputy director for execution Ali Al-Hebail said all public buildings of the Wafra expansion project will be completed by the end of 2018 and handed over to relevant government bodies.

Hebail added that the buildings expected to be completed and handed over by July 2018 include a main mosque and two others, imams' residences, gas outlets, a co-op store and a clinic. Hebail noted that all schools will

be handed over to the education ministry by October, adding that some buildings had already been completed. "The Wafra expansion project is going according to schedule and will be completed and handed over by February 2020," he added.

Housing loan

Minister of State for Housing and Minister of State for Services Dr Jenan Boushehri rejected a proposal to grant the housing loan of KD 70,000 to the youngest children of citizens after the death of the father. Responding to the proposal made by MP Askar Al-Enezi, Boushehri stressed that increasing the repairs loan to KD 70,000 for certain people would be unfair, and that putting such a proposal into practice will remarkably increase costs and drain the Credit Bank's capital, and eventually require increasing it. "Such a proposal will negatively affect the bank's capability to cover future obligations," she warned.

Road projects

The Ministry of Public Works suspended three road projects until a final review is done to decide whether to keep or cancel them. Informed sources said the suspended projects include all the main roads and intersections linking Kuwait City to Terminal 2 of Kuwait

International Airport, two stretches of the northern regional road and a border control center in Salmi.

Authority's budget

Chairman of the parliamentary budgets and final statements committee Adnan Abdulsamad said the committee met and discussed the 2018-2019 budget of the Public Authority for the Disabled and its final statement for 2016-2017, as well as the Audit Bureau's related remarks. Abdulsamad explained that the total expenditure in the new budget will be KD 224 million and stressed that the finance ministry had reservations concerning including KD 18 million that had been allocated for supporting educational services for the disabled in previous fiscal years in the new budget. He added that the Audit Bureau's remarks include weakness in controlling the payments of tuition fees for the disabled, such as paying KD 828,000 to kindergartens and centers without explaining the details or the documents and receipts proving it. The report also showed that other financial violations were committed by including non-Kuwaitis in various committees and allocating a sum of KD 872,000 for them. The report also detected unlawful payment of over KD 1 million to deceased disabled citizens.

Defense Minister meets Prince Nawaf bin Mohammad

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met Saudi Arabia's Prince Nawaf bin Mohammad Al Saud at Bayan Palace yesterday. The two discussed issues of mutual importance and other related matters, according to a Defense Ministry statement.

Sheikh Nasser later met Kuwait Red Crescent Chairman Hilal Al-Sayer and its Secretary General Maha Al-Barjas. Their discussions focused on the humanitarian aid role assumed by the philanthropic organization domestically and globally. Separately, the First Deputy Prime Minister hosted a luncheon in honor of the newly-appointed British Ambassador to Kuwait Michael



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with Saudi Arabia's Prince Nawaf bin Mohammad Al Saud. —KUNA

Davenport, during which both discussed bilateral relations. —KUNA

US Department of State's Report on Human Rights Practices in Kuwait for 2017 - Part IV

Section 7. Worker rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law protects the right of workers to form and join trade unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes, with significant restrictions. The government, however, did not always respect these rights.

The law provides workers, except for domestic workers, maritime workers, and civil servants, a limited right to collective bargaining. There is no minimum number of workers needed to conclude such agreements.

Public-sector workers do not have the right to strike. Private-sector workers have the right to strike, although cumbersome provisions calling for compulsory negotiation and arbitration in the case of disputes limit that right. The law does not prohibit retaliation against striking workers or prevent the government from interfering in union activities, including the right to strike. According to the Public Authority for Manpower, there were 2.63 million workers in the country. Only 18.1 percent of the total workforce were citizens. Most citizens (76 percent) worked in the public sector, in part because the government provided lucrative bonuses to citizens, including retirement funding.

The law prohibits antiunion discrimination and employer interference with union functions. It provides for reinstatement of workers fired for union activity. Nevertheless, the law empowers the courts to dissolve any union for violating labor laws or for threatening "public order and morals," although a union can appeal such a court decision. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor can request the Court of First Instance to dissolve a union. Additionally, His Highness the Amir may dissolve a union by decree.

Foreign workers, who constituted more than 80 percent of the workforce, may join unions only as nonvoting members after five years of work in the particular sector the union represents, provided they obtain a certificate of good conduct and moral standing from the government. They cannot run for seats or vote in board elections. Both the International Labor Organization and the International Trade Union Confederation criticized the citizenship requirement for discouraging unions in sectors that employ few citizens, including much of private-sector employment, such as construction.

The government enforced applicable laws, with some exceptions, and procedures were generally not subject to lengthy delay or appeals. The government treated worker actions by citizens and noncitizens differently. While citizens and public sector union leaders and workers faced no government repercussions for their roles in union or strike activities, companies directly threatened noncitizen workers calling for strikes with termination and deportation.

In February 300 Bangladeshi workers staged a peaceful sit-in protest at their accommodation camp over unpaid salaries and alleged extortionary behavior by their employer in exchange for their residency visas. They claimed that their Bangladeshi supervisor was regularly charging them fees for taking annual leave or renewing residency documents. Labor officers from the Bangladesh Embassy confirmed the labor violations and worked with local authorities to provide for payment of salaries.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits and criminally sanctions forced or compulsory labor "except in cases specified by law for national emergency and with just remuneration." Although the law prohibits withholding of workers' passports, the practice remained common among sponsors and employers of foreign workers and the government demonstrated no consistent efforts to enforce this prohibition. Employers confined some domestic and agricultural workers to their workspaces by retaining their passport and, in the case of some domestic workers, locked in their work locations. Workers who fled abusive employers had difficulty retrieving their passports, and authorities deported them in almost all cases. The government usually limited punishment to assessing fines, shutting employment firms, issuing orders for employers to return withheld passports, or requiring employers to pay back wages. In October the government conducted raids on fake and inactive companies that resulted in the suspension of 843 commercially licensed companies with over 5,911 registered workers. These companies were founded only to sell visas to foreign workers; once the workers were registered to the fake companies, they would be unemployed or worked as marginal workers or trafficked.

Some incidents of forced labor and conditions indicative of forced labor occurred, especially among foreign domestic and agricultural workers. Such practices were usually a result of employer abuse of the sponsorship system (kafala) for noncitizen workers. Employers frequently illegally withheld salaries from domestic workers and minimum-wage laborers. According to various reports, North Korean laborers, estimated to number between 2,500 and 3,000, worked in forced labor conditions, averaging 15-hour days with no freedom of movement and living in squalid conditions. Former North Korean laborers and officials indicated that employers paid worker salaries to a North Korean government-owned company instead of directly to the individual workers. In 2016 the government halted all North Korean flights to Kuwait and ceased issuing new work visas for North Korean workers. In September the government reaffirmed its commitment to the international community and stopped renewing visas for existing workers.

Domestic servitude was the most common type of forced labor, principally involving foreign domestic workers employed under the sponsorship system, but reports of forced labor in the construction and sanitation sectors also existed. Forced labor conditions for migrant workers included nonpayment of wages, long working hours, deprivation of food, threats, physical and sexual abuse, and restrictions on movement, such as withholding passports or confinement to the workplace. As of October, employers filed 8,976 "absconding" reports against employees and domestic workers filed 323 complaints against their employers in accordance with the new domestic labor law. Numerous domestic workers who escaped from abusive employers reported waiting several months to regain passports, which employers illegally confiscated when they began their employment.

The Public Authority for Manpower operated a shelter for abused domestic workers. As of October, according to a government source, the shelter had a capacity of 500 victims and housed on average 350 at any one time. International and national organizations had relatively open access to workers residing in the shelter and reported adequate living conditions.

In 2016 the government began implementing the 2015 domestic worker labor law that requires employers to grant domestic workers a maximum 12-hour workday, with one day off per week and 30 days paid leave per year. The law also establishes a minimum wage of 60 dinars (\$198), end-of-service benefits—one month's wage for every year worked—and bans employing domestic workers below age 20 or more than 50 years of age. Parliament also voted in 2015 to establish a shareholding public-sector company for recruiting domestic workers. The company officially launched its services in September and initially planned to bring 120 domestic workers a month from the Philippines and about 100 male workers from India. The government-owned company is mandated to provide training for domestic workers and cut out middlemen to lower recruitment fees for employers. The target recruitment fee is between 120 and 280 dinars (\$396 and \$924) per worker, depending on experience and skillset. The government regularly conducted information awareness campaigns via media outlets and public events and otherwise informed employers to encourage compliance by the public and private recruiting companies with the new law.

There were numerous media reports throughout the year of sponsors abusing domestic workers or significantly injuring them while they tried to escape; some reports alleged abuse resulted in workers' deaths. Female domestic workers were particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse. Police and courts were reluctant to prosecute citizens for abuse in private residences but prosecuted serious cases of abuse when reported. According to a high-level government official, authorities prosecuted several cases of domestic worker abuse. In April a video of an Ethiopian domestic worker falling out of a 7th floor apartment window went viral. The videographer of the incident was the employer who stood watching and recording as the domestic worker pleaded for help and eventually lost her grip and fell several stories, surviving the fall but sustaining serious injuries. The employer was arrested for failing to help the worker.

Numerous media reports highlighted the problem of visa trading, where companies and recruitment agencies work together to "sell" visas to prospective workers. Often times the jobs and companies attached to these visas do not exist, and the workers are left to be exploited and find work in the black market to earn a living and pay back the

cost of the residency visa. Arrests of visa traffickers and illegal labor rings occurred almost weekly. Since workers cannot freely change jobs, they were sometimes willing to leave their initial job due to low wages or unacceptable working conditions and enter into an illegal residency status with the hope of improved working conditions at another job.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits child labor. The legal minimum age for employment is 18, although employers may obtain permits from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor to employ juveniles between 15 and 18 in some nonhazardous trades. Juveniles may work a maximum of six hours a day with no more than four consecutive hours followed by a one-hour rest period. Juveniles cannot work overtime or between 7 pm and 6 am. Although not extensive, there were credible reports that children of South Asian origin worked as domestic laborers. Some underage workers entered the country on travel documents with falsified birth dates. The government made efforts to enforce laws regulating child labor. Approximately 460 Public Authority for Manpower labor and occupational safety inspectors routinely monitored private firms for labor law compliance, including laws against child labor. Noncompliant employers faced fines or a forced suspension of their company operations. Nevertheless, the government did not consistently enforce child labor laws in the informal sector, such as in street vending.

d. Discrimination with Respect for Employment and Occupation

The law prohibits discrimination in employment based on race, sex, gender, and disability. The government immediately deports HIV-positive foreign workers, and there is no protection for workers based on sexual orientation. No laws prohibit labor discrimination based on language, non-HIV communicable diseases, or social status, but there were no reported cases of discrimination in these areas.

Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred with respect to both citizen and noncitizen women. Domestic workers were at particular risk of discrimination or abuse due to the isolated home environment in which they worked. Shiite continued to report government discrimination based on religion. For example, Shiite were represented in police force and military/security apparatus, although not in all branches and often not in leadership positions. Some Shiite continued to allege that a glass ceiling of discrimination prevented them from obtaining leadership positions in public-sector organizations, including the security services. In the private sector, Shiite were generally represented at all levels in proportion to their percentage of the population.

The law states that a woman should receive "remuneration equal to that of a man provided she does the same work," although it prohibits women from working in "dangerous industries" and in trades "harmful" to health. Educated women contended the conservative nature of society restricted career opportunities, although there were limited improvements. While 72 percent of college graduates from Kuwait University were women, they were underrepresented among the number of students sent to study internationally, likely due to societal concerns about permitting young women to study away from their families. According to government statistics submitted to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women meeting in Geneva in November, women represented 51 percent of the population but had a total female workforce participation rate of 56 percent.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The law sets the national minimum wage in the oil and private sector at 75 dinars (\$247) per month. The actual minimum wage for domestic workers was 60 dinars (\$198) per month. Most low-wage employees lived and worked in the country without their families, and employers generally provided at least some form of housing.

The law limits the standard workweek to 48 hours (40 hours for the petroleum industry), and gives private-sector workers 30 days of annual leave. The law also forbids requiring employees to work more than 60 hours per week or 10 hours per day. The law provides for 13 designated national holidays annually. Workers are entitled to 125 percent of base pay for working overtime and 150 percent of base pay for working on their designated weekly day off.

The government issued occupational health and safety standards that were current and appropriate for the main

industries. For example, the law provides that all outdoor work stop between 11 am and 4 pm during June, July, and August, or when the temperature rises to more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade. A worker could file a complaint against an employer with the Public Authority for Manpower if the worker believed his safety and health were at risk.

The law and regulations governing acceptable conditions of work do not apply to domestic workers. The Ministry of Interior has jurisdiction over domestic worker matters and enforces domestic labor working standards.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor is responsible for enforcement of wages, hours, overtime, and occupational safety and health regulations of nondomestic workers. Enforcement by the ministry was generally good, but there were gaps in enforcement with respect to unskilled foreign laborers. Several ministry officials cited inadequate numbers of inspectors as the main reason for their inability to enforce the laws to the best of their abilities.

Approximately 460 labor and occupational safety inspectors monitored private firms. The government periodically inspected enterprises to raise awareness among workers and employers and to assure that they abided by existing safety rules, controlled pollution in certain industries, trained workers to use machines, and reported violations.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor monitored work sites to inspect for compliance with rules banning summer work and recorded hundreds of violations during the year. Workers could also report these violations to their embassies, the KTUF, or the Labor Disputes Department. Noncompliant employers faced warnings, fines, or forced suspensions of company operations, but these were not sufficient to deter violators.

In the first 10 months of the year, the Labor Disputes Department received 10,821 complaints from workers of which 3,173 were referred to the courts; these complaints were either about contract issues, such as nonpayment of wages, or about difficulties transferring work visas to new companies. Most of the complaints were resolved in arbitration, with the remaining cases referred to the courts for resolution.

At times the Public Authority for Manpower intervened to resolve labor disputes between foreign workers and their employers. The authority's labor arbitration panel sometimes ruled in favor of foreign laborers who claimed violations of work contracts by their employers. The government was more effective in resolving unpaid salary disputes involving private sector laborers than those involving domestic workers. By October Minister of Social Affairs and Labor won 58 court cases against visa traders. According to officials the 350 court cases were filed by the ministry against visa traders.

Foreign workers were vulnerable to unacceptable conditions of work. Domestic workers and other unskilled foreign workers in the private sector frequently worked substantially in excess of 48 hours a week, with no day of rest.

Domestic workers had little recourse when employers violated their rights except to seek admittance to the domestic workers shelter where the government mediated between sponsors and workers either to assist the worker in finding an alternate sponsor or to assist in voluntary repatriation. There were no inspections of private residences, the workplace of the majority of the country's domestic workers. Reports indicated employers forced domestic workers to work overtime without additional compensation.

Some domestic workers did not have the ability to remove themselves from an unhealthy or unsafe situation without endangering their employment. There were reports of domestic workers' committing or attempting to commit suicide due to desperation over abuse, including sexual violence or poor working conditions. In 2016 the government implemented the domestic labor law that provides legal protections for domestic workers for the first time. The law established a formal grievance process and identified the Domestic Labor Department at the Ministry of Interior as the sole arbitration entity for domestic worker labor disputes. A worker not satisfied with the department's arbitration decision has the right to file a legal case via the labor court. As of October the department conducted 2,553 inspections of domestic worker recruiting agencies and closed 79 of them for failing to meet the requirements of the new law and shut 15 fake agencies.

Several embassies with large domestic worker populations in the country met with varying degrees of success in pressing the government to prosecute serious cases of domestic worker abuse. Severe cases included those where there were significant, life-threatening injuries.

Local

National Library of Kuwait marks World Intellectual Property Day

Copyright law remarkable achievement for Kuwaiti media: Director

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The National Library of Kuwait marked World Intellectual Property Day in collaboration with the United States' Embassy in Kuwait yesterday. The library's Director-General Kamel Al-Abduljaleel affirmed that the copyright law and related rights are a remarkable achievement for the Kuwaiti media and support the cultural, literary and artistic movement in the country.

During his opening speech, Abduljaleel affirmed the National Library's role in the intellectual property protection of literary and artistic works of all kinds and forms to reach the international standard. He pointed out that this will increase the civilized status of Kuwait in protecting the moral and financial rights and interests of authors and innovators, adding that this proves that Kuwait is committed before international organizations on intellectual property rights and international trade.

US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman explained the importance of protecting intellectual property to nations and individuals. "At the 2016 Global Informatics Forum in Kuwait, Sheikh Dr Meshaal Jaber Al-Sabah, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, noted that Kuwait enjoys a wealth of talented youth innovators that supports industries and innovation and creating sustainable societies. So the most important tool that Kuwait needs to motivate inno-

vators is intellectual property rights, or IPR, that provides innovators, artists and entrepreneurs with the protection they need to raise capital, build their businesses and bring their products and services to the marketplace," he said.

He noted that IPR encourages innovation and creativity worldwide, spurring economic growth, attracting investment, creating new jobs and enhancing the quality of life. "It should be our shared mission to increase confidence in IPR in Kuwait to ensure that intellectual property rights are reliable, predictable and enforceable. Kuwait recognizes the importance of IPR and is taking tangible steps to improve its system," he noted.

Silverman commended the close work between Kuwaiti customs officials and the US Customs and Border Protection's in-country advisory program aimed at enhancing the application of protection of intellectual property. "This includes the signing of a bilateral customs mutual assistance agreement in September 2017 committing to collaboration, information sharing and coordination in enforcement activities," he said. "Last week we operationalized this agreement: A US automobile company trained officials from Kuwait customs, police and investigators on how to identify counterfeit automotive parts."

Silverman thanked the ministry of information for broadcasting the event and helping the message reach a large audience. "I'm very glad to see the leadership of the Ministry of Information and the



KUWAIT: A general view of attendants at a function held at the National Library of Kuwait to mark the World Intellectual Property Day. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

National Library in improving Kuwait's copyright legislation and joining international copyright treaties. We look forward to the submission of amended legislation to parliament, and hopefully, the passage of the amendments. This would send a very valuable signal to domestic and foreign investors alike, encourage innovation and enhance Kuwait's prosperity. These changes will help Kuwaiti creators and software developers protect and market their works, especially in the digital space, and set Kuwait apart as a destination that nurtures creative content," he concluded.



National Library's Director-General Kamel Al-Abduljaleel



United States Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman

Abide by emergency lane rules: Interior

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Motorists are urged to abide by regulations for using emergency lanes flanking the highways, the Interior Ministry said yesterday. Motorists have been breaking traffic rules by over speeding on the shoulder road and the left lane, said Major General

Tawheedullah Al-Kandari, the ministry's acting director general for security information.

Drivers can use the special left route at a maximum speed of 45 km/h between 6 am and 10 pm in case of traffic congestion, the major general explained, warning that penalties include impounding the vehicle for two months. As to the right shoulder road, it is solely specialized for emergencies, he said. The traffic department registered up to 22,671 offenses of irregular driving on the two lanes in the first three months of 2018.

Startups in Kuwait

Intellectual property



By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

Today is World Intellectual Property Day! The definition of intellectual property (IP) is non-tangible property resulting from creativity - this could be anything from a piece of art to a poem, invention or a technology code. The day is celebrated around the world in order to create awareness and education regarding IP rights. Many people are confused with the legal terms - a popular confusion is copyright and IP right. The best way to describe them is that intellectual property is the umbrella under which other rights exist, such as copyright, patents and trademarks. Here are the definitions of each:

Trademark: Intellectual property that is used for commercial use, the most common being a company's logo.

Copyright: Intellectual property usually for literary or artistic work; for example you would copyright a drawing or a book you have written.

Patents: These are innovations or inventions in a certain industry. For example, if I was to invent the Internet today, I would be able to ask for a patent for it. A patent is a protection of this innovation.

Since this article is part of a series of articles dedicated towards startups, today I will be focusing on IP rights that might be of interest to startups and how they can be protected. Instead of doing my usual questions from readers and answers, I will list the most important IP rights for startups and where and how you can protect them.

Trademark:

Registering trademarks in Kuwait is under the Ministry of Commerce in KIPCO Tower - the process can take up to six months, as the logo that you want to trademark is printed in the official gazette. It is vital that you trademark your logo - keep in mind though that you would need a business license first.

A tip: Because it takes a long time to trademark a logo, I usually suggest clients that they copyright the work artistically at the Kuwait National Library - in this way you can use your logo and be protected.

Location: Ministry of Commerce at KIPCO Tower

Fee: KD 250 approximately

Source codes:

If you are a tech startup with a mobile application or another technology that has programing, you are probably thinking that you would want to copyright the source code. Although the Kuwaiti government does provide protection for source codes through the Kuwait National Library, I would not suggest that you do this. In order to have this protection, you would need to submit your entire source code - but the code itself will continue to change periodically. Also, the source code is usually private and not shared with your clients or users unlike your logo, therefore it is not easy for people to claim it. I think it is important that you focus on owning the actual site and mobile app, as well as the designs.

Location: Kuwait National Library

Fee: KD 10

Literary or artistic work

If you have written a pamphlet, worked on a presentation or have done a few drawings or made characters you are using in your design, you can copyright them at the Kuwait National Library. The process is very efficient and quick. They also offer some international services.

Location: Kuwait National Library

Fee: KD 10 per artwork

I hope you found the above article useful. Happy Intellectual Property Day to all business owners, artists and other creatives out there! If you have a concern, please email us at info@ftl-legal.com

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France, US clash with Iran over changing nuclear accord

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PARIS: Reporters Without Borders (RSF) general secretary Christophe Deloire speaks during a press conference to present the watchdog's World Press Freedom Index for 2018 yesterday. Press freedom around the world is under threat from a triple whammy of US President and Russia and China's bid to crush all dissent, says the report. —AFP

Press freedom around the world under threat

Turkey - the world's biggest jailer of journalists

PARIS: Press freedom around the world is under threat from a triple whammy of US President Donald Trump, Russia and China's bid to crush all dissent, a watchdog said yesterday. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) warned that a "climate of hatred and animosity" towards journalists combined with growing attempts to control the media pose a "threat to democracies". Its annual report said that reporters were the target of a growing wave of authoritarianism with leaders whipping up hostility against them. The group accused the world's three superpowers—the US, China and Russia of leading the charge against press freedom, with Trump regularly launching personal attacks on reporters and Beijing exporting its "media control model" to strangle dissent elsewhere in Asia. The slide towards "strongman" and populist politics in Europe, stoked by Moscow, was threatening freedoms in the region where they were once safest, it added, with Hungary, Slovakia and Poland setting off alarm bells.

Czech President Milos Zeman turned up at a press conference with a fake Kalashnikov inscribed with the words "for journalists" while Slovakia's former leader Robert Fico called journalists "filthy anti-Slovak prostitutes" and "idiotic hyenas". "The unleashing of hatred towards journalists is dangerous and a threat to democracy," RSF chief Christophe Deloire said. "Political leaders who fuel loathing for reporters... undermine the concept of public debate based on facts instead of propaganda.

To dispute the legitimacy of journalism today is to play with extremely dangerous political fire," he added.

China's 'oppressive' order

RSF said that hostility towards the media is "no longer confined to authoritarian countries such as Turkey and Egypt", but was poisoning the political atmosphere in some of the great democracies. "More and more democratically elected leaders no longer see the media as part of democracy's essential underpinning, but as an adversary to which they openly display their aversion," the report said, picking out Trump, India's Narendra Modi and Philippine leader Rodrigo Duterte for particular criticism.

The US president had referred to reporters as "enemies of the people", a term once used by Stalin, it said. RSF accused Vladimir Putin's Russia of "stifling independent voices at home...

and extending its propaganda network by means of media outlets such as RT (Russian Today) and Sputnik." It had even harsher words for Beijing, saying "Xi Jinping's China is getting closer and closer to a contemporary version of totalitarianism.

"Censorship and surveillance reached unprecedented levels thanks to the massive use of new technology" in his first term in office, the report said. Now the Chinese government "is trying to establish a 'new world media order' under its influence, by exporting its oppressive methods, information censorship system and Internet surveillance tools," it added. "Its unabashed desire to crush all pockets of public resistance unfortunately has imitators in Asia," the RSF

said, condemning Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen's "ruthless offensive" against the media. It said Beijing's influence and tactics were also being felt in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore.

Turkey falls further

Turkey-the world's biggest jailer of journalists-has fallen into the most repressive 25 countries in the world. The watchdog said that "media-phobia" there is now so pronounced that journalists are routinely accused of terrorism and "those who don't offer loyalty are arbitrarily imprisoned." North Korea remains the most repressive country on Earth closely followed by Eritrea, Turkmenistan, Syria and then China. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Vietnam, Sudan and Cuba also remain among the worst offenders, according to the RSF ranking of 180 countries. Malta tumbled 18 places to 65 after the assassination of investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia.

But not all the news was bad. Ecuador jumped 13 places after tensions eased between the government and privately-owned media, while Justin Trudeau's Canada entered the European-dominated top 20. Jamaica climbed to eighth overall, above Belgium and New Zealand, and Gambia jumped 21 places-the biggest rise in Africa-just ahead of Angola and Zimbabwe. The departure of the three African countries' "predatory presidents" was the main reason for their improved performance, the RSF said. As usual, Scandinavian countries topped the list with Norway deemed as having the world's freest press for the second year in a row. —AFP



Trump, Russia and China media attacks threaten democracy

Syria's rebels dig in for Daraa fight

DARAA: On a tense urban frontline in Syria's Daraa, rebel Atallah Qutayfan has been steadily reinforcing his defensive post for weeks in anticipation of a looming assault by government troops. The 25-year-old spends his days stacking sandbags to shore up his post overlooking a market in the southern city, and monitoring the amassing regime forces nearby. "Their reconnaissance planes are constantly above the city. There are daily clashes and they try to infiltrate our positions, but we've stopped them," says Qutayfan. "Our commanders told us to be ready for an attack by regime forces-and we're on high alert."

As loyalist forces mop up the last pockets of resistance around the capital, President Bashar al-Assad appears to already have set his sights on his next target: Daraa. The city is split between rebels, who hold the southern Old City, and regime forces who control the modern districts and government posts to the north. Opposition forces still hold more than two-thirds of the surrounding 3,730-square-kilometre province which borders Jordan. Seizing the border area could bring the regime both military and economic security, analysts have said.

And a victory in Daraa city would carry symbolic weight-it was the cradle of Syria's seven-year uprising against Assad's rule. The resurgent regime just this month dealt rebels their biggest blow yet by recapturing Eastern Ghouta, the former opposition stronghold outside Damascus. That freed up troops who had spent years bombing the Ghouta front.

Mass mobilization

"After Ghouta, the regime escalated its bombing against us with surface-to-surface missiles, machine-gun fire, mortars, tanks, and heavy artillery," says rebel fighter Fahed Abu Hatem. In response, Abu Hatem says, his forces reinforced their positions, dug trenches and erected fresh barricades. Gritting his teeth, rebel field commander Ibrahim Musalima, 27, insists the extra



DARAA: A general view shows a destroyed street in a rebel-held area in the southern Syrian city of Daraa. After the capture of Eastern Ghouta the Syrian president now has forces ready to redeploy elsewhere in the war-ravaged country. —AFP

measures are necessary. "It's not fear, it's readiness," says Musalima. "We're setting up lines of defense and attack, and upping our coordination with the Quneitra rebels to the west, all the way to the border with Suweida to the east."

Quneitra is the province directly to Daraa's west, and Suweida neighbors it to the east. Sections of the three provinces make up a "de-escalation zone" agreed in May 2017 by rebel backer Turkey and regime allies Russia and Iran. The US and Jordan have also backed the zone, announcing alongside Russia in July that a cessation of hostilities would begin in the southern sliver.

Despite the steadily increasing violence, Musalima says the south's rebel factions had been "advised" by their foreign backers not to provoke the regime or its loyalist militias, and to preserve the de-escalation zone. The subtle warning belies the region's importance to rival actors in Syria's complex war. Assad is keen to recapture the strategic Nasib crossing with Jordan, which the regime lost to rebels in 2015 but whose recapture could generate desperately needed income from cross-border trade. Meanwhile, the presence of Iran-backed militias in southern Syria, including Lebanon's Hezbollah, has irked neighboring Israel. —AFP

In Lebanon vote, candidates shell out for coverage

BEIRUT: Six thousand dollars can buy a minute of air time, but a talk show episode can cost \$240,000. In Lebanon, media outlets are charging parliamentary candidates exorbitant prices for coverage. Whether beamed into living rooms on television screens or heard over the radio, legislative hopefuls are keen to get their messages out to their constituents before the May 6 election. The long-awaited vote is the first since 2009, and marks the end of a years-long political stalemate that had paralyzed Lebanon's government institutions.

The deadlock had also left news organizations across Lebanon starving for both content and funds. Most of their financial backers are politically affiliated and have found little use for their media arms in a time of muted political rivalry. But now that elections are on, the competition, the news cycle, and the money are flowing again. In addition to paid campaign ads, private outlets are also charging candidates for one-on-one interviews and appearances on talk shows. "Election season has prompted Lebanese media outlets to offer packages that can reach up to \$1.5 million per electoral list," says Roula Mikhael, who heads Maharat, a civil society group monitoring Lebanon's upcoming vote.

The price lists are only recited verbally, to avoid being traced, but Maharat received a detailed breakdown from some campaigners. "A month and a half ago, a minute on a morning television programme could cost you \$1,000. But the prices go up steadily as the elections get closer," says Mikhael. Now, a minute of air time on some privately owned television channels will rack up a \$6,000 bill. Radio stations charge \$3,000 for a 15-minute interview. And channels perceived as independent can charge more than those with clear political affiliations.

No air time

In a first, Lebanon's new electoral law has set a spending limit on campaigns and established an electoral commission to monitor media appearances. Paying for coverage is not illegal, according to the law, but channels are required by the commission to identify sponsored media appearances and specify who paid for them. Its chief, former judge Nadim Abdulmalak said the amounts cited by Maharat were higher than those reported to the commission. But he did admit outlets were violating other parts of the legislation. "Media organizations are not abiding by the law. They are not identifying paid advertisements or saying who placed the ad," says Abdulmalak. "They are also, more generally, not fulfilling the requirement of presenting a weekly report to the commission of what ads they broadcast," he says. The commission has struggled since its delayed inception to properly flag any violations.

Its only member to have come from outside the political elite resigned on April 20, blaming a shortage of resources that left the body "unable to monitor media, campaign ads, or spending." At its headquarters, 25 employees are silently scrutinizing a mix of media. One unfurls a newspaper and squints her eyes at the text. Another is glued to a laptop screen, jotting down how long candidates appear on air. "As monitors, we've noticed that media outlets host some guests more than others based on their political affiliation," says commission member Manal Ezzedine, 34. "There are some candidates that you've never heard of or seen, because they don't have media coverage."

A total of 597 candidates are running for parliamentary office, including many newcomers who have rallied against rampant corruption and clientelism in Lebanon. Those first-time candidates say they struggle to get coverage because it's too expensive. "Who can pay \$20,000 these days for half an hour on air, besides the traditional parties that we've known for years?" says Laury Haytayan, a candidate running in Beirut on the Kulluna Watani list. "Elections can't be for the wealthy only," she says. Maharat's Mikhael said the prices asked by Lebanese media outlets risked turning the elections into a race among the rich. —AFP

International

In power for 15 years, Iraq Shiites split ahead of vote

Urban young voters crave change, secular government

BASRA: United in their fight against Saddam Hussein's oppression for decades, Iraq's Shiites have become deeply fragmented and disillusioned with their leaders after 15 years in power. In Iraq's Shiite heartlands, many who once voted blindly along sectarian lines are now turning their ire against the Shiite-led governments they say have failed to repair crumbling infrastructure, provide jobs or end the violence. The divisions within the community now risk splitting the Shiite vote in a May 12 election, which could complicate and delay the formation of a government, threaten gains against Islamic State and let Iran meddle further in Iraq's politics.

In the oil-rich southern province of Basra, 81-year-old retired teacher Mowafaq Abdul Ghani is disappointed with the performance of the Shiite leaders since Saddam fell in 2003. "I've been waiting for Saddam to fall since the 1970s. I've been waiting for you! Why would you do this to us?" he said. "Look around. The streets are filthy, there are flies everywhere, pot holes at every step. Twenty years ago Basra was terrible but it was better than this," Abdul Ghani said. In the holy city of Najaf, home to Imam Ali's shrine and Iraq's most revered Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, there was a similar feeling of disillusionment.

Iraqi Shiite majority fragmented, angry with political leaders

At midnight on April 13 when official campaigning began, hordes of party activists plastered campaign posters on every visible surface, in some cases covering pictures honoring those who died fighting Islamic State.

"They took down the martyrs and replaced them with thieves," said unemployed 29-year-old Abbas Saad. Even Sistani seems unhappy with the performance of the politicians, issuing a fatwa recently implicitly calling on Shiites to vote for new blood. "The tried should not be tried," said the fatwa from Sistani, whose decrees are sacrosanct to millions.

New generation

Under the informal power-sharing arrangement in place since Saddam's fall, the prime minister has always come from the Shiite majority with a Kurdish president and a Sunni speaker. In the past, while no party has won enough seats to govern alone, there has typically been one Shiite leader with enough support to shape a ruling coalition government. This time there are three Shiite frontrunners: incumbent Haider Al-Abadi who has promoted a more inclusive government, his overtly sectarian predecessor Nuri Al-Maliki who failed to inspire unity and Hadi Al-



BASRA: Iraqi supporters of Hadi Al-Ameri, head of the Badr organization and leader of the mostly Shiite Hashed Al-Shaabi paramilitary units, attend a campaign gathering in the city of Basra. —AFP

Amiri, a military commander close to Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards seen as a war hero by many.

If no clear winner emerges, Iran could have more of a chance to act as a broker between the Shiite parties and influence who becomes prime minister, while Islamic State could capitalize on any power vacuum and exploit Sunni

feelings of marginalization. At a party for university graduates in Najaf, dozens of young people danced under a glittering disco ball and listened to poetry in a packed hall. At the event sponsored by Adnan Al-Zurfi, a former governor running on Abadi's Victory Alliance list, the talk was of inclusiveness. —Reuters

What proposed Iran 'new deal' might look like

WASHINGTON: French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday proposed a "new deal" to address President Donald Trump's many concerns about the existing nuclear pact with Iran. Here is a look at what may be in the works, and the challenges a new deal could entail.

Macron's proposal

In a press conference at the White House, Macron said the 2015 Iran nuclear deal did not go far enough, while crediting it for allowing the international community "some control" over Iran's nuclear activities. Other areas still need addressing, he said, namely: Iran's nuclear activities after 2025 when so-called sunset clauses in the current deal kick in; Iran's ballistic missile activities; and a political means to limit Iran's activities in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon.

Iran is a key ally of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, supports Hezbollah militias in Lebanon and backs Yemen's Houthi rebels, who are locked in a war with a Saudi-led coalition. "It's not about tearing apart an agreement and having nothing, but it's about building something new that will cover all of our concerns," Macron said. The French president said France and its allies want "sustainable stability," following months of Trump anger at the original Iran deal and threats to back out of it.

"I believe that the discussions we've had together make it possible to ... pave the way for a new agreement, an agreement on which we will work, and beyond our European partners, we would like to involve the regional powers, and of course, Russia and Turkey," he said. Macron indicated his suggestion was for a separate accord that would run alongside the current deal. "I'm not saying that we move from one agreement to another," he said. The proposal appears to repack-age a solution previously floated by the Europeans to meet Trump's demands, by taking a tougher line on Iranian missile activity and Tehran's regional influence, but without ripping up the existing nuclear deal.

What's at stake

With a hollowed-out State Department, even a transatlantic deal could prove an epic undertaking for the Trump administration, and Iran has already signaled that any talk of curbing its missile program is off limits. Further, Trump has shown little appetite for international deal-making. The existing nuclear deal was struck in 2015 after 21 months of grueling diplomacy. In return for the lifting of punishing international sanctions, Iran froze its nuclear program, ending a 12-year standoff with the West, which worried it was developing a nuclear bomb. Britain, China, France, Russia, the United States and Germany signed off on the deal that, among other things, requires Iran to slash the amount of uranium it can enrich.

Trump's view

Trump has continually lambasted the accord signed by his predecessor Barack Obama, calling it at one point the "worst deal ever." On Tuesday, he described it as "insane," and in October he refused to certify that Iran was respecting its commitments on the pact-though he stopped short of walking away altogether. At least on first blush, the US leader appeared receptive to trying to reach some sort of grand bargain. "I think we will have a great shot at doing a much bigger, maybe, deal," said Trump, stressing that any new accord would have to be built on "solid foundations." "They should have made a deal that covered Yemen, that covered Syria, that covered other parts of the Middle East," said Trump. The next decision deadline for Trump on the Iran deal is May 12. "We're going to see what happens," he said. —AFP

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International

France and US clash with Iran over changing nuclear accord

Iran President rejects any new nuclear deal

WASHINGTON: The leaders of the United States and France call for a new deal curbing Tehran's nuclear program, but Iranian President Hassan Rouhani swiftly rejected their demands and the EU insisted the current agreement must stay. The appeal from two of the signatories to the landmark 2015 accord came as French President Emmanuel Macron was on a state visit, received with much pomp by US President Donald Trump.

Trump Tuesday laid transatlantic divisions bare, pillorying a three-year old agreement designed to curb Iran's nuclear program. The US leader described it as "insane" and "ridiculous," despite European pleas for him not to walk away. Instead, Trump eyed a broader "deal" that would also limit Iran's ballistic missile program and support for militant groups across the Middle East. Macron said the agreement should impose tougher terms on Iran including a settlement in Syria, where it backs President Bashar Al Assad.

Macron was to address a joint session of the US Congress yesterday, with more freedom to speak his mind on world issues after his talks with Trump. Iran's President Hassan Rouhani yesterday questioned the legitimacy of these demands for a fresh nuclear agreement with Tehran. "Together with a leader of a European country they say: 'We want to decide on an agreement reached by seven parties'. What for? With what right?" Rouhani said in a speech. EU diplomatic chief Federica Mogherini insisted yesterday that the current Iran nuclear deal was working and "needs to be preserved".

"On what can happen in the future we'll see in the future, but there is one deal existing, it's working, it needs to be preserved," the former Italian foreign minister said as she arrived for a donor conference on Syria in Brussels. In Moscow, the Kremlin said there can be 'no alternative' to the current deal with Iran. "We believe that no alternative exists

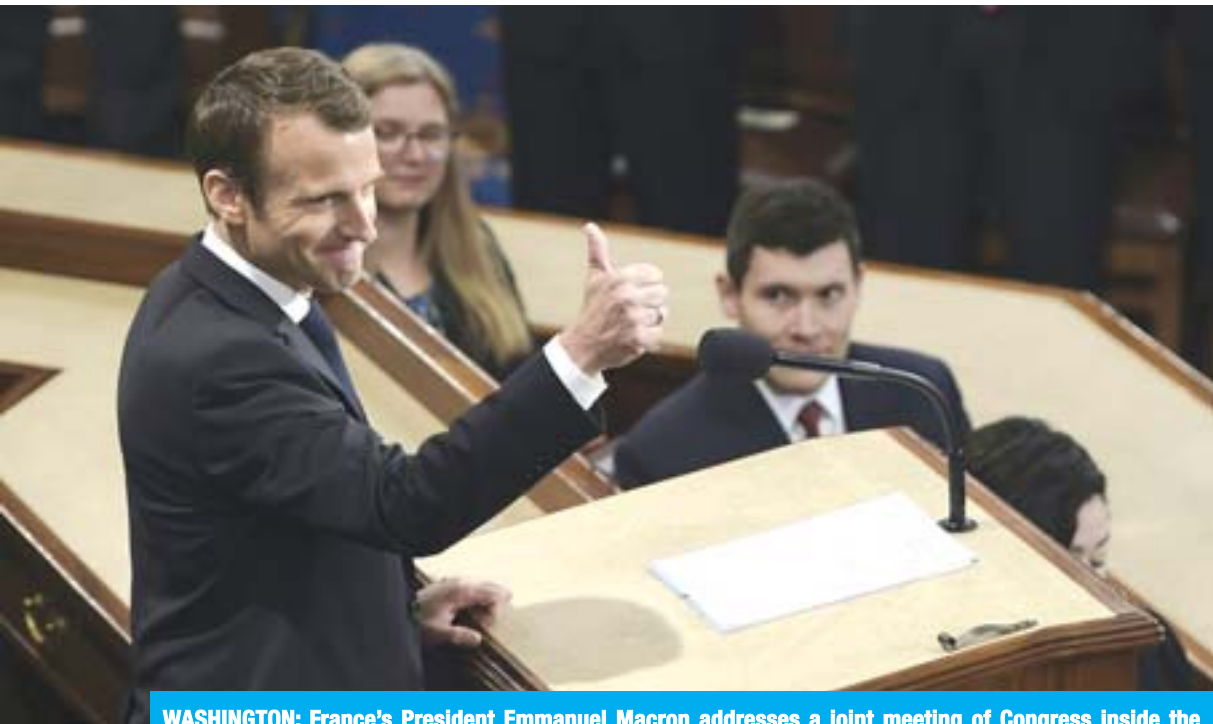
so far," President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, adding that Iran's position on the subject was paramount. Trump said earlier that "they should have made a deal that covered Yemen, that covered Syria. No matter where you go in the Middle East, you see the fingerprints of Iran behind problems."

EU powers try to save nuke pact

Looming decision

Macron said after meeting Trump that he did not know whether the US president would walk away from the nuclear deal when a May 12 decision deadline comes up. Putting on a brave face, he said he wished "for now to work on a new deal with Iran" of which the nuclear accord could be one part. Speaking to US lawmakers yesterday in English, Macron will address what he thinks are historically warm Franco-US ties now challenged by differences over economic inequality, climate change, how to tackle terrorism, threats to democracy and the rise of nationalism, according to sources in Macron's entourage.

Macron, completing a three-day state visit, was also scheduled to visit the Library of Congress and be received by House of Representatives speaker Paul Ryan. On Tuesday neither Trump nor Macron indicated whether Iran would get



WASHINGTON: France's President Emmanuel Macron addresses a joint meeting of Congress inside the House chamber at the US Capitol in Washington, DC.—AFP

something in return for concessions on its ballistic programs, activities in the Middle East or extending nuclear controls beyond 2025. Trump-true to his background in reality TV - teased his looming decision. "This is a deal with decayed foundations. It's a bad deal, it's a bad structure. It's falling down," the US leader said. "We're going to see what happens

on the 12th." Trump's European allies have repeatedly tried to persuade him not to abandon the 2015 deal, which gave Iran massive sanctions relief and the guarantee of a civilian nuclear program in return for limiting enrichment that could produce weapons grade fuel. German Chancellor Angela Merkel will renew those calls when she visits Washington on Friday.—AFP

News in brief

Man sets woman alight

LIMA: Ten people were treated for burns after a man doused a woman with gasoline and set her alight inside a public bus in the Peruvian capital Lima, firefighters said. Witnesses to the incident late Tuesday said the man approached the woman aboard the bus, spoke to her briefly, doused her with fuel and set her on fire. The attack caused panic aboard the bus in the capital's Miraflores district, as passengers stumbled out the doors or threw themselves through the bus windows, witnesses told Peru21 newspaper. The driver used a fire extinguisher to save the victim. The attacker escaped in the confusion.—AFP

3 troops, 30 jihadists killed

CAIRO: Three soldiers and 30 jihadists have been killed in the past week in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula where the military is battling the Islamic State group, the army said yesterday. Around 200 jihadists and at least 33 government troops have now been killed since the launch of a major offensive against the jihadists on February 9 dubbed "Sinai 2018," according to official figures. They include Nasser Abu Zaqul, "the central Sinai commander of the terrorist group," according to the army which announced his death last week. More than 170 suspected jihadists have been arrested.—AFP

Suspected 'honor killing'

LAHORE: Pakistani police exhumed the body of an Italian woman of Pakistani descent yesterday to investigate suspicion her family killed her in the name of so-called honor after she refused to marry a man of their choosing. Sana Cheema, 25, who lived in Brescia, Italy, was visiting relatives in Pakistan this month when her family says she died after suffering from "chronic ulcer and hypotension", said police official Asad Gujjar. Social media activists in Pakistan highlighted the case this week, citing Italian media reports that Cheema might have been killed by her family after she refused to marry the man they wanted her to. "Police have taken samples from her stomach and sent them for forensic examination," Gujjar said.—AFP

Danish inventor jailed

COPENHAGEN: A Copenhagen court yesterday found Danish inventor Peter Madsen guilty of the premeditated murder and sexual assault of Swedish journalist Kim Wall on his homemade submarine last year, handing him a life sentence. Madsen, 47, had admitted chopping up the 30-year-old's body and throwing her remains overboard in waters off Copenhagen on the night of August 10, 2017, but claimed her death was accidental. "He committed a cynical, planned murder, of a particularly brutal nature," the judge said as she read out the verdict, adding that Madsen "dismembered the body in order to hide the evidence of murder." A life sentence in Denmark averages around 16 years. Wearing a black T-shirt and blazer, Madsen stood in the courtroom to hear the ruling.—AFP

Scandal-plagued leader quits

MADRID: Madrid's conservative regional president, Cristina Cifuentes, announced her resignation yesterday in the wake of a scandal about a masters degree she is suspected of obtaining fraudulently. "All of my actions, my whole life has been called into question," 54-year-old Cifuentes said, claiming she was the victim of a lynch mob. Cifuentes has been caught in a media storm over accusations she got the 2011-2012 law diploma from Madrid's King Juan Carlos University (URJC) without taking all the required exams and rarely attending lectures. She also hit the headlines more recently for allegedly shoplifting in a supermarket. Announcing her resignation, Cifuentes, who has been president of the Madrid region for three years, said that she had taken the decision "to take a step back a few days ago" in order to stop the left from wresting power in the region.—AFP

Germans rally with the Jews against new wave of anti-Semitism

BERLIN: Germans staged shows of solidarity with Jews yesterday after a spate of shocking anti-Semitic incidents, raising pointed questions about Berlin's ability to protect its burgeoning Jewish community seven decades after the Holocaust. One day after the head of Germany's Central Council of Jews, Josef Schuster, warned against wearing religious symbols on city streets for fear of attack, rallies were being held in several cities denouncing hate crimes. "We must never allow anti-Semitism to become commonplace in Germany again," Foreign Minister Heiko Maas told the daily Tagesspiegel ahead of a "Berlin Wears Kippa" event where Jews and non-Jews will wear the traditional skullcap in a shared show of defiance.

Every attack on Jewish life "is an attack on us all", Maas added. Demonstrations in support of Jews were also planned in the cities of Cologne, Potsdam, Magdeburg and Erfurt. The rallies come a week after a 19-year-old Syrian refugee attacked two young men wearing kippas in a trendy district of the capital, shouting "yahudi" Jew in Arabic-and lashing out at his victim with a belt.

A video of the assault, filmed by one of the Israeli victims, went viral on social media and sparked widespread revulsion. The issue of anti-Semitism is particularly fraught in Germany, which has gone to great lengths to atone for its Nazi past and whose political class takes deep pride in the growth of the now 200,000-strong Jewish community. However, a number of high-profile incidents in recent months have stoked fears of a possible resurgence of anti-Semitism from both the far-right and a large influx of predominantly Muslim asylum-seekers since 2015.

Attack on 'remembrance culture'

In March, the Central Council of Jews urged schools to keep track of religious bullying following reports that a young Jewish girl was harassed by Muslim fellow pupils at a Berlin primary school and allegedly received death threats after she said she didn't believe in Allah. Earlier this month,



ERFURT: A participant of the 'Thuringia wears Kippa' rally wears a kippa in Erfurt, central Germany yesterday. Germans stage shows of solidarity with Jews after a spate of shocking anti-Semitic assaults, raising pointed questions about Berlin's ability to protect its burgeoning Jewish community seven decades after the Holocaust.—AFP

two rappers raised hackles by winning a music prize after selling more than 200,000 copies of their album which features a lyric boasting that their bodies are "more defined than Auschwitz prisoners".

The far-right Alternative for Germany party, which captured nearly 13 percent of the vote in September's general election, has also not shied away from questioning Germany's cherished "remembrance culture". Party member Bjoern Hoecke last year called Berlin's Holocaust memorial a "monument of shame" and said Germany should take a "180-degree" turn away from its guilt over World War II crimes.

Chancellor Angela Merkel on Sunday denounced the emergence of "another form of anti-Semitism", beyond that of right-wing extremist groups, from Muslim refugees, in an interview with Israeli television. She reaffirmed that the security of Jews and of the state of Israel was a central concern for Germany because of its "eternal responsibility" for the Holocaust in which the Nazis murdered six million European Jews. However, Schuster of the Central Council appeared to question that assurance Tuesday with a stark warning that Jews who wear the kippa or the Star of David could be courting danger on German streets.

Anti-Semites' vision

The remarks sparked outrage, with the Nazi-hunting Simon Wiesenthal Center accusing German authorities of failing to take effective action against violent hate crimes. "When the respected head of German Jewry feels it necessary to urge Jews to hide their identities in public, it is clear that German authorities have failed to protect the rights of their Jewish citizens and are failing to counter growing anti-Semitism," Rabbi Abraham Cooper of the Los Angeles-based association said.

The head of the European Jewish Association, Rabbi Menachem Margolin, criticized Schuster, saying he was "mistaken in the cure for the serious problem". "Not wearing a skullcap due to fear of anti-Semitism is in fact the fulfillment of the vision of anti-Semites in Europe," he said. The International Auschwitz Committee, founded by survivors of the Nazi death camp, welcomed Wednesday's kippa demonstrations but said they must be part of a broader effort by German officials, teachers and average citizens. "That would make this day an important first step—a break with the past," its vice president Christoph Heubner said.—AFP

Armenia crisis deepens as thousands protest

YEREVAN: Armenia's crisis deepened yesterday as tens of thousands of people took to the streets after the opposition accused the government of refusing to negotiate a transfer of power following the resignation of veteran leader Serzh Sarkisian. Authorities beefed up security in the capital Yerevan, cordoning off buildings housing the government and the ruling Republican party, and deploying hundreds of police and several armored personnel carriers.

Protesters shouted, clapped, whistled, beat drums and tooted car horns in demonstrations that underscored the political turmoil gripping the impoverished former Soviet republic. Led by 42-year-old Nikol Pashinyan, thousands of demonstrators marched through Yerevan against the Republican Party's unwillingness to facilitate the transfer of power after former president Sarkisian stood down Monday from his new post of prime minister.

Pashinyan sported his trademark khaki-colored T-shirt and clutched a megaphone as protesters chanted "Nikol for prime minister" and "We are the masters of our country". Demonstrators warned of possible clashes with the authorities if a solution to the crisis was not found quickly. "There is a danger that riots, clashes could start if the Republicans do not leave in a calm manner," 40-year-old lawyer Ruzanna Vartanyan said. Stepan Grigoryan, a political analyst who joined the rallies, said it was a do-or-die situation, describing the current system as "criminal." "The head has been chopped off," he said, referring to Sarkisian's resignation Monday, "but the body—the Republican Party—remains and it needs to be removed."

Russia watching closely

Russia—which has a military base in Armenia—said yesterday it was watching the situation "very closely" but reiterated that it would not interfere. "We believe this to



YEREVAN: Armenian opposition supporters take part in a rally in Yerevan yesterday.—AFP

be Armenia's internal affair," President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. In a surprise move, Sarkisian, who served as president for a decade, stood down as prime minister just a week after being elected by parliament, following days of protests by demonstrators who accused him of a blatant power grab. Pashinyan, leader of the Civil Contract Party, had been due to hold talks with acting government head Karen Karapetyan to discuss a "peaceful" power transfer.

But the negotiations were cancelled late Tuesday. Pashinyan accused the authorities of wanting to nominate a Republican Party candidate for prime minister, warning that the opposition would boycott snap parliamentary elections in that case. "I want to tell Karen Karapetyan: I want you to understand that we will of course not allow

you to implement such steps and the sooner you understand this the better it will be for everyone," he said.

Pashinyan has insisted the new premier must be a "people's candidate" and not a member of Sarkisian's party, and told reporters he was himself willing to lead. Most political parties sided with the protest movement, and Edmon Marukyan of the Bright Armenia party, said the Yelk opposition bloc would nominate Pashinyan for prime minister. But he said the opposition supporters were currently 13 votes short of a majority. A candidate would need 53 votes to get elected. Karapetyan, who has accused Pashinyan of promoting his own agenda, proposed holding a snap election so voters themselves could decide on the new leader under a parliamentary system of government.—AFP

Israeli ex-policeman jailed for nine months for killing Palestinian teen

Body of assassinated Palestinian given emotional send-off

JERUSALEM: An Israeli former paramilitary policeman was jailed for nine months yesterday for killing a teenage Palestinian protester in 2014, prompting protests from the youngster's family who demanded a tougher sentence. In a plea bargain, defendant Ben Deri had earlier confessed to the negligent manslaughter and aggravated injury of 17-year-old Nadim Nuwara - less serious than the full manslaughter charge he originally faced.

“This is not how justice is done,” Nuwara’s father Issam told Reuters after the sentencing. “I never expected the Israeli court to do justice for my martyred son, but I had to do all I can to present a solid case and to expose the Israeli judicial system before the world and I did.” Prosecutors had originally filed full manslaughter charges against Deri, accusing him of deliberately switching his rubber bullets for the live round that killed Nuwara at Beitunia village in the occupied West Bank. The amended indictment, agreed to by Deri and approved by Jerusalem District Court, described the switch as accidental.

Negligent manslaughter carries a maximum three-year jail term in Israel. Manslaughter, by contrast, carries a maximum 20-year sentence as that charge can apply to deliberate killings where there is no clear evidence of premeditation. The court handed Deri a nine-month jail term, an additional six-month suspended sentence, and ordered Deri to pay 50,000 shekels (\$14,000) in damages to Nuwara's family. Deri was convicted of **aggravate injury** after the court determined that he had aimed what he thought was a rubber bullet at Nuwara's chest at Beitunia on May 15, 2014.

A second teenage protester was killed in the Beitunia incident but Israel did not pursue charges in that case, citing lack of evidence as an autopsy was not carried out. The court statement yesterday said the shooting took place after the stone-throwing by the protesters had ceased. "Contrary to regulations, and despite the fact that the deceased posed no threat to the (Israeli) unit, the defendant aimed his weapon at the torso of the deceased and fired at the deceased with the intent of injuring him."

The deaths stoked Palestinian fury at Israel in the weeks after US-sponsored peace talks collapsed in April. An Israeli

soldier, Elor Azaria, is due to be released from prison next month after serving two-thirds of an 14-month sentence for manslaughter over his killing of a wounded and incapacitated Palestinian assailant in the West Bank in 2016. Azaria was originally sentenced to 18 months in jail, a term the Palestinian government condemned as a “green light” to kill with impunity. Israel’s armed forces chief cut that sentence by four months and it was later shortened by a third for good behavior.

Emotional send-off

In another development, the body of an assassinated Palestinian scientist was yesterday driven through the Malaysian capital accompanied by a crowd shouting "God is greatest", as mourners accused Israel of killing him. Fadi Mohammad Al-Batsh's corpse was set to be flown to Egypt later in the day before being transported on to Gaza for burial. Batsh, a member of Islamist militant group Hamas and said to be a rocket-making expert, was murdered in a hail of bullets by motorbike-riding attackers Saturday as he walked to a Kuala Lumpur mosque for dawn prayers. Family and friends of the 35-year-old have accused Israel's Mossad spy agency of carrying out the killing but the Jewish state has denied the claims.

Hundreds of mourners marched through the capital under Palestinian flags accompanying a van holding the body, as they carried placards showing the victim's face. The remains were taken to a mosque, where prayers for the dead were performed before about 500 mourners. "Every Palestinian who has heard of this assassination is saddened and shocked," said Muslim Imran, chairman of the Palestinian Cultural Organization of Malaysia. "This crime, I believe, is another reflection of the nature of the Israeli occupation. They carry out crimes, massacres, not only in Palestine but also in the rest of the world."

Malik Taibi, an Algerian student who was Batsh's neighbor, added the victim was a "very kind man". "We hope that the ones that killed him are caught by the Malaysian government." Earlier yesterday police said they believed the two suspects accused of carrying out the hit were still in the country, and released a photograph of one of them. The men were believed



KUALA LUMPUR: Friends of the late Palestinian professor Fadi Mohammad Al-Batsh carry his coffin out of a mosque after special prayers in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Fadi Mohammad Al-Batsh, 35, was struck down in a hail of bullets by motorbike-riding attackers on April 21 as he walked to a mosque for dawn prayers. —AFP

to have entered Malaysia in January but their nationalities were still not known, police said. The motorbike they were allegedly riding was found abandoned Tuesday not far from where the assassination took place, and police were able to trace the photo.

It showed a man with wavy black hair, glasses and a goatee beard. Police previously released two computer-generated images of the suspects, showing two light-skinned men with

beards. Mossad is believed to have assassinated Palestinian militants and scientists in the past, but rarely confirms such operations. Batsh's expertise in making weapons could have made him a target—militants in Hamas-ruled Gaza regularly fire rockets at southern Israel, usually without causing casualties. But Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman has denied claims of the state's involvement, suggesting instead that it was a "settling of accounts" between factions of a terror group. —Agencies

Seven decades of danger and detente between two Koreas

SEOUL: North and South Korea will hold their third summit tomorrow, stirring hopes of peace following years of tensions over the North's nuclear and missile tests. The North's leader Kim Jong Un will meet the South's President Moon Jae-in on the southern side of the border truce village of Panmunjom, ahead of a summit with US President Donald Trump expected in the coming weeks. Tomorrow's meeting comes after tensions soared last year as the North made rapid progress on its banned nuclear weapons programs, while Trump engaged in an increasingly bellicose verbal scrap with Pyongyang's leader. North and South previously held summits in Pyongyang in 2000 and 2007. Here are some key moments in the decades-long standoff between the two Koreas:

War but no peace

The US and Soviet Union agreed to divide the Korea between them in the days after Japan's surrender ended the Second World War and its rule over the peninsula. In June 1950 the Communist North invaded the capitalist South, sparking a brutal war that killed millions of people. Beijing backed Pyongyang in the three-year conflict, while Washington threw its support behind the South-alliances that have largely endured. The two sides fought each other to a stalemate and hostilities ceased in 1953 with an armistice rather than a formal peace treaty, leaving them technically still at war.

Sending in the assassins

Pyongyang has tested the ceasefire with numerous attacks. It sent 31 commandos to

Seoul in a botched attempt to assassinate then-President Park Chung-Hee in 1968. All but two were killed. In the “axe murder incident” of 1976, North Korean soldiers attacked a work party trying to chop down a tree inside the Demilitarized Zone, leaving two US army officers dead. Pyongyang launched perhaps its most audacious assassination attempt in Myanmar in 1983, killing 21 people in a bomb blast in a Yangon mausoleum, but visiting South Korean general-turned-president Chun Doo-hwan survived.

In 1987 a bomb on a Korean Air flight exploded over the Andaman Sea, killing all 115 people on board. Seoul accused Pyongyang, which denied involvement. The North's founder Kim Il Sung died in 1994, but under his son Kim Jong Il it continued to prod its southern neighbor. In 1996 a North Korean submarine on a spying mission ran aground off the eastern South Korean port of Gangneung, sparking a 45-day manhunt that ended with 24 crew members and infiltrators killed. A clash between South and North Korean naval ships in 1999 left some 50 Northern soldiers dead.

Rays of hope

The South's first liberal president for decades, Kim Dae-jung, instituted a "Sunshine Policy" of engaging with the North, and went to Pyongyang in 2000 for the first inter-Korean summit since the Korean War, earning himself the Nobel peace prize. Inter-Korean projects followed, including the Kaesong industrial park, where South Korean firms employed North Korean workers, and hundreds of thousands of Southern tourists visited the North's scenic Mount Kumgang. —AFP

Chavez's legacy as his successor Nicolas Maduro seeks re-election in a May 20 presidential vote. In Socopo, in the agricultural savannah state of Barinas that was once home to Chavez, half of the 20 public schools, including Orlando Garcia, closed completely in February, mid-term.

They have since reopened, but, along with the rest of Barinas' approximately 1,600 public schools, they are operating just three days a week. Venezuela's economic implosion has led to millions suffering food shortages, unable to buy basic goods. Prices double every two or three months and the currency is worth less every day. Education experts fear a stunted generation. "Hungry people aren't able to teach or learn," said Victor Venegas, president of the Barinas chapter of the national Federation of Education Workers. "We're going to end up with a nation of illiterates."

A major bonus for school children was once free food but state food programs are now intermittent, and when lunches do come, they are often small and missing protein. The problems are felt across the country, with children often falling unwell or dizzy due to poor nutrition. —Reuters

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Impossible dream? Unification less of a priority as Korea leaders begin talks

Is unification of North and South Korea the solution or the problem? The recent detente between North and South Korea has given new life to talk of unification for the two countries divided since the 1950s. It's a term that conjures up visions of the Berlin Wall falling, families reunited and armies disbanded. Both Koreas have repeatedly called for peaceful unification and marched together under a unity flag at the recent Winter Olympics. And when a group of K-pop stars visited the North recently, they held hands with Northerners and sang, "Our wish is unification."

But on a peninsula locked in conflict for 70 years, unification is a concept that has become increasingly convoluted and viewed as unrealistic, at least in the South, amid an ever-widening gulf between the two nations, analysts and officials say. The South has become a major economic power with a hyper-wired society and vibrant democracy; the North is an impoverished, isolated country locked under the Kim family dynasty with few personal freedoms.

Unlike East and West Germany, which were reunited in 1990, the Korean division is based on a fratricidal civil war that remains unresolved. The two Koreas never signed a peace deal to end the conflict and have yet to officially recognize each other. Those unresolved divisions are why seeking peace and nuclear disarmament are President Moon Jae-in's top priorities in Friday's summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, said Moon Chung-in, special national security adviser to the president.

Unification - a key topic at the two previous summits, in 2000 and 2007 - isn't expected to be discussed at any great length, he said. "If there is no peace, there is no unification," Moon Chung-in told Reuters. In the past, some South Korean leaders have predicated their reunification plans on the assumption the North's authoritarian regime would collapse and be absorbed by the South. But under the liberal President Moon, the government has softened its approach, emphasizing reconciliation and peaceful coexistence that might lead to eventual unity, current and former officials say.

Three noes

Public support for reunification has declined in the South, where 58 percent see it as necessary, down from nearly 70 percent in 2014, according to a survey by the Korea Institute for National Unification. A separate government poll in 1969 showed support for unification at 90 percent. The economic toll would be too great on South Korea, says Park Jung-ho, a 35-year-old office worker in Seoul. "I am strongly against unification and don't think we should unify just for the reason we come from the same homogenous group," he said. "I just wish we live without the kind of tensions we have today." To ease the animosity, "our government should acknowledge North Korea as an equal neighbor like China or Japan," he said.

Estimates of the cost of reunification have ranged widely, running as high as \$5 trillion - a cost that would fall almost entirely on South Korea. In a speech in Berlin last July, Moon outlined what he called the "Korean Peninsula peace initiative" with three noes: No desire for the North's collapse, no pursuit of unification by absorption, and no pursuit of unification through artificial means. "What we are pursuing is only peace," he said.

'Supreme task'

Both Koreas have enshrined reunification in their constitutions, with North Korea describing it as "the nation's supreme task". Like South Korea's Ministry of Unification, the North has its own Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country, and state media has mentioned unification more than 2,700 times since 2010, according to a Reuters analysis of articles collected by the KCNA Watch website. North Korea does not make officials available for comment to media inquiries.

A North Korean statement in January urged "all Koreans at home and abroad" toward a common goal: "Let us promote contact, travel, cooperation and exchange between the north and the south on a wide scale to remove mutual misunderstanding and distrust and make all the fellow countrymen fulfill their responsibility and role as the driving force of national reunification!" North Koreans on both sides of the border appear to be more supportive of unification, with more than 95 percent of defectors polled in the South in favor.

In 1993, North Korea's founding leader Kim Il Sung proposed a 10-point program for reunification, which included a proposal for leaving the two systems and governments intact while opening the borders. Until the 1970s, North Korea - officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea - constitutionally claimed Seoul as its capital, and to this day the South Korean government appoints symbolic governors of Northern provinces. "Reunification ultimately complicates a lot of the more immediate, short-term goals, whether it is denuclearization or the human rights issue, or even just developing stable communications between North and South Korea," said Ben Forney, a research associate at Seoul's Asan Institute.

Stumbles

The two sides have run into problems on even small-scale cooperation, such as the Kaesong joint industrial park where workers from both sides labored together until it was shut down in 2016 amid a row over the North's weapons development. Recently, they failed to agree on a program to allow divided families to communicate with each other. Mistrust runs deep. Some South Koreans and Americans remain convinced Kim Jong Un has amassed his nuclear arsenal as part of a long-term plan to control the peninsula. And Pyongyang worries the American military presence in South Korea is an invasion force intent on toppling Kim. —Reuters



In southern Iraq, drought tightens grip

Abu Ali carefully crank-starts a generator to pump water from a well out into his parched field in southern Iraq. There used to be no need for a well in his village, but a creeping drought is now threatening agriculture and livelihoods in the area. "Last year, the river started to dry up and today we only have wells to supply us with water," the 73-year-old farmer told AFP. Since childhood, Abu Ali and his family have lived off this land in the village of Sayyed Dakhil, to the east of Nasariyah city some 300 km south of Baghdad.

It cost him \$1,600 to dig the well, a lifeline that provides access to the water table deep below. "The water that we draw serves as drinking water for our cows and our sheep, and despite the bitter taste, we also use it to cook and even drink ourselves," said Abu Ali, dressed in a traditional beige robe. But his family's main supply of drinking water comes from six small reservoirs that are refilled at least once a week for around 20,000 dinars (\$17).

Abu Ali is determined to stay put, but the drought has already forced dozens of families to flee more than 20 villages in the area. Weather patterns are largely to blame for the crisis, according to an engineer with Iraq's ministry of water resources. "For the second consecutive season, the rains have been poor and temperatures have risen," Mehdi Rashid told AFP.

Marshes under threat

But while rain accounts for 30 percent of Iraq's water resources, the remaining 70 percent is drawn from rivers and marshes shared with Iran, Turkey and Syria, he said. The diversion of these shared waterways has played a part in Iraq's drought. "Iran has completely re-routed the course of the Karun river," he said, once a cross-border river and a key water source for Iraqis. Rashid said Iran had also "built three big dams on the Karaj river", significantly reducing water levels in cross-border wetlands shared by the two countries. Of the 45 tributaries once shared by Iran and Iraq, only three or four remain viable, said added.

The famous marshes of Mesopotamia, among the largest in the region, are victims of the "worst drought in their history", according to Jomaa Al-Daraji. He works

Jokowi turns to populist policies ahead of election

Soon after taking office in 2014, Indonesian President Joko Widodo made a landmark decision to cut subsidies on politically sensitive fuel prices to boost the economy, but a year out from a tough re-election campaign, his reformist zeal may be waning. Markets cheered Widodo's gamble to free up billions of dollars to build much-needed infrastructure, while the former furniture salesman also unveiled a series of reforms to slash regulations holding back Southeast Asia's biggest economy.

Now, less than a year from an expected hard-fought 2019 election, Widodo has made a "strategic policy shift", say senior government officials, dropping nearly \$20 billion of infrastructure projects to focus on social welfare. The government has also slapped price controls on staple goods such as fuel, power, rice and sugar - moves that will surely be welcomed by voters. "Of course he's thinking about elections. With these moves, he can gain popularity by benefiting the people and ensuring welfare both in the short- and long-term," said one senior official, who declined to be named because he was not authorized to speak on the issue. Economists warn Widodo's return to "populist" policies may threaten Indonesia's investment climate. "With national elections around the corner, Widodo appears to be backtracking on his reform agenda with a string of populist measures... moves that would pressure firms' profit margins and weigh on the investment climate," Fitch Group's think-tank BMI Research said in a note last week.

Being 'realistic'

Widodo took office promising to boost annual economic growth to 7 percent and with an ambitious plan to build \$350



with an organization trying to protect the UNESCO world heritage site, which stretches from Basra into Dhi Qar province. Meanwhile, Iraq and Turkey are locked in talks over the latter's controversial Ilisu dam project on the Tigris, which began in 2006. The Iraqi stretch of the Tigris is downstream from Turkey, leaving it vulnerable to reduced flows.

Along with the mighty Euphrates, the enduring presence of the Tigris River helped give Iraq its nickname: "the land of two rivers". With water increasingly scarce, Iraq's three major dams and 20 smaller ones are running low. According to Rashid, the government engineer, the

billion worth of infrastructure across the poorly connected archipelago. Indonesia has since earned coveted upgrades from ratings agencies. Standard & Poor's last year announced a landmark upgrade for Indonesia to investment grade status. This month Moody's Investors Services raised its ratings another notch, citing effective policies to support broad economic stability.

Indonesia has also jumped 19 places to 72nd in the World Bank's 2018 Ease of Doing Business index. The 56-year old Widodo still enjoys high public approval, with recent surveys giving him a double digit lead over his main rival, former general Prabowo Subianto. Widodo only narrowly defeated Subianto in a bitterly fought 2014 election. Subianto is expected to campaign on welfare issues, the cost of living and a perceived over-reliance on Chinese investment at a time when economic growth is stagnating at around 5 percent and consumption has been persistently sluggish.

Asked about the government's change in policy focus, Widodo's chief-of-staff said it was time to be "realistic". "Development should not just be in the physical sector but also be oriented to the non-physical sector like vocational schools, education, religious schools, health," Moeldoko, a former military commander, said in an interview with Reuters. "The president is aware that we are achieving some success in the investment area, in infrastructure, in ease of doing business, and in deregulation... so we can leap to the next stage which is to focus on human development," he told Reuters.

Data shows that as of the end of 2017, around \$100 billion worth of roads, ports, bridges and dams had been built or were under construction. But experts say it's unlikely the remainder of the program can be finished before the end of Widodo's term in Oct 2019. Denni Purbasari, the president's deputy chief-of-staff for economic affairs, said the government had taken into account external factors like rising global oil prices in its decision to re-route funds to public welfare. "It's important to balance between economic progress and the burden borne by the people. We 100 percent believe that an adjustment must be made to fuel subsidies," said Purbasari.

country's reservoirs currently hold about 12 percent of their total collective capacity. The southern agricultural provinces of Diwaniyah, Muthanna and Missan, home to nearly a quarter of Iraq's population, are also suffering from the drought.

Some 80 percent of the province's agriculture depends on generators and pumps to draw water, according to Ismail Abdel Wahed, head of water resources with Diwaniyah's provincial council. And with warming temperatures, less rain and progressively drier riverbeds, "the struggle is increasing each year", added his colleague Safa Al-Janabi. —AFP

Boosting welfare

Widodo plans to keep electricity tariffs and fuel prices unchanged over the next two years by hiking subsidies by \$588 million in 2018 and making state owned enterprises (SOEs) foot the rest of the bill. Critics say the move is a reversal of the 2015 decision to scrap fuel subsidies and that the government is essentially forcing SOEs to subsidize prices. Moody's has said it could undo its recent upgrade of Indonesia's government debt if the financial health of SOEs worsened and threatened the government's balance sheet.

The finance ministry has said it will monitor such risks. Another plan to force fuel retailers to get government approval before changing prices has been criticized as distorting the market. Other efforts to boost purchasing power include imposing a ceiling price on rice, even though traders say the upcoming main harvest of the staple should contain prices. Government officials insist the policy changes will not affect the core discipline of Widodo's economic agenda.

Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati recently told foreign correspondents the government was not returning to subsidising everything and was not curtailing market mechanisms. This year's budget deficit would be under 2.2 percent of gross domestic product, well below a legal cap of 3 percent, she said. Arianto Patunru, a researcher on Indonesia's economy at Australian National University, said Widodo's actions should be seen in the context of a global shift towards populist policies. "If the Indonesian government is carried away with this trend, I think the prospect is not so bright," he said, adding it was too early to say if it was a long-term risk to economic reforms in the Southeast Asian nation. —Reuters

Continued from Page 1

Asaram became restless in his teens and ran away from the family home in Gujarat state. He flitted between jobs, selling liquor and fixing bicycles, before landing in an ashram where he found his true calling. He established his first spiritual retreat in Ahmedabad in

Continued from Page 1

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Meanwhile, lawmakers yesterday hailed as adequate and appropriate the decision of the foreign ministry. Opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri described the decision a "step in the right direction", adding the foreign ministry should have taken such action after Duterte

Many of India's numerous "godmen" have been embroiled in scandal. Last year, when a spiritual leader was jailed for 20 years for rape, his devotees went on a rampage that left 38 dead. In 2014 the guru Rampal Maharaj barricaded himself in his ashram surrounded by armed devotees after a court issued a warrant for his arrest. Six people died during the siege. — AFP

Information sent to Earth by Gaia is collated by 450 scientists from 20 countries. One of them, Antonella Vallenari, likened the data release to “opening a chocolate box”. “It’s very, very exciting,” she said at the launch event in Germany, webcast live. The full data will be published in a series of scientific papers in a special issue of the journal *Astronomy & Astrophysics*, laying the foundation for decades of further study. “We are really getting today the catalogue of a billion stars zipping through the Milky Way in various directions,” said Guenther Hasinger, ESA’s director of science. “With Gaia, we can actually deconstruct the whole history of the Milky Way,” he added. “It’s like archaeoastronomy... to really build up the history of our Universe.” Lammers said another update is due in 2020. — AFP

The latest row erupted after videos emerged of embassy staff helping Filipinos flee from allegedly abusive employers. One of the clips, released by the Philippine foreign ministry last week, shows a woman running from a home and jumping into a waiting vehicle, while another depicts a person sprinting from what appears to be a construction site to a black sport utility vehicle. Kuwait was furious about the videos, further straining ties already hit by Duterte imposing a ban on Filipino workers moving to the state after the discovery of a domestic worker's body in a freezer in an abandoned flat. The two countries had since been trying to work out an agreement to protect the rights of Filipino workers in Kuwait, particularly some 170,000 maids.

The Gulf nation has trained hundreds of Somali troops since 2014 as part of an effort boosted by an African Union military mission to defeat an Islamist insurgency and secure the country for the Somali government, which is backed by Western nations, Turkey and the United Nations. The UAE ended the

Continued from Page 1

"If you think he is the best in the world, write it or say it," urged Klopp, who has been credited with bringing out Salah's previously untapped potential. "To be the best in the world you need to do that over a longer period I think, and there are a few others that are not so bad." Heavily left-footed, small, speedy and with a low center of gravity, Salah's characteristics are far more like those of Messi than the muscular goal-machine Ronaldo. "In a certain light, at certain points, it is possible to glimpse in Salah a little of Messi's after-glow," wrote Rory Smith in the *New York Times*.

Continued from Page 1

"The threat to Israel has nothing to do with Iranian military might. It has to do with increasingly being seen as illegitimate by many of its international friends."

Neither Somalia nor the UAE is showing urgent interest in resolving their dispute, said Rob Malley, president of the International Crisis Group, a think-tank. Somali officials wanted to be seen "standing up" to the UAE, "and the Emirati officials' position is, 'If Somalia doesn't want our money, fine, we'll take it elsewhere,'" Malley told Reuters in Nairobi after returning from a trip to Mogadishu. The UAE-trained troops began stealing weapons from the facility shortly after the program was disbanded, the dealers said. — Reuters

Messi is almost certain to win a La Liga and Copa del Rey double and Ronaldo could lead Real Madrid to a third consecutive Champions League after another bucketload of goals this season. But Salah is the coming man and after bagging the African and English players' player of the year crowns, it is hard to back against him also conquering the world. — AFP

Finding a way to rebuild trust looks near-impossible when the key players lack any forum for discussions or even basic diplomatic relations. On a trip to Washington this week, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called for a "regional dialogue forum... so we can talk to each other, not about each other". But Iran's opponents dismiss him as the friendly face of a regime that is complicit in mass slaughter in Syria and is masking its true intentions.

Nonetheless, many feel that continuing to exclude Iran from regional decision-making is unsustainable. "Iran should recognize that the more its military doctrine promotes expeditionary war-fighting, the more it will prompt aggressive pushback by its adversaries," the ICG report said. But "Iran is an integral part of the region and cannot be excised from it. Iran will need to be more systematically engaged by its neighbors (and by the US) on regional issues such as the future of Yemen, Syria or Iraq." — AFP



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Schwarber hits two HRs as Cubs beat Indians in Series rematch

Mark Canha homers to lead surging Oakland to a win at Texas

CLEVELAND: Kyle Schwarber hit two solo home runs, Ian Happ homered and had three hits and Tyler Chatwood allowed a run and scattered four hits in six-plus innings as the Chicago Cubs rolled past the host Cleveland Indians 10-3 on Tuesday in the teams' first meeting in Cleveland since the epic 2016 World Series. Chatwood (1-3) struck out five and walked five. Josh Tomlin (0-3) took the loss after surrendering five runs on seven hits in 3 2/3 innings. Four of the hits he allowed were home runs. Tomlin struck out three and didn't issue a walk. The Cubs pounded out 15 hits, and Happ and Tommy La Stella joined Schwarber in driving in two runs. All nine batters who started the game for the Cubs had hits. Cleveland managed nine hits off four Chicago pitchers, with Jose Ramirez and Bradley Zimmer collecting three hits each.



Marco threw six-plus scoreless innings

three-run eighth inning as the Diamondbacks (16-6) tied the franchise record for best 22-game start. Aaron Altherr had a two-run double and Cesar Hernandez had two hits and an RBI for the Phillies. Philadelphia had won four in a row and 11 of 13.

A's 3, RANGERS 2

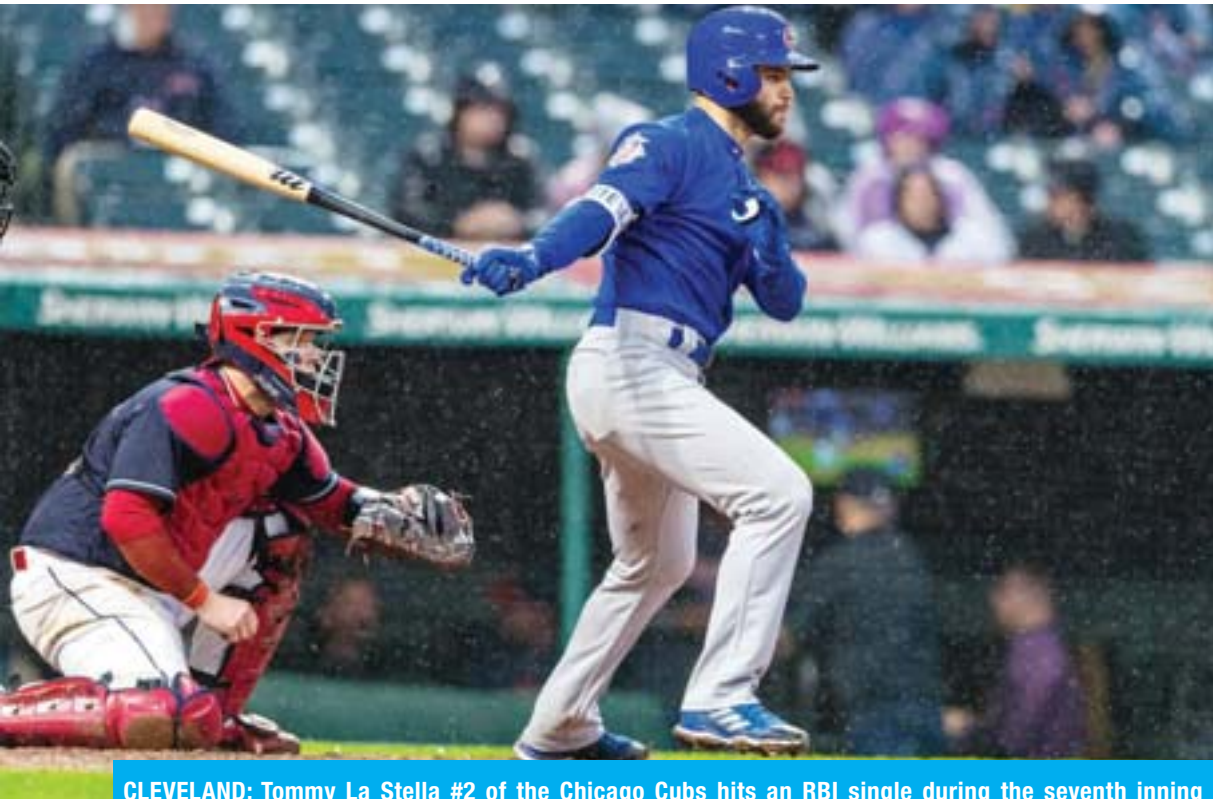
Andrew Triggs pitched six strong innings, and Mark Canha homered to lead surging Oakland to a victory at Texas. Triggs (2-0) allowed one run on four hits and struck out six with one walk for the A's, who have won four in a row and eight of their past nine. Adrian Beltre drove in both runs for the Rangers, but he also injured his left hamstring in the eighth inning, leaving him day-to-day.

ANGELS 8, ASTROS 7

Andrelton Simmons socked two home runs, and Los Angeles fended off a late rally to win at Houston. Simmons belted his second homer of the season leading off the second inning against Astros right-hander Charlie Morton, then struck a bigger blow with his two-out, three-run shot off Joe Smith to cap the Angels' four-run seventh. The latter blast provided Los Angeles with an 8-5 lead. Angels right-hander Shohei Ohtani dazzled yet struggled with his command, posting multiple triple-digit fastballs while issuing five walks and yielding four runs over 5 1/3 innings.

BREWERS 5, ROYALS 2

Travis Shaw hit a three-run homer, and visiting Milwaukee posted its seventh consecutive victory by dispatching Kansas City. Milwaukee's Lorenzo Cain homered against his former teammates and reached base four times on two hits and two walks. Ryan Braun had an RBI single and also collected two hits and two walks for the Brewers, who prevailed in the opener of a nine-game road trip. Zach Davies (2-2) pitched six innings of two-run ball to win his second straight start. Salvador Perez homered in his season debut for the Royals, who have dropped 11 of their past 13 games.



CLEVELAND: Tommy La Stella #2 of the Chicago Cubs hits an RBI single during the seventh inning against the Cleveland Indians at Progressive Field on Tuesday in Cleveland, Ohio. — AFP

METS 6, CARDINALS 5 (10 INNINGS)

Jay Bruce had three hits, including a long, tiebreaking solo homer in the top of the 10th inning, as New York came back to win at St. Louis. The Mets have alternated wins with losses in their last five games. The Cardinals had a three-game winning streak snapped and fell for just the second time in 10 games. Bruce, who missed the cycle by a double, gave the Mets their first lead with his two-out blast off Matt Bowman (0-1). New York trailed 2-0 and 4-1 — Bruce laced an RBI triple in the second inning-before tying the game on Yoenis Cespedes' three-run homer in the fifth inning. Tommy Pham went 3-for-3 with a two-run homer for the Cardinals.

ROCKIES 8, PADRES 0

Kyle Freeland tossed seven innings for his first win of the season, and Colorado blanked visiting San Diego. Trevor Story hit a grand slam in a five-run second inning to pace the Rockies. Colorado's big night at the plate spoiled the major league debut of San Diego's Eric Lauer. The left-hander, who had his contract selected earlier Tuesday, surrendered six runs in three-plus innings.

MARLINS 3, DODGERS 2

Cameron Maybin delivered a go-ahead RBI double in the ninth inning as visiting Miami ended its five-game losing streak with a victory at Los Angeles. Maybin's hit off Dodgers reliever Pedro Baez (0-1) helped the Marlins complete a rally from a one-run deficit in the

eighth inning. Drew Steckenrider (1-0) threw a scoreless eighth inning for the victory, and Brad Ziegler pitched the ninth for his second save. Miami's J.T. Realmuto hit his second home run in six games this season.

GIANTS 4, NATIONALS 3

Mac Williamson hit a tiebreaking homer in the sixth inning, and Brandon Belt homered to extend his hitting streak to seven games in San Francisco's victory over visiting Washington. Williamson's homer was his third in five games since being recalled from the minors Friday. Belt has five homers and seven RBIs during his hitting streak. Michael Taylor hit a three-run homer and Moises Sierra had two hits for the Nationals, who have lost four in a row and five of six.

RAYS-ORIOLES, PPD.

Inclement weather forced the postponement of the Tampa Bay game in Baltimore. The game will be made up as part of a single-admission doubleheader May 12, to begin at 3:05 p.m. ET, followed by the regularly scheduled game approximately 30 minutes after the opener concludes, the Orioles announced.

TIGERS-PIRATES, PPD.

Rain prompted the postponement of the game between Detroit and host Pittsburgh. It will be made up as part of a single-admission doubleheader Wednesday. The opener will begin at 4:05 p.m. ET, with the second game beginning 30 minutes after the conclusion of the first. — Reuters

Paris 2024: Esports 'in talks' over demo sport

TOKYO: The International e-Sports Federation (IeSF) is "deep in talks" with organisers of the Paris 2024 Olympics about incorporating the discipline as a demonstration sport at the Games, the federation's acting Secretary General Leopold Chung has told Reuters.

Esports, the competitive side of electronic gaming, has quickly amassed an estimated 250 million players worldwide, more than several traditional Olympic sports federations combined in a growing market worth about a billion dollars a year. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) in November recognised esports as a sports activity, the first clear indication to the growing industry that it wants to link up.

Esports will be a medal event at the 2022 Asian Games. "It won't be possible to be an official discipline but to be a demonstration title within the Paris Olympics," Chung told Reuters by telephone from the IeSF headquarters in Busan, South Korea.

"The local Olympic organising committee and the city are supporting this movement, so this will be a stronger message towards the IOC that esports could be included as a demonstration title in 2024."

While esports is mainly driven by the games developers and publishers, the IeSF is the first attempt at creating a global body that could promote esports. The IeSF currently has 46 members and hosts an annual esports World Championship involving three major gaming titles - Counter Strike, League of Legends and Tekken.

Global audiences for esports are expected to reach 380 million this year, according to research firm Newzoo, who have also estimated that the esports economy was expected to grow 38 percent year on year in 2018.

Esports is due to appear as a demonstration event at this year's Asian Games in Jakarta and will make its debut as a medal event at the multi-sport tournament four years later in Hangzhou, China.

Appearing at an Olympics would be a huge step for esports and Chung said Paris was the perfect platform. "Paris would one day like to become an esports hub for Europe," said Chung.

"There are great engagement numbers, great fan numbers who live in France and especially in Paris, who would definitely want to come to an esports game."

The IOC is fully aware of esports' rapid growth and its popularity among young people, making it an attractive proposition to refresh its own ageing audience and make the Games relevant to a new generation. IOC President Thomas Bach acknowledged the popularity of esports among young people this month but was wary of its often violent or discriminatory content. —Reuters

Semenya's reign to be ended by new IAAF gender rule

LONDON: South African Caster Semenya's long and controversial reign as the queen of middle distance running looks set to be ended this year not by a track rival but by a new hyperandrogenism rule that will stop her from running 800 and 1500 metres races.

The IAAF will publish new rules today to prevent women with the condition, which produces higher than normal levels of testosterone and is deemed by the governing body to give them an unfair advantage, from running distances from 400m to the mile.

The International Association of Athletics Federations would allow them to compete at international level only if they took medication to reduce naturally occurring levels of testosterone. Semenya, double Olympic and triple world champion over 800m and who completed the 800-1500 double at the Commonwealth Games this month, has always been a controversial figure in the sport as its authorities have sought a solution that respected her rights while also providing a "level playing field".

The 27-year-old's powerful physique and deep voice, followed by the revelations of her hyperandrogenism, left some rivals complaining that they faced an impossible and unfair challenge. The IAAF's previous attempts to regulate the issue fell foul of a Court of Arbitration for Sport ruling in 2015 following an appeal on behalf of Indian athlete Dutee Chand, who had been banned from competing because of her testosterone levels.

The IAAF Council announced last month that following a review of available evidence it would revise its regulations, with the changes coming into force on Nov. 1. "All testosterone, either naturally occurring or artificially inserted into the body, provides significant performance enhancements," IAAF head Seb Coe said at the time, while also going out of his way to stress that nobody



Caster Semenya

was suggesting Semenya had done anything wrong. "We were asked by CAS to provide evidence of the magnitude of the advantage, which we now have," he said.

FEMALE CLASSIFICATION

Media in the UK and South Africa on Wednesday published sections of the report ahead of its official release, revealing that the new hyperandrogenism regulations would include a separate female classification to be known as an Athlete with Differences of Sexual Development (DSD). "Experts consulted by the IAAF have gathered and reviewed all of the published evidence and data, which indicates that increasing the level of circulating testosterone from the normal female range to the normal male range leads to increased muscle mass and strength and higher haemoglobin levels," the report, which has not been seen by Reuters, is reported to have said.

"The result is these new regulations, which seek to facilitate the participation in the sport of athletes with DSDs on terms that preserve fair and meaningful competition in the female classification."

"The significant over-representation of DSD athletes in certain events, and their success in those events, provides further indirect but strong corroboration of the above. "In addition, the IAAF has gathered observational data about the difference in performance levels of DSD athletes depending on whether or not their testosterone levels are suppressed."

The IAAF's medical advisors have suggested the advantage held by DSD athletes is far less pronounced in short sprints or longer distance endurance races, leaving the door open for Semenya to move up to 5,000 or 10,000 metres if she desires. The South African began raising eyebrows when she won the world junior championships in 2008 and the senior world title the following year, with dramatic improvement in her times. The IAAF made Semenya take a sexual verification test, which was initially kept secret but revealed by the media in 2009. Since then virtually all of Semenya's performances have been followed by questions about her sexual and physical status, but she has long stopped answering them. — Reuters

Sports

Durant steers Warriors past Spurs, Heat put on ice as 76ers advance

Celtics hold off Bucks to take series lead

OAKLAND: Kevin Durant scored 25 points as the Golden State Warriors powered into the Western Conference playoff semi-finals with a 4-1 series victory over the San Antonio Spurs on Tuesday.

The reigning NBA champions, jolted by the Spurs in game four on Sunday, booked their place in the next round with a nervy 99-91 win in front of the home fans at the Oracle Arena.

The Warriors will now face the New Orleans Pelicans for a place in the conference finals.

However Golden State were given a scare after a late fourth quarter rally from San Antonio that threatened to take the best-of-seven series to a game six.

The Spurs chipped away at a double-digit Golden State lead to close to 93-91 with 57 seconds left on the clock. But Durant delivered when it mattered with a superb fadeaway jump shot and two free throws to take Golden State clear again as the clock ticked down.

Warriors coach Steve Kerr said the Spurs' battling performance bore the hallmark of counterpart Gregg Popovich, who again was missing from the San Antonio bench following the death of his wife from a long illness last week. "That was a big-time fight. We're lucky to get out of here," Kerr said. "They're a championship organisation and they've been doing this for a long time. They're a reflection of their coach." Golden State had edged into a 22-20 first quarter lead before stretching away in the second quarter to go into the halftime break 49-38 ahead.

A late flurry in the third quarter, including a Durant three-pointer and a pullup jump shot from Shaun Livingston gave the Warriors a 79-65 lead heading into the final quarter.

With the Warriors still without the injured Stephen Curry, it was left to Klay Thompson and Durant to carry the offense. Durant finished with six rebounds and five assists while Thompson had 24 points. Draymond Green also contributed 17 points and 19 rebounds.

LaMarcus Aldridge led the scoring for San Antonio with 30 points while Patty Mills had 18. Veteran Manu Ginobili scored 10 off the bench.

SIXERS ADVANCE

Meanwhile in the Eastern Conference on Tuesday, the Philadelphia 76ers wrapped up a 4-1 series win over Miami to progress following a 104-91 victory.

J.J. Redick scored 27 points and Joel Embiid weighed in with 19 as the Sixers set up a second round meeting against either Boston or Milwaukee.

A fiercely contested duel at Philadelphia's Wells Fargo Center was effectively settled in the third quarter, when the Sixers pulled clear to take a decisive lead.

Prior to that there had been little to separate the two sides, with Miami holding the hosts 46-46 at halftime.

But the Sixers surged into a 66-54 lead after Robert Covington's three-pointer with 6:11 remaining in the third period. It was the latest evidence of a remarkable turnaround at the Sixers, who just two years ago had the worst record in the NBA, with just 10 wins against 72 defeats. Sixers coach Brett Brown said the team was reaping the benefit of a long-term rebuilding strategy.

"I was hired in 2013 and I sat with a few of the owners and we talked about the vision and what we hoped to build," Brown said. "And through rough times, through adversity, we didn't blink. We stayed strong in



OAKLAND: Klay Thompson #11 of the Golden State Warriors drives on Patty Mills #8 of the San Antonio Spurs during Game Five of Round One of the 2018 NBA Playoffs at ORACLE Arena on Tuesday in Oakland, California. — AFP

what we were trying to do. And we've got more to do. "We've got more to give. We're excited for sure."

Meanwhile Boston edged into a 3-2 series lead after beating Milwaukee 92-87. Al Horford scored 22 points, 14 rebounds and three assists to lead the

scoring for Boston. Khris Middleton led the scoring for the Bucks with 23 points while Giannis Antetokounmpo had 16 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists. Jabari Parker had 17 points and eight rebounds. Game six takes place in Milwaukee today. — AFP

Gower fears 100-ball cricket plan is '12 years out of date'

LONDON: Former England Test captain David Gower has welcomed plans for a new 100-ball format but says it is "12 years out of date", with the Indian Premier League now setting the pace.

The 61-year-old, who scored 8,231 Test runs before moving into TV work, believes the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) may have missed a trick by not acting sooner. "In many ways you could say that this new competition is going to be 12 years out of date before it starts," said Gower, speaking at the launch of a Lord's property investment project in London.

"The ECB had the opportunity to be at the forefront of Twenty20. This new competition could have started and been competing with the IPL from the outset. "But for various reasons, which you have to respect, it's taken this long to get under way."

The proposed eight-team city-based competition, due to start in 2020, has had mixed reviews. England captain Joe Root said it could attract a new audience to Test cricket but his predecessor as skipper, Alastair Cook, believes Tests need to be protected.

Gower believes there is room for both long and short formats, and suggested simply adding another T20 tournament to the schedule would have been the wrong move. "I agree with Alastair that Test cricket is important and there are people like him who have made their reputations almost entirely in Test match cricket," Gower said.

"But the game has changed dramatically in the last 20 years, even more in the last 10 years. T20 has gained traction and the IPL is one of the biggest sporting events in the world currently. "The idea of making this (competition) different has validity, because another T20 competition added to the world's crowded schedule, and the English summer's crowded schedule, would have been just that."

"The shorter the game, the likelihood is you'll have close games, so it will be interesting." Gower is the public face of a consortium that is offering members of the public an opportunity to own parcels of land at the Lord's Nursery End.

The Marylebone Cricket Club, which owns Lord's, voted in September to reject plans for a residential development at the ground, instead choosing to adopt their own "MCC Masterplan". — AFP



Kuwait shooters continue their dominance

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait continues its excellence, as shooters Jassim Al-Mudhaf and Sarah Al-Hawal won third place and the bronze medal in the mixed team trap competition, they also registered a new world record in the name of Kuwait Shooting Federation.

The World Cup competition being held in South Korea will continue until April 30, with the best shooters around the world participating. Kuwait's team took the bronze medal, although it was on top during the preliminaries and recorded a new world record for Kuwait when Jassim and Sarah scored 145 hits out of 150, meanwhile Slovakia's Rehak Stefecekova and Erik Vorka won the gold medal and Australia's Penny Smith and Jack Wallace won silver.

President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Eng Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi said he is proud of Kuwait shooters achievements in this championship which was due to their efforts, as efforts of board members, administrative and technical departments enabled Kuwait shooters to make this achievement, along with previous ones.

Al-Otaibi, and on behalf of KSSC board members and shooting community, dedicated the win to HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who has been supporting the sport of shooting all along, which motivates



them to make such outstanding achievements in the name of Kuwait. He also dedicated the win to HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and government. Al-Otaibi lauded the role of the honorary President of KSSC Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah for his continued support and follow up of shooters. He also thanked Information Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri, and the Public Authority for Sports and its Director General Dr Humoud Fulaiteh for their cooperation and removal of obstacles the sport of shooting in Kuwait encounters.



Gautam Gambhir

Daredevils' team management said Gambhir will continue as player and mentor for a side still seeking its first title in the glitzy league which began in 2008. The IPL is now in its 11th season. There is \$8 million in prize money at stake including \$4 million for the winning team. The final takes place on May 27 in Mumbai. —AFP

Daredevils in the first half of the IPL. He has scored just 85 runs in five innings. "I take full responsibility for where we are at the points table," Gambhir told reporters in New Delhi.

"I felt this was the right time because we still have a chance. Absolutely my decision. No pressure from the franchise. "Maybe I was too desperate to turn things around...I was sitting alone and thinking, I couldn't handle the pressure...I was not good enough and that is all," said the 36-year-old Gambhir.

Daredevils coach Ricky Ponting congratulated Gambhir for what the former Australian captain called a "tough decision". "I think Gautam deserves a lot of credit with the way he has handled this situation," said Ponting.

"It's really unheard of in Indian cricket for a senior player to put his hand up and say that I am not playing well enough and for the team's sake I am going to stand down," he added. Gambhir, who played his 58th and most recent Test for India in 2016 against England, has fallen off the selectors' radar.

India's Gambhir quits as Delhi skipper in IPL

NEW DELHI: Gautam Gambhir yesterday stepped down as captain of Indian Premier League side Delhi Daredevils after they lost five of their first six matches in this year's Twenty20 tournament. Mumbai batsman Shreyas Iyer has been appointed the new captain of a side that lies bottom of the eight-team table in the cash-rich league. Gambhir, who led Kolkata Knight Riders to two IPL titles in 2012 and 2014, was bought by Daredevils for \$418,320 in the January auction and subsequently made skipper ahead of the 2018 season.

But the left-handed opener failed to inspire the

Arthur hopes ball-tampering scandal 'a reality check' for world game

CANTERBURY: Former Australia coach Mickey Arthur hopes the Australia ball-tampering scandal will prove a "reality check for world cricket" and that the banned trio of Steven Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft get a chance to play county cricket in England.

Smith and Warner, the deposed captain and vice-captain, have been given one-year bans by Cricket Australia, while Bancroft has been hit with a nine-month suspension for his part in the ball-tampering scandal that marred the team's recent tour of South Africa. Top-order batsman Bancroft was all set to be Somerset's overseas player this season but the county backed out of that deal after it emerged he had used sandpaper to alter the condition of the ball in Cape Town. The CA ban applies only to Australia international matches and domestic fixtures, leaving open the possibility that the shamed trio could resume their careers elsewhere before their respective suspensions expires. Now the coach of Pakistan, who begin their tour of England against Kent later this week, Arthur told reporters at the south-east county's Canterbury headquarters on Wednesday that he had been stunned by the extraordinary scandal.

"It was a shock to me, I was disappointed, really disappointed, when I saw it go down," he said. Arthur, who coached Australia from 2011-2013, added: "Australia always play their cricket really hard, they play it tough. They've pushed 'the line'-I just want to know where 'the line' is because I'm not sure many people do know where that line is and what it is."

"But I think it got to a point where perhaps, hopefully this is a reality check for world cricket and just makes everybody sit back and take stock. "Hopefully, something good comes out of it."

'ABSOLUTELY GUTTED'

Arthur was sympathetic to the idea of the banned trio playing county cricket. "In a way, I feel really sorry for them. I can understand they were really stupid, they've paid a massive price for it and I know Steve Smith, he would be absolutely gutted."

"Cameron Bancroft is a new guy on the block so for him it would be really hard to swallow and Davey (Warner). "For them to be missing the amount of cricket they are missing is tough on them so if the ECB (England and Wales Cricket Board) allowed it, it would be good for them to keep playing because I think they have paid a big price already."

Arthur's focus, however, is firmly fixed on Pakistan. They face Kent in a four-day warm-up match starting Saturday ahead of an inaugural Test in Ireland and a two-Test series in England. Pakistan impressed during a 2-2 drawn series in England two years ago and last year Arthur's men won the Champions Trophy one-day tournament in Britain.

But since that 2016 series, Pakistan have seen the likes of veteran batsmen Misbah-ul-Haq and Younis Khan retire. England may have suffered a 4-0 Ashes reverse in Australia and a subsequent Test series loss in New Zealand, but Arthur was in no doubt about how tough it would be to face Joe Root's men in early-season English conditions.

"England are a really good side and in these conditions they are outstanding," he said. "There are not that many sides that win away from home these days, so that's how we are challenging ourselves.—AFP

Sports

Djokovic crashes out in Barcelona, Nadal wins, Nishikori retires

Dimitrov moves past Gilles to reach last 16

BARCELONA: Former world number one Novak Djokovic suffered a surprise second-round exit at the Barcelona Open when the Serb was beaten 6-2 1-6 6-3 by world number 140 Martin Klizan yesterday. But favourite and 10-times champion Rafael Nadal eased past fellow Spaniard Roberto Carballes-Baena 6-4 6-4 in his first appearance at this year's tournament to reach the third round and set a record by winning 38 consecutive sets on clay.

Second seed Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria also moved smoothly past Frenchman Gilles Simon 6-2 6-1 to reach the last 16. Djokovic, who received a bye in the opening round, has not made the last eight of a tournament since last year's Wimbledon and has struggled with a long-term elbow injury.

The 30-year-old lost to Austria's Dominic Thiem in the last 16 of the Monte Carlo Masters last week and looked far from his best in what was his second career appearance in Barcelona. Klizan claimed the first set in just 32 minutes before Djokovic broke the Slovakian's serve twice to take the second.

Klizan snatched a crucial break in the eighth game of a tense final set and went on to claim his first career victory over Djokovic in five meetings. "I feel I haven't lived up to your expectations, not even my own," Djokovic told a news conference. "It's hard to deal with these types of games and defeats, I wasn't playing at my best, only during the second set. I will try to continue and see where it takes me."

SLOW START

World number one Nadal, who also had a bye to the

second round, packed out the main court at the Real Club de Tennis in Barcelona which is named after him.

Perhaps still feeling the effects of his triumph in Monte Carlo on Sunday, Nadal made a slow start against Carballes-Baena and was broken in the opening game to fall 2-0 behind. The Mallorcan responded by breaking twice to take a 4-2 lead and went on to claim the first set. Nadal broke in the opening game of the second set but lost his serve in the sixth.

He went in front again and had match point at 5-3 but could not take advantage, although he comfortably closed the match out with his next service game. "It was a difficult game and I committed a couple of errors at the start. The first game here after Monte Carlo is always hard but I soon found my rhythm," Nadal told reporters.

The victory saw the Spaniard surpass Romanian Ilie Nastase's record of winning 36 consecutive sets on clay in 1973. Nadal will now meet another Spaniard, Guillermo Garcia-Lopez, who progressed after 14th seed Kei Nishikori retired from his first match after experiencing pain in his right wrist.

The 28-year-old Japanese, who lost to Nadal in the Monte Carlo Masters final on Sunday, withdrew after losing the first set 6-3. "My expectations grew in Monte Carlo, despite losing to Nadal," Nishikori told reporters. "However, I started feeling discomfort again during the first set and I did not want to take any risks." He missed last year's US Open and the Australian Open at the start of 2018 after injuring the same wrist in August. — Reuters



BARCELONA: Serbia's Novak Djokovic returns the ball to Slovakia's Martin Klizan during their Barcelona Open ATP tournament tennis match in Barcelona yesterday. — AFP

Tennis has 'significant' integrity problems: Report

LONDON: Tennis faces "very significant" integrity problems caused by the sharp increase in internet betting, an independent report concluded in its interim finding yesterday with one investigator describing it as a "tsunami" at its lower levels.

The Interim Report of the Independent Review of Integrity said its two-year investigation had not revealed widespread corruption at the highest levels of the professional game globally although "there is nonetheless evidence of some issues at these levels".

The Review was commissioned by the sport's major bodies (the ATP, WTA, ITF and Grand Slam Board) in 2016 following a report by the BBC and BuzzFeed News which claimed 16 players ranked in the world's top 50 had been flagged to the Tennis Integrity Unit (TIU) over suspicions that matches had been thrown.

However, the panel chairman, Adam Lewis, said: "Match fixing is unlikely at the level of grand slam. All the indicators are clear the problem is low." Among the report's recommendations are a greater monitoring of the lower levels of the game, with one investigator saying there is a "tsunami" of problems, plus a review of appearance fees and the ranking system.

The report also called for greater education among players, the elimination of gambling sponsorships, changes to integrity rules and for the TIU to be beefed up and be truly independent. "The integrity problems are greatest where prize money relative to costs, prospects of advancement, public interest and attention, and financial resources of tournaments are lowest," it said.

Tennis operates under a pyramid system with young players competing in Futures and then Challenger tournaments of increasing value under the main tour. The panel said the advent of online betting and the sale of official live scoring data have greatly exacerbated the problem and recommends that the ITF ends its data sale agreement at \$15,000 Futures events, and probably at other ones as well.

The report dates many of the problems to the 2011 agreement between the ITF and data company Sportradar for the sale of live scoring data. A further agreement followed in 2015. The panel recognised that any change in the system would financially penalise the ITF, which it said should be compensated for by the other governing authorities.

The report added that there are no simple solutions but called on the sport "to address and limit the betting markets that ultimately drive, and give expression to, the problem; and to improve the systems of preventing and disrupting breaches of integrity, and for detecting and sanctioning them when they occur."

MATCH-FIXING

The report paints a picture of financial privation among many of the sport's 15,000 professionals, with many at the lowest level struggling to cover the costs of competing. This, the report said, made betting on matches more attractive to players, many of whom admitted knowledge of match-fixing.

A survey of 3,200 players found that 16 percent indicated they had first-hand knowledge of players betting on matches, 11 percent knew of inside information being provided and 14.5 percent of match-fixing. Of these, 35 percent said they had knowledge of more than one instance.

But Lewis said that in many cases the scale of the betting was small, with players seeking the cost of a flight or with relatives, who often double as financial backers, seeking to offset costs. The three-person panel took statements from 200 key stakeholders, conducted more than 100 interviews and collected more than 3,200 survey responses.—Reuters

Vandeweghe routs Stephens in Stuttgart

STUTTGART: CoCo Vandeweghe put aside her career-long dislike of clay to crush US Open champion Sloane Stephens 6-1, 6-0 with a 56-minute rout in the first round of the Stuttgart Grand Prix yesterday.

There was a similar fate for last year's New York runner-up, with Russian Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova eliminating American Madison Keys 7-6 (9/7), 5-7, 6-4. Vandeweghe and Stephens, who won the Miami title last month after a lacklustre six months following her Grand Slam triumph, had teamed up at the weekend to help the United States defeat France and reach the Fed Cup final.

"I really don't like clay, it's my least favourite surface," the Californian said after defeating the seventh seed. "I'll never like it. This is my second time in Germany—I'm not here for the clay, it's more the shopping. "I didn't come out here to play and lose." Vandeweghe broke six times in her victory and next faces defending champion Laura Siegemund of Germany in the second round. Vandeweghe increased her career record over Stephens to 4-1.

The unseeded Keys lasted for two and three-quarter hours before going down to Pavlyuchenkova in their second meeting. In other first-round results, Russian qualifier Veronika Kudermetova surprised Spain's Carla Suarez Navarro 7-6 (7/5), 6-2 and Kazakhstan's Zarina Diyas downed Germany's Carina Witthoeft 6-3, 6-2.—AFP

Spartak get stadium ban for racism, Zenit fined \$1,600

MOSCOW: Russia's defending champions Spartak Moscow received a partial stadium ban yesterday for monkey chants directed at Cape Verdean midfielder Nuno Rocha but a top official said the World Cup hosts are being unfairly singled out.

The football federation also fined Zenit Saint Petersburg \$1,600 (1,300 euros) for "Nazi slogans" heard during a league match with the north Caucasus side Anzhi. The twin penalties deliver a new blow to Russian football international reputation less than two months before the vast country hosts its first World Cup. Fears of racism and hooliganism marring one of sport's most celebrated competitions have been a constant refrain throughout Russia's preparations. The world governing body FIFA is already investigating ape noises heard during a warmup friendly against France in Saint Petersburg last month.

But Russian football's anti-racism inspector Alexei Smertin said Wednesday that his country was being unfairly singled out.

"I cannot say that (racist incidents) happen more often in Russia than in other countries," he told the RIA Novosti state news agency.

Smertin argued that Moscow's current diplomatic standoff with the West was feeding into existing biases about Russia. "We cannot fail to take the political situation into account," said Smertin.

"There is certain bias (again Russia) in this respect." Spartak will play their

next league cup match-not scheduled until the 2018/19 season—with one of their stands reserved for the fans empty. Last Wednesday's semi-final in Moscow culminated with a penalty shootout between Spartak and the small Russian Premier League side Tosno.

Rocha scored the winning spot-kick for Tosno before running past Spartak supporters while celebrating the upset.

Footage of the episode showed the 26-year-old cupping his hand to his ear as a chorus of ape noises rang down from the crowd.

The chanting appeared to begin while he was preparing to take the kick. The Zenit incident occurred during an April 14 match against the Makhachkala side Anzhi in Saint Petersburg.

"Zenit supporters chanted Seige, Seige," said disciplinary committee chief Artur Grigoryants.

"This is classified as a Nazi slogan." The phrase is a variant of the highly the offensive salute that was used to address Hitler. Racial animosity between big Russian teams and smaller sides from the north Caucasus have run high in the Premier League for years.

Various forms of abuse have been plaguing Russian football since clubs began purchasing foreign players after the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991.

The Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) anti-discrimination network reported 89 racist and far-right incidents at Russian games in the 2016/17 season.

The number was about the same as that recorded in the preceding three seasons—a sign that Russia's campaign to clean up its game has not had the desired effect.

The World Cup final will be played on July 15 in Moscow while Saint Petersburg will host one of the semi-finals. Both cities are home to large groups of hardcore nationalist supporters and have witnessed numerous ugly episodes during games. — AFP



CoCo Vandeweghe

F1 goes back to Baku

BAKU: The Azerbaijani Grand Prix has a lot to live up to this weekend and Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton has plenty to think about as well. Baku dished up a crazy thriller of a race last season, with Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo winning after Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel famously succumbed to 'road rage' and clashed with Mercedes' Hamilton.

The Force India pair collided, Canadian Lance Stroll made it to the podium for Williams but was pipped at the line for second by Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas, who also had a coming together with Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen.

The most exciting race of last year, with the safety car driver kept busy, had been the most boring on its debut a season earlier. Fans, Formula One's owners, struggling Williams and the ever-smiling Ricciardo in particular will be hoping that the 2017 sort of lightning strikes twice, even if Ferrari and Mercedes would rather it didn't.

Hamilton, on pole position last year when the race was held in the much hotter month of June, is still chasing his first win of a campaign that is well on the way to becoming a classic.

Nine points adrift of championship leader Vettel, he complained in China two weekends ago of being in 'no man's land'. The ultra-long Baku straight could favour Ferrari, with Vettel aiming to make up for the disappointment of finishing eighth in

Shanghai after winning the first two races in Australia and Bahrain.

Mercedes, without a win in three races for the first time since the V6 turbo hybrid era started in 2014, will need to get their tyres working properly and can take nothing for granted. "We know that we have a massive challenge on our hands," said team boss Toto Wolff.

"Last year, we were in a tough fight with Ferrari. However, it was nothing compared to the intensity of this year's battle. "Last year's race threw up a podium that nobody could have predicted and, as is the way with street courses, we can once again expect the unexpected."

Ricciardo, winner in China after a safety car period fell into Red Bull's lap, is on a high and Baku rewards the brave overtaking moves he is known for. "Baku is different to other street circuits, because there are places where you can pass. Actually, lots of places where you can pass," said the Australian. "With a street circuit you have to love it-but you also have to respect it and understand it. I understand that, to be fast, you have to be on the limit-but put yourself there and it can bite you."

Force India were heading for the podium last year when Sergio Perez and Esteban Ocon collided, and the two now have a very clear understanding of what is expected. Williams, whose podium was the only one by a team outside the top three, meanwhile return to Baku as the only ones yet to score a point in 2018.

"For Lance it would be bold to expect another podium but he should perform well given his significant achievements in Baku last year," said technical head Paddy Lowe. — Reuters

Simeone, Wenger go head to head in a battle of the old-timers

Madrid and Barca have always won the league, 13 times in 14 years

MADRID: Arsenal's Europa League semi-final against Atletico Madrid today will be a clash of styles as stark as they come but Arsene Wenger and Diego Simeone are anything but polar opposites. Arsenal will flood forward at Emirates Stadium while Atletico will sit back; Arsenal will dominate possession, Atletico will counter; Arsenal will risk leaving gaps and Atletico will do everything they can to close them.

"We have a style that does not very much," Simeone said last month. "We usually play one way, with the same idea." Wenger may share little common ground with Simeone on how best to win matches but there is no coach in the game that knows better the sense of identity and attachment to a club, which the Frenchman is now in the process of curtailing.

"I'm staying because this club has a future and that future is us," Simeone said at the end of last season, before extending his contract to 2020 in September. If he sees it through, he will have been in charge at Atleti for almost nine years, still 13 short of Wenger's 22 but far closer in terms of status, impact and legacy.

His standing is enhanced by two stints and five years playing for Los Rojiblancos, the first spell yielding a league and cup double in 1996, when Simeone was the captain. When they next won the Copa del Rey in 2013 and La Liga in 2014, Simeone was the coach.

The cult of Simeone at Atletico is also powerful because it is unusual. In December 2011, he was their 12th appointment in 10 years and fifth in the last two.

Like Wenger, he has brought stability, but in a club where previously there was none.

REALITY OF NUMBERS'

Like Wenger too, Simeone enjoys casting Atletico as underdogs, up against rivals with far greater resources and far less concern for long-term thinking. "What we cannot do is forget the reality of the numbers," Simeone said, after his side lost 1-0 to Barcelona last month.

"In 14 years Madrid and Barca have always won the league, 13 times in 14 years. We made possible the impossible once but it is clear that it will not happen every year." They nabbed the La Liga title in 2014, an astonishing achievement, but Atletico's priority has been qualification for the Champions League, particularly during the club's switch to its new stadium, a move completed at the start of this season. When chief executive Miguel Angel Gil paid a rare visit to the club's training ground earlier this month, his message was clear. "Qualify for the Champions League," Simeone said. "He has been telling me that for five years."

Wenger once suggested a top-four finish was akin to winning a trophy and he knows the challenges of leaving a long-held home, both psychological and financial. Many suspected Simeone would leave after Atletico departed the Vicente Calderon but he has stayed to oversee the transition while enduring the club selling some of its most expensive stars to make it work.



LONDON: Atletico Madrid's Spanish forward Diego Costa (R) takes part in a training session at the Emirates Stadium in London yesterday on the eve of their UEFA Europa League first leg semi-final football match against Arsenal.—AFP

Radamel Falcao, Mario Mandzukic, Diego Costa and Filipe Luis have all been allowed to leave for big sums. It remains to be seen whether Antoine Griezmann and Jan Oblak follow suit this summer. And there is Simeone and Wenger themselves, each symbols of their respective clubs but both at their least comfortable when discussing personal achievements.

Simeone prefers to divert focus onto his players and the next game, just as Wenger has tried to do since announcing he will leave Arsenal at the end of the season. Atletico, and Simeone, stand in the way of a potentially glorious farewell. "In the end, it is the pitch that talks," Simeone said. "And when the pitch talks, all the coach does is listen." — AFP

Marseille host Salzburg eyeing return to European glory days

MARSEILLE: Quarter of a century on from giving French football its crowning moment in Europe, Marseille are dreaming of continental glory once again.

But the club that won the inaugural Champions League in 1993 — still the only time the European Cup has been won by a French side—must first come through a semi-final against Austria's Red Bull Salzburg, with the first leg at the Velodrome today.

If Marseille can win before a sell-out crowd of more than 60,000 on Thursday night (kick-off 1905 GMT), it will set them up to finish the job in next week's return and keep them on course to make a final that will be played in France, at the home of their bitter rivals Lyon. Given that Atletico Madrid and Arsenal meet in the other semi-final, Marseille cannot be seen as favourites to lift the trophy. Nevertheless, the rousing 5-2 win over RB Leipzig in the second leg of the quarter-final at the Velodrome confirmed that they are a club on the up again under Rudi Garcia.

The former Lille and Roma coach has spearheaded Marseille's revival on the field since American tycoon Frank McCourt's takeover of the club in late 2016. McCourt immediately launched his 'Champions Project', aimed at getting the club back into Europe's top club competition again as soon as possible. They are currently locked in a fierce battle with Lyon and Monaco for two Champions League qualifying berths in Ligue 1 behind champions Paris Saint-Germain.

But with Florian Thauvin in the form of his life, Dimitri Payet at his best again and Brazil midfielder Luiz Gustavo proving an inspired signing, they could yet win the Europa League and, in the process, qualify for the Champions League anyway.

"We are on a winning run, which is important, and now we are going to study Salzburg closely," said



MARSEILLE: FC Salzburg players stretch as they attend a training session at The Velodrome Stadium in Marseille yesterday, on the eve of the first leg of the Europa Cup semi-final football match between Olympique Marseille and FC Salzburg.— AFP

Garcia after a 5-1 weekend win over Lille. "We want to play with the same degree of enthusiasm, talent and team spirit. "We are never more clinical than when everyone is playing for each other. With this spirit, this team is capable of being stronger than everything."

'TAKE THE NEXT STEP'

Given PSG's well documented difficulties in the Champions League, Marseille's run has given French football a boost, a year after Lyon lost in the last four of the same competition.

This is OM's first European semi-final since 2004, when Didier Drogba's goals saw off Newcastle United in the UEFA Cup before they lost to Rafael Benitez's Valencia in the final in Gothenburg.

Marseille can be confident, but they will be without influential Japan right-back Hiroki Sakai due to a knee injury, and Salzburg's run in Europe so far this season

means they deserve respect.

On course to win a fifth consecutive Austrian title, Marco Rose's Salzburg have already drawn with and beaten the French giants in the group stage. This will be their 19th game in Europe this season, a run that started in the Champions League qualifying rounds and continued on to wins against Borussia Dortmund and Lazio in the last two rounds of the Europa League. "We have come this far, so of course we want to take the next step to the final," Israeli striker Munas Dabbur, who scored in the win over Lazio, told the club's website. "We face really strong opponents though, who have become even more dangerous in recent weeks."

Coached by the Leipzig-born Rose, Salzburg are the first Austrian semi-finalists in a major UEFA club competition since Rapid Vienna lost to PSG in the 1996 Cup Winners' Cup final. That was the last time any French club won a European trophy. — AFP

FIFA rejects alleged ethics charge as 'baseless'

MANCHESTER: FIFA Secretary General Fatma Samoura says claims she is related to an ambassador of the Moroccan bid for the 2026 World Cup are "ridiculous and baseless". The BBC reported on Wednesday that Samoura had been referred to FIFA's Ethics Committee for breaches of its ethics code relating to "duty of disclosure, co-operation and reporting" and "conflicts of interest".

The report said that FIFA's evaluation task force, which is examining the Moroccan bid along with the joint bid from the United States, Mexico and Canada had discovered an alleged undeclared family connection.

The BBC said the family link was between Samoura - whose full name is Fatma Samba Diouf Samoura - and the former Liverpool forward El Hadji Diouf, who

is working in an ambassadorial role for the Moroccan bid. Both Samoura and Diouf are from Senegal.

"These claims against me are totally ridiculous and baseless. El Hadji Diouf is not a member of my family and therefore everything is crystal clear. There is nothing to discuss further," Samoura told Reuters in an email. After several requests for comment, FIFA's media department neither confirmed nor denied that a complaint had been made about Samoura to the Ethics Committee. FIFA did release a general statement about the bid process.

"FIFA has been heavily criticised for how it conducted the selection of hosts in the past. It was our obligation to learn from this and leave no room for any doubt or subjectivity," said the statement.

"The enhanced bidding process is the result of a long and thorough consultation process with many external experts and stakeholders and includes the highest standards in terms of transparency, participation, commitment to sustainability and human rights and objectivity.

"Anyone criticising this approach should be able to say if they would prefer a return to the old ways." FIFA's congress is scheduled to hold a vote to decide the 2026 tournament hosts when it meets in Moscow on June 13. — Reuters

Spurs' Son keen to play at Asian Games

SEOUL: Tottenham Hotspur forward Son Heung-min is keen to play at the Asian Games later this year, South Korea's under-23 coach Kim Hak-bum has said, with a gold medal at the event bringing an exemption from almost two years of mandatory military service.

Son has been in terrific form for Spurs this season, scoring 18 goals in all competitions, but the 25-year-old could soon see his career interrupted. All able-bodied South Korean males must serve 21 months in the military and Korean law states that the period of service must begin before the age of 27.

However, exemptions are awarded to athletes who win a gold medal at the Asian Games, or an Olympic medal of any colour, and South Korea will be one of the favourites for the football title at the Aug. 18-Sept. 2 Games in Indonesia.

"Son has a strong will to compete at the Asian Games," Yonhap news quoted Kim as saying on his return from Europe on Tuesday. "But first, there's the World Cup. I told Son to play well in Russia before we meet at the Asian Games."

Kim said he had met with Son in Britain as part of his trip to look at candidates for Asian Games selection. Son, who could be selected as one of three overage wild card, was refused permission by his former club team Bayer Leverkusen to play in the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon when the South beat North Korea in the gold medal match.

Since the Asian Games soccer tournament is not on the official FIFA calendar, clubs are under no obligation to release players but reports in Britain say Spurs are weighing up the possibility of giving Son the chance to earn an exemption.

The 2018/19 English Premier League season is scheduled to kick off on Aug. 11 with the final of the Asian Games football tournament taking place on Sept. 1. "It's a sensitive issue," Kim said. "I believe the Korea Football Association will handle this matter well. The men's senior national team, the U-23 team, the KFA and the player's club should all work closely." —Reuters

Salah's performance gives Egyptians 'goosebumps'

CAIRO: Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah sent Anfield into raptures with his dazzling display and two goals in the 5-2 demolition of AS Roma in the Champions League semi-final first leg and was also the name on everybody's lips back in his home country of Egypt.

Salah hogged the front pages of the national newspapers who hailed him as "King Salah" after his decisive performance. On the streets of the capital Cairo, there was a tangible sense of pride at the unusual sight of an Egyptian being thrust into world football's centre stage.

"Honestly as soon as Salah scores we all feel goosebumps all over our body," coffee shop worker Sherif Hussein told Reuters TV. "I saw yesterday's goals. If Messi had scored it they would have called him phenomenal but this is the first time we see an Egyptian impressing the entire world."

A graffiti portrait of Salah adorns the walls outside a Cairo coffee shop, and even people not usually interested in football were talking excitedly about their compatriot who has turned into an ambassador for their country.

"Despite not being a football fan, I am very proud of Mohamed Salah. was able to present a very good picture of to the international world," said Cairo resident Fatma Saad. "About Egyptians, Arab's and Islam. He was able to present an image of us elegantly and easily."

In his first season back in England following an unsuccessful stint at Chelsea, Salah has already made Premier League history in matching the goals record in a 38-game season with 31 strikes. The 25-year-old was also named player of the year by his fellow professionals in England on Sunday.

He leads the race to win the Golden Boot for the top scorer in the league and is ahead of Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo and Barcelona forward Lionel Messi in the bid to land the European Golden Shoe for the leading scorer in Europe's top five leagues.

Salah will also spearhead the Egypt national team in Russia on their return to the World Cup for the first time in 28 years. "Mohamed Salah is the best player in Egypt and is really representing us," said another Cairo resident.

"He will be the best player in the world. He is royalty and everyone loves him. Everyone is proud of him. He is making Egypt proud abroad." — Reuters

	Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE		
Olympique Marseille v Red Bull Salzburg		22:05
beIN SPORTS HD 3		
Arsenal v Atletico de Madrid		22:05
beIN SPORTS HD 2		

12

Semenya's reign to be ended by new IAAF gender rule



13

Durant steers Warriors past Spurs, Heat put on ice as 76ers advance



14

Djokovic crashes out in Barcelona, Nadal wins, Nishikori retires



Real beat Bayern 2-1 in Munich

Real stay on course for three Champions League titles



MUNICH: Real Madrid moved a step closer to a third straight Champions League title after substitute Marco Asensio hit the winner in a 2-1 semi-final, first-leg victory at Bayern Munich yesterday.

The 22-year-old came off the bench to finish a counter-attack and complete the holders' comeback win, giving Real the advantage for the return game in Madrid next Tuesday. Bayern took the lead at the sold-out Allianz Arena through Joshua Kimmich, but Marcelo equalised just before the break.

Despite Bayern dominating possession and creating plenty of chances, Madrid claimed a sixth straight win, dating back to 2012, over the Bavarians in the Champions League knockout stage.

Real coach Zinedine Zidane pulled a surprise before kick-off by leaving both Gareth Bale and Karim Benzema out of the starting line-up. Isco, who was

replaced by Asensio at half-time, and Lucas Vazquez played either side of Cristiano Ronaldo, who had a subdued night up front in Munich.

The Portuguese failed to add to his tally of 15 Champions League goals this season, being denied a second-half strike by an offside flag, which would have made it 3-1.

James Rodriguez, who is on a two-year loan deal from Real, shone in Bayern's midfield and found plenty of cracks in the Madrid defence. However, this just was not Bayern's night. Both Thomas Mueller and Robert Lewandowski went agonisingly close with a string of chances.

The hosts suffered a blow with barely five minutes gone when Arjen Robben limped off to be replaced by Thiago Alcantara. Bayern changed their system with right-back Joshua Kimmich moving up to plug the space on the right wing, which sparked the opening goal.

When Bayern goalkeeper Sven Ulreich played the ball down the right flank, James released Kimmich with a perfectly-timed pass in the 28th minute. The Germany international raced clear and caught out Keylor Navas at his near post to stun Real.

Bayern suffered their second early injury blow when Jerome Boateng was replaced by Niklas Suele on 34 minutes—which is also bad news for Germany with the World Cup looming. Real had a left-off when Ribery went one-on-one with Navas, but stumbled at the crucial moment. Then from nothing, Marcelo conjured the equaliser on 44 minutes. When Dani Carvajal headed the ball across the edge of the box, it landed at Marcelo's feet and was in Bayern's net milliseconds later after a fierce left-footed shot.

It was the Brazilian's third Champions League goal this season after also scoring in the knock-out rounds

against Paris Saint-Germain and Juventus.

Real escaped again when Navas failed to hold a Lewandowski header just before the half-time whistle and the ball bobbed away to safety. It shows how far Bale and Benzema have dropped out of Zidane's favour that Isco was replaced on the left wing by Asensio for the second half, but the move paid off.

Rafinha lost the ball in midfield after a Bayern attack, and Vazquez sprinted clear and put Asensio into space to curl past Ulreich on 57 minutes. With 25 minutes left, Zidane threw on an extra attacker, as Benzema came on for injured right-back Carvajal. Moments later Bayern came within inches of an equaliser when Navas denied Mueller with a reflex save.

In the final five minutes, Lewandowski beat Navas, but his floated shot flew just wide of the post to add to Bayern's misery. — AFP

Liverpool fan fighting for his life after assault by Roma fans

LIVERPOOL: A Liverpool fan was fighting for his life yesterday after suffering a serious head injury in a "vile" assault by Roma fans before the club's Champions League semi-final first-leg clash with the Italian club. Sean Cox, 53, is being treated for his injuries at a neurological centre, where his condition is described as critical, Merseyside Police said.

Two men-aged 25 and 26 — have been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder after attacking Cox, who had travelled from Ireland along with his brother for the match. "We believe the victim was in Liverpool with his brother for the Liverpool v Roma semi-final and was assaulted during an altercation between Roma and Liverpool fans near to the Albert pub at about 7:35 pm (1835 GMT)," said detective inspector Paul Speight.

"Witnesses report that the victim was hit with a belt and then fell to the ground.

"Paramedics treated him at the scene and he was taken by ambulance to Walton neurological centre, where he is being treated for a head injury. "His condition is currently described as critical and his next of kin have been informed." Liverpool, who won the match 5-2, said they were "shocked and appalled" by the incident. "Our thoughts, in the first instance, are with the victim and his family at this very traumatic time. We will be offering them our full support," the club added in a statement. Serie A side Roma said there was no room in football for the "vile behaviour". "AS Roma condemns in the strongest possible

terms the abhorrent behaviour of a small minority of traveling fans who brought shame on the club and the vast majority of Roma's well-behaved supporters at Anfield after getting involved in clashes with Liverpool supporters before last night's fixture," the club said.

European football's governing body UEFA said it was "deeply shocked by the vile attack", adding it was waiting to receive full reports before deciding on potential disciplinary charges.

Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson tweeted his regret about the incident involving Cox: "He came to watch a football match and support our team-the only result that matters to us now is that he recovers and can return to his family and loved ones. You'll Never Walk Alone." Cox, described as a "cornerstone" of his community by a local councillor, is a former chairman of St Peter's, his local Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) club in Dunboyne, County Meath, who released a statement.

"At this point we hope that Sean is receiving all of the medical care he requires and that he makes a full and speedy recovery. Our thoughts and prayers are with Sean and his family," the club said. The alleged assailants were among a total of nine men, aged between 20 and 43, who were arrested for various offences before and after the match. The offences included affray, assault, possession of offensive weapons, possession of a controlled drug, criminal damage and being drunk and disorderly. — AFP



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ACICO Group launches a new logo, eyes major expansion

Company optimistic amid infrastructure development growth



Ghossan Al-Khaled, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of ACICO, with officials and media.

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The ACICO Group launched a new logo and name at a press conference at its premises in Hamra Tower. Ghossan Al-Khaled, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, spoke about the history of ACICO. "My father Ghassan Al-Khaled founded the company as a real estate company, then built a factory and started operating it even before it had a boundary fence. The beginning was very hard for him, especially since he brought a new system for white bricks, which was something new to the Kuwaiti market. To prove that this was a good system, he built our house out of it," she noted.

"From a small office with only five employees in Salhiya, we grew and expanded into a huge company with 4,200 employees called

ACICO Group. We began from Kuwait and expanded to Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar. We are proud of this expansion in this short period. We provide bricks, cement and other construction materials, in addition to offering real estate development services. We sell ready houses and also design homes for our clients. We offer them everything from A to Z," added Khaled.

"We represent a name and quality that our clients trust. This trust came from my father's name - Ghassan Al-Khaled - who built this great reputation. This wasn't easy at all, as it took years to build this trust. This is the reason behind our transparency. We care for quality and safety more



Ghossan Al-Khaled

than just making profits. We are proud that we are a Kuwaiti company. We added ACICO in Arabic to our logo, and also added the word (Group) to the company's name. We are proud that we became a group and are happy to launch it with the media. Furthermore, we held training courses for our staff," she explained.

When the clients come to ACICO, they have the opportunity to choose from a wide range of materials. "Our clients will find all what they need under one roof. We aim to offer them comfort. I'm proud of this company and our team. My dream is to expand our services and become an international compa-

ny. The biggest asset of our company is human resources. We focus on the comfort of our staff, which will then give us best productivity, and then the client will be satisfied," Khaled pointed out.

ACICO is optimistic for the future. "We look forward to the next five years, as the government will be executing many mega development projects. We are focusing on local projects, yet we also have factories outside Kuwait and they are producing perfectly. Most profits come from the local market and I'm proud of this. In the past, the investment opportunities abroad were bigger than in Kuwait, but today it's opposite," stressed Khaled.

The development plan of Kuwait is proceeding and this will move the economy, which will bring benefits to all people living

here. "The Silk City will be a quantum leap in Kuwait, and even HH the Amir is interested in this project. This and other government projects are a great opportunity for private companies. Even international companies will come to Kuwait from China and other countries to work on these projects. We are happy that our government is now cooperating more with the private sector and giving us a chance to prove our high quality of services. This is why we care for aftersales services, which built our reputation," she added.

ACICO has knowhow in tourism and is ready to cooperate with the government. "Kuwait is not a touristic destination until now and we need some legislation to change this. But when it opens to welcome tourists, we will always be ready to execute public projects in this field," concluded Khaled.

Ahli United Bank (Kuwait) net profit attributable to shareholders up by 5% in Q1 2018

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank has announced the financial results for Q1 2018 achieving a 5% growth in net profits attributable to the Bank's shareholders. The net profit after tax recorded KD 16.8 million for Q1 2018, 5% higher than the net profits posted for Q1 2017 of KD 16.0 million. The Bank's revenues from core financing activities grew by 8.1% amounting to KD 25.3 million during Q1 2018, up from KD 23.4 million recorded in the first quarter of last year.

This profit is achieved as a result of the Bank implementing selective and vigilant financing policies hence ensuring the high quality of its financing assets and contributing in reducing the non-performing finances ratio from 3.11% at the first quarter of 2017 to 1.30% at the end of the first quarter of the current year and boost the provisions coverage ratio to reach to 314% of the non-performing finances at the end of March 2018 as compared to the ratio of 138% recorded at the end of March 2017.

Dr. Anwar Al-Mudhaf, Chairman, Ahli United Bank (Kuwait), remarked "The Bank's ongoing successful strategy has resulted in realizing sound key performance indicators during the first quarter".

"The Bank has achieved a return on equity (ROE) of 16.4% and a return on assets (ROA) of 1.8% at the end of March 2018 being amongst the highest return indicators for the banks announcing their results in the local market for the same period. The higher returns con-



tributed to generating earnings per share (EPS) of 10.0 fils as compared with the EPS of 9.5 fils recorded in 2017. The Bank's total assets reached KD 3.8 billion at the end of Q1 2018, up from KD 3.7 billion recorded at the end of last year. Total deposits rose to KD 3.2 billion. The Bank has reported a sound capital adequacy

ratio (CAR) of 16.9% being higher than the minimum regulatory required level of 13%."

Furthermore, the Bank is progressing steadily towards the implementation of the carefully-studied expansion plans in the Retail Banking sector in order to enhance further its market share, optimize the costs associated with financing and saving products offered to our customers and provide a competitive profits and finance rates to the customers. Within the same context, the Bank will pursue its investment in Digital Banking being a main pillar in attaining a higher segments from the Retail Banking customers.

The Chairman attributed these positive results for the period to the efforts of the Bank's management and staff who have provided distinctive services and integrated solutions for customers, maintaining customer confidence and enhancing the presence of the Bank in Corporate Banking, Retail Banking, Private Banking & Wealth Management, and Treasury. The Chairman stressed that the management's success has placed the Bank among the best and safest Islamic Banks, not only locally but also regionally.

The Bank has continued to receive high credit ratings from international credit rating agencies, such as Fitch, Moody's and Capital Intelligence. The Bank maintained a credit rating of "A+" on the long term and "F1" on the short term with stable outlook by Fitch Ratings Agency, and "A2" on the local currency with

stable outlook by Moody's. Capital Intelligence affirmed the Bank's long term credit rating of foreign currency to "A+" and enhanced the short term foreign currency rating to "A2". All these ratings confirm the credit standing, capital quality, and stability of the Bank for future growth.

The Bank was proud to have been awarded numerous awards in 2017 which included "The Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait 2017", by Global Business and Islamic Finance Magazine, "The Best Bank for Private Banking in Kuwait in 2017 Award" by "The Banker Magazine" and "CPI Financial Banker Middle East" in addition to other several prestigious awards.

Furthermore, the Chairman expects further progress in the Bank's performance with growth during the forthcoming period, notwithstanding the increased competition in the market. The Bank is committed to the continuous improvement in banking services, including the innovation of its services, products and financial solutions.

In concluding his statement, Dr. Al-Mudhaf extended his thanks and appreciation to the Central Bank of Kuwait, to the Bank's Board of Directors, to customers, to shareholders, and to management and staff for the confidence and support they have conferred upon the Bank. This has enabled the Bank to realize these continued achievements and maintain its preeminent position in the Kuwaiti Banking sector.

Business

Boursa Kuwait’s roadshow in London meets with keen interest

Event attracts high-profile UK-based institutional investors

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait’s first roadshow in London in collaboration with multinational financial services firm Goldman Sachs turned out to be an exceptional success. Eight companies listed at the Kuwaiti stock exchange, including the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), Kuwait Finance House (KFH), Burgan Bank, Zain, Kuwait Projects Company (KIPCO), Mabaneer, Mezzan Holding, and Human Soft participated in the tour.

The companies hosted more than 60 meetings with interested institutional investors, including endowment funds, commercial banks, mutual funds, hedge funds, pension funds and insurance companies. Taking place in Goldman Sachs’ London headquarters, the get-togethers provided the investors with the chance to learn more about the benefits of investing in Kuwaiti stocks as well as the individual companies, such as their respective performance, business strategy and outlook.

Pleased with the successful roadshow, Boursa Kuwait CEO Khaled Abdulrazzaq Al-Khaled commented, “We came to London to raise awareness of the

exceptional investment opportunities in the Kuwaiti stock market, and I am delighted to say that our roadshow has been met with keen interest by some of the most reputable institutional investors in this part of the world. The participation of eight of our locally listed companies was key to show-case specific investment options across a variety of sectors. Boursa Kuwait’s vision is to create a vibrant, mature and diversified market, and we have been making immense progress over the past two years. The positive feedback we have been receiving confirms we are on the right track, and this roadshow will be followed by many more in the years to come.”

This roadshow is the latest in a series of events that

Boursa Kuwait has taken part in or organized with the aim of promoting the Kuwaiti market to international investors and raising the profile of its listed companies.

In early March, Boursa Kuwait participated in the 14th Annual EFG Hermes One on One Conference in Dubai, where CEO Khaled Abdulrazzaq Al-Khaled underlined the impact of sound operations and strong performance of capital markets on economic growth. Boursa Kuwait also recently participated in HSBC’s MENA Investor Forum, which brought together regulators, exchanges, over 25 of the largest companies from across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and US-based investors in New York City.

Boursa Kuwait is committed to developing a liquid, reliable and sound capital market providing issuers with efficient access to capital, and investors with diverse return opportunities, which will further strengthen Boursa Kuwait’s position as a leading regional exchange. In April, Boursa Kuwait initiated the second phase of its Market Development Plan, introducing a segmented market, new indices, circuit breakers as well as entirely new listing requirements, along with the Boursa Kuwait Rulebook. Companies listed on Boursa Kuwait has also recently been included in the FTSE Russell secondary emerging market index, which is testament to the efficiency of the changes implemented.



Khaled Abdulrazzaq Al-Khaled



One-day event in collaboration with Goldman Sachs

X-cite inaugurates its 21st store in new Al-Kout Mall

KUWAIT: X-cite by Alghanim Electronics, Kuwait’s largest electronic retailer, is now closer than ever with the opening of its 21st store in Al-Kout Mall, Fahaheel, thus enabling its customers to enjoy an ultimate and convenient electronics shopping experience.

Extending over an area of 400 square meters in the newly opened Al-Kout Mall, one of the largest mall in Kuwait, the latest X-cite store is part of a continuous drive to expand the company’s footprint in all areas around Kuwait. The store located on Mezzanine 2nd floor offers its customers a wide variety of electronics ranging from TVs, laptops, smartphones & tablets, to home and kitchen appliances and more under one roof.

With this new addition, X-cite stores are now near you anywhere you go, making it more convenient for shoppers residing in the dynamic area of Fahaheel to have access to X-cite. Through its customer-centric concept, X-cite offers customers competitive quality and prices to serve every segment of its customer-base, providing them with the highest level of service, engaging with them, and earning their trust through supporting services and offerings. X-cite also enables customers to shop from the comfort of their homes through its free mobile app and shopping website at www.xcite.com.

X-cite has established itself as a leading brand in providing the latest products to customers as it continues to build strong relations with international brands in the electronics sector. Continuously seeking to satisfy the needs of its customers, X-cite provides them with diverse services that enable customers to experience products and interact with them, whether in their 21 stores or through the website, designed to make online shopping a fast and easy experience. X-cite also offers premium maintenance and purchase services at most of its major showrooms throughout Kuwait and other services such as free delivery and X-care warranty services.

Lloyds banks posts rising profit on ‘resilient’ economy

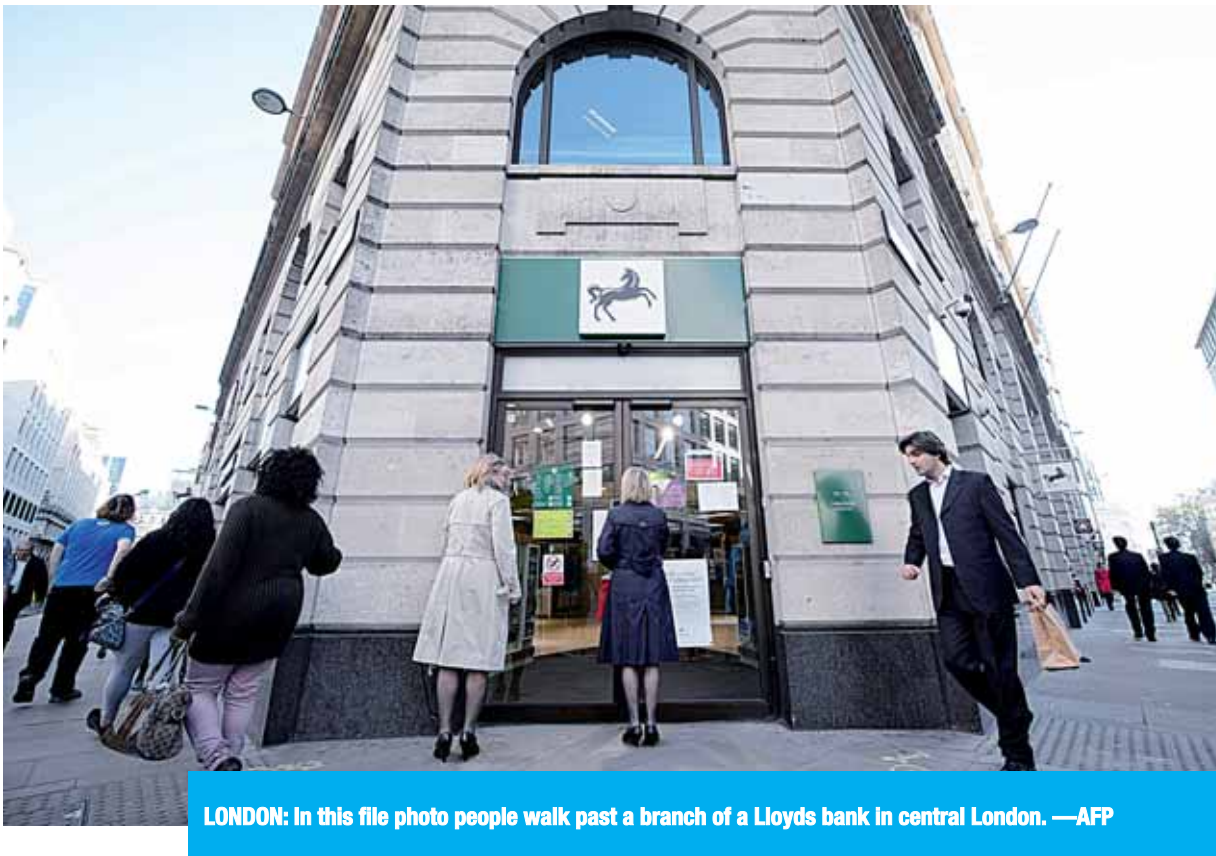
LONDON: Britain’s Lloyds Banking Group, bailed out by the government during the global financial crisis, yesterday logged strong first-quarter profits on the back of the “resilient” UK economy.

Earnings after taxation, or net profits, jumped 29 percent to £1.15 billion (\$1.61 billion, 1.31 billion euros) in the three months to the end of March from a year earlier, the lender said in a results statement. LBG, which returned to full private ownership last year following its financial rescue by the UK government a decade ago, added that pre-tax profits swelled 23 percent to £1.6 billion.

The group however took another £90 million in costs for payment protection insurance (PPI) mis-selling claims, taking its total bill for the saga to an eye-watering £18.8 billion. The London-listed financial services giant, whose brands include Lloyds, Halifax, Bank of Scotland and Scottish Widows, operates primarily in Britain with about 27 million commercial and residential customers. “We have made a strong start to 2018,” said chief executive Antonio Hora-Osorio.

“The UK economy continues to be resilient, benefiting from low unemployment and continued GDP (gross domestic product) growth,” he added. “Asset quality remains strong with no deterioration seen across the portfolio. “We expect the economy to continue to perform along these lines during 2018.” Britain’s government rescued Lloyds with £20 billion of taxpayers’ money at the height of the global financial crisis.

Lloyds Banking Group was created by a merger of Lloyds TSB and rival British lender HBOS in late 2008.



LONDON: In this file photo people walk past a branch of a Lloyds bank in central London. —AFP

India merger to create world’s second-largest mobile mast firm

MUMBAI: India’s Bharti Infratel and Indus Towers said yesterday that they had agreed to merge in a deal that will create the world’s second-largest mobile mast company. The merged entity will boast 163,000 towers

However, HBOS was saddled with toxic or high-risk property investments, and LBG subsequently received the vast state bailout. Lloyds returned to full private ownership in May 2017 after the government had steadily offloaded its stake by returning about £21 billion to the taxpayer.

In yesterday morning deals, Lloyds shares slid 0.35

percent to 65.89 pence, mirroring broader losses on London’s benchmark FTSE 100 stocks index.

“For the most part this is an impressive update with the potential for future growth becoming crystal clear,” said Interactive Investor analyst Richard Hunter. “Unfortunately the share price has not kept up with developments,” he added. —AFP

across India, behind just China Towers for the number of masts internationally, the firms announced in separate statements to Indian stock exchanges.

“The combined company will be the largest tower company in the world outside China,” Bharti Infratel said. The merged business will be called Indus Towers. Wednesday’s deal values it at more than \$14 billion.

Indian telecom operator, Bharti Airtel, which owns a majority stake in Infratel, will hold the largest share, ahead of Vodafone. The merger is expected to be completed by March next year.

The deal comes as Vodafone’s India operations and Idea Cellular await approval from Indian regulators for their own proposed merger. It would see the combined firm overtake Bharti Airtel as the country’s largest mobile phone carrier. Vodafone and Idea may decide to sell their stakes in Indus Towers to fund the merger, Indian business dailies have speculated. India telecom operators have been rushing to merge or sell assets since Asia’s richest man Mukesh Ambani sparked a price war in the telecoms market with the launch of the Reliance Jio network in 2016. —AFP

Kenya economy seen rebounding after election slowdown

NAIROBI: Kenya’s economy is expected to rebound to 5.8 percent growth in 2018 after electoral uncertainty and drought cut last year’s expansion to the lowest level in more than five years, Finance Minister Henry Rotich said yesterday. The economy will benefit from increased investment in key areas like manufacturing, farming, housing and health-care, he said. President Uhuru Kenyatta won re-election in November in a second vote after the first in August was annulled by the Supreme Court citing irregularities. Around 100 people, mainly opposition supporters, were killed mainly by police during the prolonged election season.

“Despite the slowdown in 2017 our outlook is bright,” Rotich said at the launch of the annual economic survey. “We expect growth to recover to 5.8 percent in 2018 and over the medium term the growth is projected to increase by more than 7 percent.”

Growth slowed to 4.9 percent last year from a revised 5.9 percent in 2016, the statistics office said.

Kenya’s diversified economy is better able to withstand shocks like the commodity price drop that started in 2014 and hit oil-producing African countries such as Nigeria and Angola. But its economy was hobbled by a severe drought in the first quarter of last year that was followed by poor rainfall.

The services sector including tourism grew strongly last year and that helped to offset the slowdown in farming and manufacturing, said Zachary Mwangi, director general of the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. Tourism is vital for hard currency and jobs and grew 14.7 percent while earnings surged 20 percent, he said.

In contrast, growth in the agriculture sector, which accounts for close to a third of overall output, slid to just 1.6 percent in 2017 from 5.1 percent the year before.

The government says manufacturing is a priority due to its potential to create jobs and it grew at 0.2 percent last year from 2.7 percent the year before. Production of cement, sugar and processed milk slid as firms reeled from the impact of the election and high costs.

Rotich said the projected economic rebound is supported by favorable economic fundamentals including inflation, which has dropped to about 4 percent this year. “The ongoing investments in infrastructure, improved business and factory confidence and strong private consumption are expected to support growth,” he said. —Reuters

Turkey raises key interest rate ahead of snap polls

ANKARA: Turkey’s central bank yesterday hiked one of its main interest rates as the lira faces pressure and inflation remains high ahead of snap polls in June. The bank said in a statement that it lifted the late liquidity window (LLW) interest rate by 75 basis points from 12.75 percent to 13.5 percent.

Economists had expected a 50bps rate increase in the LLW and it is the first rise since December. The Turkish lira rose to nearly 0.7 percent against the US dollar at 4.05 immediately after the announcement by 1200 GMT it was at 4.09 against the greenback. Inflation is at 10.23 percent, double the central bank’s official target of 5 percent. The bank said on its website the overnight lending rate would remain at 9.25 percent in line with expectations. The one-week repurchasing (repo) rate remained unchanged at 8.0 percent and the overnight borrowing rate was kept at 7.25 percent.

The central bank employs multiple interest rates-which it often changes at different times-in a complex monetary policy strategy. —AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL			
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL	
Europe			
British Pound	0.414948	0.422448	
Czech Korune	0.006433	0.015733	
Danish Krone	0.045308	0.050308	
Euro	0.362214	0.369714	
Georgian Lari	0.119781	0.119781	
Hungarian 0.001084	0.001274		
Norwegian Krone	0.033961	0.039161	
Romanian Leu	0.062068	0.078918	
Russian Ruble	0.004874	0.004874	
Slovakia	0.008958	0.018958	
Swedish Krona	0.031280	0.036280	
Swiss Franc	0.300286	0.311288	
Australasia			
Australian Dollar	0.219712	0.231712	
New Zealand Dollar	0.207236	0.216736	
America			
Canadian Dollar	0.229042	0.238042	
US Dollars	0.297250	0.301650	
US Dollars Mint	0.297750	0.301650	
Asia			
Bangladesh Taka	0.003198	0.003782	
Chinese Yuan	0.046298	0.049796	
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036329	0.039079	
Indian Rupee	0.004086	0.004727	
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023	
Japanese Yen	0.002676	0.002856	
Korean Won	0.000268	0.000283	
Malaysian Ringgit	0.073189	0.079189	
Nepalese Rupee	0.002977	0.003147	
Pakistan Rupee	0.002498	0.002788	
Philippine Peso	0.005655	0.005955	
Singapore Dollar	0.221743	0.231743	
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001610	0.002190	
Taiwan	0.010014	0.010194	
Thai Baht	0.009221	0.009771	
Arab			
Bahraini Dinar	0.792705	0.801205	
Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd			
Rate for Transfer		Selling Rate	
US Dollar		301.000	
Canadian Dollar		235.025	
Sterling Pound		421.915	
Euro		369.235	
Swiss Frank		297.965	
Bahraini Dinar		800.470	
UAE Dirhams		82.355	
Qatari Riyals		83.585	
Saudi Riyals		81.160	
Jordanian Dinar		425.820	
Egyptian Pound		17.013	
Sri Lankan Rupees		1.916	
Indian Rupees		4.538	
Pakistani Rupees		2.604	
Bangladesh Taka		3.611	
Philippines Peso		5.770	
Cyprus pound		17.915	
Japanese Yen		3.760	
Syrian Pound		1.585	
Nepalese Rupees		2.830	
Malaysian Ringgit		77.880	
Chinese Yuan Renminbi		48.140	
Thai Bhat		10.550	
Turkish Lira		74.000	

Business



KUWAIT: Officials of Zain and Huawei during the first Zain-Huawei Carrier Conference 2018 in Kuwait.

Zain, Huawei hold conference on digital transformation

Event supports Zain's future rollout of 5G, AI, Cloud and dynamic B2B services

EDITORIAL

Share the benefits of opening-up together

By WangDi

Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the State of Kuwait

On the morning of April 10th, the 2018 annual meeting of the Boao Forum for Asia officially opened in Boao, Hainan, with the theme "An Open and Innovative Asia for a World of Greater Prosperity". The forum attracted more than 2,000 delegates from 63 countries including heads of state and international organizations, politicians, businessmen, experts and scholars in different fields.

The keynote speech delivered by President Xi Jinping at the opening ceremony, which is titled "Openness for Greater Prosperity, Innovation for a Better Future", focused on the common development and progress of China and the world, declared solemnly China's firm determination to expand opening-up, setting a good example for the world to follow the trend of our times and advance the well-being of all people.

President Xi pointed out that China has grown into the world's second largest economy, the largest industrial producer, the largest trader of goods, and the holder of the largest foreign exchange reserves. Over the past 40 years, China's GDP has averaged an annual growth rate of around 9.5 percent in comparable prices and its foreign trade has registered an annual growth of 14.5 percent in US dollar. The speech profoundly summed up the great achievements, valuable experience of China's reform and opening-up, and its positive contributions to the world in the past 40 years, highlighting the great power of guiding vision, institutional guarantee and the strength of the 1.3 billion Chinese people driving history forward.

At the opening ceremony, president Xi has announced a series of important new measures to expand opening-up, promising to ease market access, improve investment environment, enhance IPR protection, and take the initiative to expand imports. These measures were made in line with China's own development needs, timetable and roadmap, based on its consistent policy proposals. China will implement these measures as soon as possible so that the outcomes of our opening-up efforts will deliver benefits to all enterprises and people in China and around the world in the near future.

The world is undergoing a new round of major development, great change and profound readjustment. Humankind still faces many instabilities and uncertainties. A comprehensive study of world development tra-

jectories shows that economic globalization is an irreversible trend of our times, that openness and innovation are of great significance for the common development of the world. The "Belt and Road Initiative" and other series of Chinese programs are aimed at promoting the construction of an open world economy with practical actions and making economic globalization more open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial to all.

Reform policy

For 40 years, China's policy of reform and opening-up has been consistent, during which China has completed the transformation from "world factory" to "world market" and is marching toward "a manufacturer" toward "a creator". These achievements prove that opening-up was key to China's economic growth and in the same vein, high-quality development of China's economy in the future can only be achieved with greater openness. "China's door of opening-up will not be closed and will only open even wider!"

In recent years, pragmatic cooperation between China and Kuwait has yielded fruitful results. China is currently Kuwait's largest source of imports and the sixth largest export of non-oil products. The volume of trade between the two countries in 2017 has reached \$12.04 billion with year-on-year growth of 28.5 percent. Kuwait is one of the most important crude oil suppliers for China. In 2017, China imported 18.24 million tons of crude oil from Kuwait, with 11.6 percent of year-on-year growth, worth \$7.05 billion. China has implemented 80 contracting projects in Kuwait, covering oil field services, exploration, refining, housing, infrastructure, telecommunications and other fields, with a total contract value of \$14.858 billion.

Under the new situation of China's expanding opening-up, China and Kuwait will embrace a brighter future of their joint-construction of the "Belt and Road".

China would like to share the fruits of China's reform, opening-up and development with Kuwait and is willing to use Kuwait's "Silk City and Five Islands" project as a joint point for the "Belt and Road" cooperation between the two countries to support Kuwait's economic restructuring. In the next stage, both China and Kuwait should continue to dedicate themselves to openness and win-win outcomes, jointly implement relevant cooperation documents of "Belt and Road", further strengthen bilateral pragmatic cooperation and strategic cooperation, promote the building of an open global economy with practical actions, making outcomes of opening-up benefit the two peoples as soon as possible.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading mobile operator in Kuwait and across the region and one of its strategic partners, Huawei, a global ICT solutions provider held the first Zain-Huawei Carrier Conference 2018 in Kuwait City on the 16th and 17th April, at Zain HQ. During the event, the two companies discussed and explored the new trends, global insights, and other topics at the forefront of Digital Transformation and ICT capability development.

This event follows a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the two companies, earlier in the year, at Mobile World Congress in Barcelona. The MoU indicated that Zain will work closely with Huawei to rollout exciting and compelling innovative solutions throughout its home country of Kuwait, as well as across the region, to continue support its Digital Transformation Strategy. The two-day event saw attendance of C-Level management team, senior directors, managers and many talents from both Zain Group and Zain Kuwait. Together the teams explored the impacts of emerging technologies such as 5G, IoT, AI, Cloud and Network Synergy empower B2B activity, and studied the broader effects these will have on communities as a whole throughout the Middle East.

Strategic focus

Eaman Al-Roudhan, Zain Kuwait Chief Executive Officer commented: "As we transform into a digital services provider, the adoption and offering of innovative integrated solutions and smart services to the enterprise sector is a key strategic focus to grow our business portfolio. We recently undertook several key steps to enter the smart cities and enterprise arenas, and this conference further supports our aspirations as it introduced the latest innovations in the global ICT industry. We will continue adopting new solutions that utilize our state-of-the-art infrastructure in offering our customers an exceptional and rich

mobile experience".

Hisham Allam, Zain Group Chief Technical Officer explained, "We are decisively cooperating with Huawei because we want to be as proactive as possible in sharing ideas, technologies and perspectives in a way that is actionable. We are at the forefront of driving the conversation around ICT innovation in the telecom industry, both in Kuwait and throughout the region, and on delivering tangible results at every turn. We are thankful to all those who attended and participated in the conference, and to our partner Huawei for assisting us in pursuing our strategic digital lifestyle ambitions here in the region."

Victor Dong, Huawei, President of Zain Key Account said, "Zain continues to be a strategic partner in a part of the world where ICT services providers are growing and changing rapidly. The passion and vision we see around ICT development and digital transformation in Kuwait, and the region as a whole, is inspiring. The Conference focused on creating an open, collaborative win-win industry eco-partnership that promotes shared success and, most of all, benefiting Zain's customers. Our experience is summed up as Real-time, On-demand, All-online, DIY, and Social, or ROADS. With the support of telecom partners such as Zain, I believe we will quickly build that 'road' to the future."

ICT insights

The two-day's Zain Huawei Carrier Conference 2018 hosted leading players in the ICT industry, harnessing real-time ICT insights and exploring fast-evolving technologies. This conference supports Zain's strategic vision, which successfully tested 5G broadband technology, a major step in the expansion of the company's future services to the enterprise sector (B2B), who will depend on high speeds and large capabilities of the network, as it will enhance the experience of customers and the Internet of things (IoT). Zain, in collaboration with Huawei, previously launched a first-of-its-kind Joint



Innovation Center in Kuwait, to serve as a research hub from which Zain will be able to further advance its mobile broadband network, services, and applications offered to customers in Kuwait and across the region.

These initiatives and new innovative business services will enable Zain to unleash its full potential in the digital community, enhance ICT collaboration on multiple fronts and stimulate its efforts to become a leader in providing customers an enriching digital lifestyle. With the combination of diverse wireless connectivity, mobility, IoT, cloud computing and big data innovative technologies, 5G offers a more comprehensive set of capabilities than other communication technologies. The 5G communication infrastructure will become a platform that realizes the target of enabling multiple industries with a single network. By taking advantage of the rapid and reliable communication capabilities of 5G networks, as well as the enormous number of connections, 5G will enable operators to better serve customers in all industries. Telecom operators will be able to position themselves as the 'best enablers' for industry applications.

Zain and Huawei discuss digital, ICT development

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Zain held the first Zain Huawei Carrier Conference 2018 in Kuwait City last week at Zain HQ. The two companies discussed and explored the new trends, global insights and other topics at the forefront of digital transformation and ICT capability development.

On the sidelines of the conference, Victor (dong Ming), President, Zain Key Account Department in Middle East region, spoke to Kuwait Times about Huawei's vision as a leading global ICT solutions provider and strategic partner with Zain. Regarding the reasons behind hosting the conference, Victor said Huawei continues exploring and introducing compelling and innovative technologies. "When I came to Kuwait two years ago, I was shocked by the technology development in Kuwait. It was different from what I had in my mind, the improvements equaled what we had in Europe then," he said.

About the 5G network, Victor revealed that Kuwait will be the first to launch it in the Middle East, stating "Huawei has been the key strategic partner with Zain for nearly 12 years. We built the first 4G network together in Kuwait. Our purpose is to work on a better network for the future of ICT technology development and to reach people's life where Huawei has achieved significant breakthroughs in end-to-end 5G system innovation. We will continue our efforts towards contributing to a unified global standard and achieving a win-win industry chain in close collaboration with the whole industry."

Vision

Regarding Huawei's view and vision, he said that the 5G is promising to be the framework for the connected world, with things, data applications,



Victor and Hisham Allam during the conference in Kuwait.

transport systems and cities seamlessly talking to one another and sharing information to improve quality of life. It will provide massive seamless connectivity for all devices, in hyper real-time speed, and with low latency. This will support countless devices hitting the network and trying to gain access at the same time, as well as support various types of car technology. The 5G is accelerating pace towards a better-connected world. It is widely anticipated that the near future eventually will witness the materialization of new experiences and applications like driverless car, remote surgery, virtual reality, and VR-based immersive entertainment. He also spoke about the vision of future collaboration between Huawei and Zain saying that both sides are working together to design an innovative network architecture in order to support Zain's digital transformation. The companies signed an MoU to focus on digital transformation and talent development at the MWC2018 in Barcelona. The cooperation will also see both parties focus on exploiting the vast opportunities in cloud services.

Smart city

"Huawei is working on the smart city where most of the city will be smart such as smart parking, CCTV security cameras all over the country will make a safer city. We are in discussion on installing 2,500 CCTV cameras in Kuwait. This technology will not only benefit the government of Kuwait but also private companies who could mon-

itor their goods," he noted.

Victor added that the Kuwaiti market should be more open and give more freedom to operators. "The Kuwait market must expand because I see people want to do something more and we should give them more room to do it. Kuwait needs to host more similar conferences and events and enact laws to protect the operators in order to strengthen the economy. If we stop investing, we will lose our future," he concluded.

Hisham Allam, Chief Technology Officer at Zain Group, said that Huawei as one of Zain's strategic vendors, supplies most of Zain's technology. "We are always looking to improve our services and evaluating the customers' experience ahead of the 5G launch".

Allam said, "We are holding a workshop today which is an annual event. You will also find demos of the latest Huawei's technology and the roadmaps. The new technology will be faster and will provide better services and the after-sales services. The customers can communicate with us through an app and launch complaints if they experience any problem. We will be offering them help if they need it."

He said that a lot of new services are available today. "In order to serve well, we need to see what is the problem. The cooperation between Zain and Huawei will demonstrate the strength of the partnership focusing on developing and improving the products," he added.

Business

Grant Thornton supports gender equality in workplace, says CEO

Bodin visits Kuwait to meet over 100 local clients

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The newly-appointed Global CEO of Grant Thornton Peter Bodin is in Kuwait to participate in the annual regional meeting of GT member firms in the Middle East. “I will be meeting clients inside and outside the firm and will attend the regional meeting with about 50 leaders from Thornton in this region. This is my second visit to the region after visiting Dubai previously. We have a strong business and presence in the Kuwaiti market, as we have over 100 local clients. Grant Thornton has been in Kuwait for over 30 years,” he told Kuwait Times. Grant Thornton is a network of independent assurance, tax and advisory firms, made up of 50,000 people in over 135 countries to help dynamic organizations unlock their potential for growth.



Global CEO of Grant Thornton Peter Bodin



KUWAIT: Global CEO of Grant Thornton Peter Bodin with officials in Kuwait during his visit. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



Thornton helps organizations realize their strategic goals

Grant Thornton supports gender equality in the workplace. “We are a network of about of 50,000 people. One of the most important and strongest global drivers is to get more diverse and gender-balanced businesses. I support this as I think it's important for any business. To be sustainable long-term, it's important to have a gender-balanced leadership in companies,” explained Bodin.

Bodin is optimistic regarding the global economy. “Of course businesses face challenges, but on the global stage, it's a positive economy at the moment. GDP is expected to grow globally and this comes from different places. We do researches on companies, and they were not so optimistic about the future during the past few years as they are at the moment. Many changes are taking place in almost every company and industry. The challenge is to transform the business so it can grow in the long term,” he noted.

Technology

Technology is a very important aspect for any company. “Globalization and technology-driven businesses are a strong force. It's a challenge to have a global business, and companies are changing their business models. Governments also look to build a stronger infrastructure for companies to grow,” Bodin pointed out.

The GCC market is a good market, said Bodin. “There are many good things here. It's building a strong infra-

structure for companies to come here and invest. Technology skills are increasing, and there are many talents in this area. I think this combination makes it a good place to invest. We also see strong trade and capital flows going to this region, so it's a good market for the future,” he stated.

“As a professional business company, we are facing a lot of disruption in our industry, so we need to develop technology in all areas to interact with clients. We invested a lot of money in the last five years to get various working tools, especially on the audit side, so we do much more value-driven audit. There is a lot of innovation in technology going on all over the world: cloud accounting systems and others are changing our business. Most of these initiatives are also client-driven, which helps our relationship,” stressed Bodin.

Cyber threats

But most businesses face cyber threats. “Cyber threat is the biggest threat for any business today in the world,

and we need to invest in protection to be safe. It's same all over the world and we need to invest in this area to be protected against such attacks, as it may take the business down in a very short time if it's not protected,” he explained. “We have to change culture in the organization to be future fit for the change that we are facing - to change and develop the leadership and the culture, and to take the people that we have in the organization with you on that journey and change their minds, which is an even bigger challenge than technology for any business. Number one priority for the business is leadership and how you lead the organization,” concluded Bodin.

For more than 100 years, Grant Thornton has helped dynamic organizations realize their strategic ambitions. Whether you're looking to finance growth, manage risk and regulation, optimize your operations or realize stakeholder value, Grant Thornton can help you. It's got scale, combined with local market understanding. That means it's everywhere you are, as well as where you want to be.

Schools, water are priorities as Saudi Arabia launches privatization plan

DUBAI: School buildings and desalination facilities producing fresh water will feature in some of the first deals as Saudi Arabia transfers a quarter of its economy to private hands, an official overseeing the process said yesterday.

Turki A. Al Hokail, chief executive of the National Centre for Privatization and Public-Private Partnerships, was speaking as the government formally launched a vast privatization program focusing on 10 sectors of the economy. Riyadh is working on new rules to attract foreign as well as local capital to the scheme and will address potential investors' concern about their level of control over projects, including their ability to hire and fire workers, Hokail said.

“This is a big change in the economy. The government is moving from operating projects to monitoring and regulating them,” he said in a telephone interview. “Operations will be the job of the private sector.” Riyadh announced on Tuesday that it aimed to generate 35 billion to 40

billion riyals (\$9 billion to \$11 billion) of non-oil state revenues from the privatisation programme by 2020, part of a drive to cut Saudi Arabia's reliance on oil exports.

Some of the money is to come from asset sales in sectors such as education, water, telecommunications and health care. Some of those sales could occur through initial public offers of shares, while others might be direct transfers.

Hokail said Riyadh was willing in principle to consider sales of 100 percent stakes in state firms, but decisions on each deal would depend on investor demand and market conditions.

The rest of the money would come from public-private partnerships (PPPs) - deals in which private companies invest in infrastructure and are paid to operate it for a period, before eventually transferring it to the state.

Draft law

Eventually, the privatization program aims to boost the private sector's contribution to Saudi gross domestic product to 65 percent from 40 percent, easing pressure on government finances that have been strained by low oil prices.

“It seeks to eliminate all obstacles that may limit the private sector from playing a larger role in the development of the kingdom's economy,” Hokail said, adding that Riyadh was also revising rules on state procurement, markets and other areas.

Authorities hope to offer a draft law on PPP

frameworks for public consultation and feedback within a week or so, before implementing a final version later this year, Hokail said.

The lack of such a law, and other legal uncertainties over ownership of state assets, have prevented significant progress in the privatization program since authorities began talking about it two years ago. The relatively modest financial targets for the initial years of the scheme suggest authorities may have scaled back their expectations because of legal and other difficulties.

Initially, officials talked of raising \$200 billion over an unspecified period. Both the old and the new revenue targets are separate from Riyadh's intention to raise about \$100 billion from the sale of a stake in national oil giant Saudi Aramco, which is to take place this year or next.

Hokail said authorities aimed by 2020 to completed five asset sales, 14 PPPs and four corporatization exercises, in which state projects would be converted into independent firms in preparation for their possible sale at a later date.

Among plans in the pipeline are the sale of the Ras Al-Khair desalination and power plant, as well as flour mills and football teams; a PPP for private companies to build and operate facilities for 60 schools; and the corporatization of ports. Hokail said authorities would be choosy about the identity of buyers of state assets, vetting them on issues such as their intention to add value to the economy, boost employment and develop local talent among staff. — Reuters

Trump, Apple CEO to meet as US-China row roils tech sector

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump will meet with Apple Inc Chief Executive Officer Tim Cook, as the technology industry finds itself in the crosshairs of a US trade spat with China, a manufacturing hub for the iPhone maker and other companies. It was not clear what Trump and Cook planned to discuss, and representatives for Apple did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Representatives for the White House also did not immediately reply.

Apple and other hardware makers have deep ties with China, where they build most of their products for export around the world. Cook urged calm and called for more open trade after Trump announced he would impose tariffs on certain Chinese imports, and China retaliated with tariffs on US imports.

Trump has a tense relationship with the US technology industry, based in Democratic strongholds such as California's Silicon Valley and Seattle. He has clashed with the tech sector on a wide variety of issues including trade, immigration and the environment.

Cook, who attended Trump's first state dinner at the White House on Tuesday night, has publicly objected to the president's decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, and criticized the US president's comments after last year's violence in Charlottesville, Virginia. US and Chinese officials have been working to resolve the feud between the world's two largest economies. Trump in March vowed to impose about \$50 billion of US tariffs on Chinese imports, prompting China to retaliate with tariffs on about \$3 billion of US imports.—Reuters

Dow futures erase losses after Boeing results

NEW YORK: Dow Jones Industrial Average futures erased losses yesterday after Boeing reported strong results and forecast, but concerns about rising US bond yields and corporate costs continued to weigh on US stocks.

Boeing, the world's biggest planemaker, rose 2.1 percent after it reported a higher-than-expected quarterly profit and raised its full-year forecast for earnings and cash flow.

The blue-chip Dow was on track to open 16 points higher, while the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq were on track for slight losses. The yield on 10-year US Treasury notes, the benchmark for global interest rates, held above 3 percent after crossing the level for the first time in four years on Tuesday, stoking concerns about higher borrowing rates for companies.

Alphabet's shares fell after the company said it expected a surge in costs on Monday, while Caterpillar noted first-quarter earnings would be the “high water mark” for the year and warned of higher material costs. Investors are watchful about other companies raising such warnings, as inflation is picking up and the Federal Reserve is in no mood to put the brakes on its own rate-hike program. “The markets are reacting to yields moving higher,” said Peter Cardillo, chief market economist at Spartan Capital Securities in New York. “The new trading range will continue to cap equities from positively responding to good earnings news.”

Reuters data shows that analysts are now estimating 21.1 percent profit growth in the first quarter among the S&P 500 companies, com-

pared with 18.6 percent growth rate at the start of the earnings season. Dow e-minis were up 10 points, or 0.04 percent, with 53,518 contracts changing hands. S&P 500 e-minis were down 7.25 points, or 0.28 percent, with 203,956 contracts traded. Nasdaq 100 e-minis were down 10.75 points, or 0.16 percent, on volume of 71,813 contracts.

The CBOE Volatility index, a gauge of short-term stock market volatility jumped to more than 1-week high to 18.56 points. Comcast fell 1.9 percent after the US cable company submitted a \$31 billion offer for pay-TV group Sky , challenging an already agreed but lower takeover bid from Rupert Murdoch's Fox. Viacom rose 1.23 percent after the media company reported better-than-expected quarterly results. Twitter jumped 4.2 percent after reporting its second profitable quarter and topping Wall Street estimates for revenue and monthly active users.

STATUS UPDATE

Facebook's results are due after the closing bell. Revenues are expected to be up sharply but focus will all be on what impact the scandal over the misuse of tens of millions of its users' data has had on usage of the social media site.

Creeping gains in US Treasury yields are also fuelling nerves that portfolio managers may move money into safer fixed-income securities at the expense of riskier assets such as stocks and emerging markets. The 10-year US Treasuries yield rose to as high as 3.02 percent. A break above its January 2014 peak of 3.041 percent could turn investors even more bearish. Fed Funds rate futures prices have been constantly falling this month, pricing in a considerable chance of three more rate hikes by the end of this year. The impact is already reverberating in many emerging markets, with JPMorgan's emerging market bond index hitting a two-month low. —Reuters

Business

Jazeera Airways reports high double digit growth in revenue, passengers

Airline records an operating revenue of KD14.3 million in Q1 2018

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways yesterday announced its financial results for the first quarter of 2018. The results showed double digit growth in both revenue and flown passengers, in addition to a significant improvement in the bottom line.

The airline recorded an operating revenue of KD 14.3 million, up 42.7 percent from Q1 2017, and a net result of KD -0.3 million, an improvement of KD 0.636 million from Q1 2017. Jazeera

Airways' improved operational and financial performance were a result of the significant investments in customer experience enhancement, new routes launches, and higher asset utilization in 2017. The company had registered a net profit of KD8.2 million for the year 2017.

Q1 2018 Financial and Operational Highlights
Operating revenue: KD14.3 million, up 42.7

percent from Q1 2017.

* Operating profit/(loss): (KD 0.46 million), an improvement of KD0.572 million from Q1 2017

* Net profit / (loss): (KD0.3 million), an improvement of KD 0.636 from Q1 2017

* Passengers: 403,863, up 43.1 percent from Q1 2017

* Fleet utilization: 11.8 hours, up 25.7 percent from Q1 2017

* Load factor: 75.8 percent, up 5.4 percent from Q1 2017. Jazeera Airways Chairman

Marwan Boodai said, "Despite the first quarter being a low travel season historically, we saw a 43.1 percent increase in flown passengers this year, a 42.7 percent growth in topline earnings, and significant improvement in our bottom line earnings. The Board is pleased to see the efforts and investments through-



out 2017 are creating a positive impact as early as the first quarter of 2018.

Looking ahead, the rest of the year is looking incredibly exciting for our business with our very own dedicated terminal coming on-line in mid-May, in addition to new routes, and new additions to the fleet".

Germany trims 2018 growth forecast but remains upbeat

BERLIN: The German government yesterday lowered its forecast for 2018 growth to 2.3 percent from 2.4 percent previously and expressed concern about international trade tensions, but insisted the "economy remains buoyant and the upturn is continuing".

The news of the trimmed forecast, confirming news reported by Reuters, came after the Ifo economic institute's business confidence measure on Tuesday showed a fifth consecutive fall in April.

Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said that, despite the dip in the Ifo index from high levels, Germany's upswing was broad. "Germany is doing well economically, actually we are doing very well," Altmaier told a news conference. "We see that German manufacturers' order books are well filled."

He said one million more people would have jobs in 2019 than in 2017, while unemployment would hit a record low. That increase in new jobs combined with rising incomes means consumer demand is likely to be strong, the ministry said. It added that corporate investment would also remain dynamic. Surveys suggest that growth in Germany and the broader euro zone has steadily slowed since January as a result of euro strength and fears of a trade war between China and the United States.

The Economy Ministry said foreign trade was unlikely to make a significant contribution to growth.

Altmaier expressed concern about developments in international trade, but added that it would be negligent to end up in a trade conflict with the United States, which has imposed tariffs on imports of steel and aluminum from some countries. Speaking days before Chancellor Angela Merkel travels to Washington to hold talks with US President Donald Trump on the issue, Altmaier said:

"I remain convinced that it would be careless to stumble into a trade conflict, so I think a consensual solution should take precedence over a confrontational one."

Trump has given the EU until May 1 to negotiate permanent exemptions from the tariffs. Asked whether the updated government growth forecasts included the scenario of a so-called 'hard Brexit', Altmaier said: "We don't know whether there will be a hard Brexit."

We are all interested in avoiding it and the EU Commission is negotiating with Britain in this spirit. Even if these negotiations were not to lead to the desired outcome, an impact on economic growth this year would be unlikely. So we are safe with the forecast for this year." — Reuters

Renault Al-Babtain displays Koleos at The Gate Mall!



KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co, the authorized agent of Renault in Kuwait displayed the powerful and refined SUV model - Renault Koleos at the Gate mall from April 19 till April 21. Delighted visitors also walked away with several grand offers namely 10 years warranty or 500,000 Km, three years' service and free registration and third party insurance.

The charismatic SUV is finely tuned with the Middle Eastern requirements backed by a local product range. In keeping with Renault's design strategy, the Koleos exterior holds a taste for adventure all that is expected of a D-segment SUV.

It's robust and muscular features amplifies the athletic exterior design with door protective moldings, large diameter two-tone alloy wheels, alloy roof rails, shark antenna, fender chrome lines and silver front skid. The four

wheel drive technology, all-terrain ability, engine and transmission line-up has been tailored to meet the needs and expectations of the Kuwaiti market. The 2.5-litre petrol engine is also an atmospheric, four-cylinder, power is 170hp (126kW) at 6,000rpm, with peak torque of 233Nm at 4,000rpm.

Ensuring equal appeal internally, it is embedded with comfortable seats including technology and design amongst the very best in its category, class-leading cabin space, including 289mm of rear knee room, 8.7" touchscreen tablet with R-LINK 2 multimedia & navigation system.

Koleos drivers can indulge in the Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) such as Easy Park Assist and Blind Spot Warning. Renault Al-Babtain encourages Renault fans to visit its showroom in Rai & to enjoy the test drive experience.



Honda Alghanim sponsors Lamees Nijem's North Pole Expedition 2018

KUWAIT: Committed towards its role in supporting the society and youth in particular, Honda Alghanim, the exclusive distributor of Honda cars, motorcycles and marine equipment in Kuwait, sponsored Lamees Nijem, the first Kuwaiti woman to ski to the North Pole in The Women's Euro-Arabian North Pole Expedition 2018.

Aiming to inspire all women across the globe to reach beyond the expectations of others and fulfil their own life ambitions, an international team of women from Europe and the Middle East set out to ski to the last degree of the North Pole, spending 10 days on the shifting ice of the Arctic Ocean to reach the top of the world in April 2018. The Euro-Arabian North Pole Expedition 2018 team led by the record making British polar explorer, Felicity Aston MBE, is formed of 11 women from the UK, Russia, Slovenia, France, Cyprus, Sweden, Qatar, Oman, KSA, and Kuwait.

Throughout their journey, participating women will work on fostering greater dialogue and understanding between one another whether having a Western or Arabian cultural background. Team members will be taking part as well in two scientific studies, the "East - Sleep - Ski" and the "Extreme Psychology" which will tackle the impact of extreme environments on the body and mind.

Honda Alghanim sponsorship comes as



part of the company's corporate responsibility and "Power of Dreams" philosophy that keeps on guiding and inspiring it to move forward. Built on dreams, the company not only seeks to create innovative products but also to establish an everlasting impact on the society, and especially the youths, while creating value

and brining joy to people's lives.

Alghanim Motors, the exclusive distributor of Honda automobiles, motorcycles, power products, and marine products in Kuwait, is committed to providing customers with flexible payment solutions and efficient and cost-effective services.



Lufthansa voted 'Best European Airline' serving the Middle East

KUWAIT: Lufthansa has been named Best European Airline serving the Middle East at the Business Traveller Awards 2018 last night in Dubai. The award underlines the airline's strong commitment in the region and long-lasting presence in the UAE market. This achievement follows a historic year for the airline, as Lufthansa became the only European 5-Star airline, after receiving the prestigious accolade from Skytrax in December 2017.

"This award simply proves that our customers in the Middle East appreciate Lufthansa's wide-range offering of innovative products and services. Our long-term commitment to the market combined with our major investments in digitalization and modernization has led us to receive this well-deserved recognition," said, Karsten Zang, Senior Director Sales Gulf, Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, Lufthansa Group after accepting the great honor. The Business Traveller Awards recognize and celebrate the achievements of the industry's leading players who have performed outstandingly in their chosen field over the last 12 months. As well as winning the Best European Airline serving the Middle East, Lufthansa was shortlisted for three other categories, including Airline with The Best Cabin Crew, Airline with The Best Premium Economy Class and Airline with the Best Frequent Flyer Program. Lufthansa Group airline SWISS was also shortlisted for Best European Airline Serving the Middle East.



(Left to right): Rosie dela Rosa, Senior Manager Marketing - Lufthansa, Karsten Zang, Senior Director Sales Gulf, Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, Lufthansa Group and Elette I Griffith, Marketing Communication & Product Manager - Gulf, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.



(Left to right): Frank Gardner OBE, Karsten Zang, Senior Director Sales Gulf, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Lufthansa Group and Gerard Seeber, Australian Consul General in Dubai and Senior Trade Commissioner.

Technology

Twitter momentum grows with second straight profit quarter

Boosted by strong growth in advertising revenue

WASHINGTON: Twitter reported its second consecutive quarterly profit yesterday in a positive sign for the short messaging service after years in the red. The San Francisco-based social network earned \$61 million in the first three months of the year, boosted by strong growth in advertising revenue and modest gains in users.

First quarter revenues rose 21 percent from a year ago to \$665 million, and the key figure of monthly active users increased by six million from late last year to 336 million. Shares reversed pre-market gains and fell 3.9 percent to \$29.25 in morning trade on Wall Street following the stronger-than-expected numbers. Twitter stock has nearly doubled from a year ago, when concerns were high over the future of the service. Chief executive Jack Dorsey said the recent changes made to the service have helped “engagement,” a measure of how often people turn to the social network and how long they stay.

“We continued our work to make it easier for people to follow topics, interest and events on Twitter with new curated timelines of tweets around breaking news and sports events at the top of the home timeline, and launched new product features, including video time stamps and bookmarks to help people discover and discuss what’s happening,” Dorsey told a conference call. Advertising remained the key driver of revenue growth for Twitter, rising 21 percent

from a year ago to \$575 million. Ned Segal, Twitter’s chief financial officer, said the company saw “growth across all major products and geographies in the first quarter.”

Beyond the core

The move into profitability is an important achievement for Twitter, which has lost money consistently since its public offering, sparking speculation over whether it needed to sell itself to keep operating. While Twitter has built a solid core base of celebrities, politicians and journalists, it has failed to match the broader appeal of Facebook and other social platforms, hurting its ability to bring in ad revenues.

The network has stepped up efforts to boost its user base and engagement, adding streaming video partnerships, doubling the character limit on tweets to 280 and making it easier to create “tweetstorms” by stringing messaging together. It has also moved largely to an algorithmic-based feed using artificial intelligence that aims to deliver more tweets that drive interest and engagement. Brian Wieser of Pivotal Research Group said the report showed “spectacular revenue growth driven by international activity,” offsetting “lepid US results.” Wieser said Twitter is showing movement toward a “durable” platform but sees broader growth more difficult. “As with Facebook, investor sentiment around

Twitter will undoubtedly swing wildly around recent momentum in any given direction, making the stock itself riskier than the company in many ways,” Wieser said in a research note.

More positive outlook

Debra Aho Williamson at research firm eMarketer said Twitter’s ad performance has been improving and predicts the platform will take a 1.6 percent share of display ad revenue worldwide. She said eMarketer has increased its revenue estimates for Twitter “because we are seeing strong performance in its non-US mobile ad business, as well as better performance for direct response and video advertising.” Williamson added that Twitter’s deal to stream content from the FIFA World Cup is likely to “create a more positive outlook for the company.” The earnings report comes with social networks under fire over protecting private user data and curbing so-called hate speech, fake accounts manipulating public debate and incitement of violence on their platforms.

Facebook, which was set to report earnings later Wednesday, has been under fire over the hijacking of private data on some 87 million users by a consulting firm linked to Donald Trump’s 2016 campaign. Dorsey said that at Twitter, “we believe privacy is a fundamental right for everyone,” and that he does not anticipate the same kinds of issues as Facebook.



NEW YORK CITY: In this file photo taken on February 8, 2018 the Twitter logo is displayed on a banner outside the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). — AFP

“We are different from our peers in that Twitter is public and... all of our data is out in the public, out in the open, and our data business just organizes that public data in real-time to make it

easier for brands, researchers and organizations to utilize it,” Dorsey said. “We do not provide any personal identifiable information that’s not already visible on the service.” —AFP

N Korea’s elite quitting Facebook, concealing internet activity

WASHINGTON: North Korea’s ruling class has in recent months abandoned Western social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Alphabet’s Google and dramatically increased its use of tools that cloak Internet activity, according to cyber security research published yesterday. The reclusive country’s small percentage of Internet-connected leaders is preferring to use Chinese services such as Alibaba, Tencent and Baidu, US-based cyber intelligence firm Recorded Future said in a report.

Between December 2017 and March 15 this year, North Korea’s elite increased by 1,200 percent its use of services such as virtual private networks and the Tor anonymity used to obfuscate Internet activity, the firm said. Recorded Future said it analyzed Internet protocol ranges associated with North Korea and other open-source information in its research.

Priscilla Moriuchi, director of strategic threat development at Record Future and author of the report, said that Pyongyang’s effort to mask Internet activity showed it was not being fully transparent before a planned meeting between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on denuclearization.

Trump on Tuesday called Kim “very honorable” and praised him for being “very open,” but he tempered expectations for any quick denuclearization deal by saying “it may be we’re all wasting a lot of time.” Statements describing the country as being more open were “in contrast with what we have observed in North Korea’s online behavior,” said Moriuchi, a former senior US intelligence official who studied Asia-based cyber threats. “It is a difference of data vs. diplomacy, or action against words.”

Internet access is strictly limited in North Korea. It is not known how many people there have direct access to the global Internet, but estimates generally place the figure at a small fraction of one percent of the population of about 25 million. Moriuchi said the change in online behavior may be because there is more foreign research and attention on how North Koreans use the internet. It may also be the result of stricter enforcement of an official ban against Western social media services and a desire to increase online security among North Korean’s senior leadership, Moriuchi said. —Reuters

Cyber-crime website behind four million attacks taken down

LONDON: A British and Dutch-led operation yesterday brought down a website linked to more than four million cyber-attacks around the world, with banking giants among the victims, Britain’s National Crime Agency said. “Authorities in five countries including the Netherlands, Serbia, Croatia and Canada, with support from Police Scotland and Europol, targeted six members of the crime group behind webstresser.org,” the NCA said in a statement.

Cyber-criminals used the website’s services, which could be rented for as little as \$14.99, to launch so-called distributed denial of service (DDOS) attacks, which swamp targets with traffic and disable their IT systems. British police searched an address in Bradford, northern England, and seized a number of items, while Dutch police, with assistance from Germany and the United States, seized servers and took down the website.

Police believe an individual linked to the address used the site, the world’s largest illegal DDOS seller, to hit seven of Britain’s biggest banks in November, forcing them to reduce operations. “Stressers” services give users the ability to stress-test the resilience of servers, causing disruption to the target. “A significant criminal website has been shut down and the sophisticated crime group behind it stopped as a result of an international investigation,” said the NCA’s Jo Goodall. —AFP

Amazon.com plays catch-up in Brazil as local rivals thrive

SAO PAULO: Claudia Maria de Oliveira is leery of online shopping. But while browsing social media recently, the 49-year-old Brazilian spotted a bargain-priced sandwich press from local retailer Magazine Luiza SA. She swallowed her doubts and hit the “buy” button. Two days later she picked up her first-ever online purchase at a mall in Sao Paulo.

“I took the risk,” said Oliveira, who cleans offices for a living. “If I have any trouble with it, at least I know I can come back to the store.” A reassuring physical presence and fast-growing online sales have vaulted Magazine Luiza into the upper echelons of Brazilian e-commerce, lifting shares over 500 percent last year and 20 percent so far in 2018.

The company is relying on deep roots in its home turf to survive an assault by Amazon.com Inc, which is revving up operations in Latin America’s largest economy six years after entering the market. Reuters has reported that Amazon is eyeing a major warehouse outside Sao Paulo, negotiating a nationwide air cargo deal and lining up local suppliers of everything from personal electronics to perfume and home appliances.

But the American giant may struggle to dominate retail in Brazil as it has elsewhere, according to a dozen executives, analysts and investors interviewed by Reuters. They compare the state of Brazilian e-commerce to that of the U.S. market 10 years ago – only Amazon’s slow rollout here gave rivals a chance to prepare.

Helped by Brazil’s richest man and search giant Google, competitors are copying many of Amazon’s signature moves. Those strategies have sped up delivery, earned customer loyalty and boosted offerings through partnerships with third-party sellers. And unlike Amazon, home-grown players such as

Magazine Luiza have decades of experience with the country’s working-class consumers and tangles of red tape – key survival skills in Brazil’s retail jungle. “We see room for several players,” said Eduardo Carlier, a fund manager at AZ Quest Investimentos, a major shareholder in Magazine Luiza. “We think the winner-take-all model that played out in the United States is going to be tempered in Brazil.” Amazon declined to comment.

Slow start

With a population of more than 200 million people, Brazil is key to Amazon’s global expansion plans. But as in China and India, where it ran into strong competition, Amazon is playing catch-up in Brazil. Amazon entered Brazil quietly in 2012, peddling e-readers, books and then streaming movies in a fast-growing e-commerce market that has since doubled to \$20 billion.

Like a predator lurking at the edges of the market, Amazon has kept competitors uneasy, wondering when it would attack their core business. They got their answer in October, when the world’s largest online retailer opened a Brazilian marketplace for third-party sellers of an array of physical products. Shares in Magazine Luiza, rival B2W Cia Digital, and market-leading MercadoLibre Inc, fell nearly 20 percent on the news.

Yet all three rebounded quickly in the following weeks. Their shares have continued to climb this year as Brazil’s economy picks up and the companies employ strategies that could have been ripped from Amazon’s own playbook.

Brazilian billionaire Jorge Paulo Lemann and partners at 3G Capital, the investment firm behind the Kraft Heinz Co merger, have invested heavily in B2W through its brick-and-mortar parent Lojas Americanas SA. Their backing has let B2W spend aggressively on in-house logistics, a third-party marketplace and efforts to integrate operations with Lojas Americanas.

In a cheeky move, B2W uses the name “Prime” for its shopping club offering fast shipping for annual membership fees, the same moniker used by Amazon for a similar service in other markets. Amazon uses “Prime” only for its streaming video offerings in Brazil. Another online rival, MercadoLibre, was founded in Buenos



BERLIN: Amazon employees, one wearing a Bezos mask, protest against Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos before he arrives at the headquarters of publisher Axel-Springer where he received the Axel Springer Award 2018 on Tuesday. — AFP

Aires two decades ago to replicate the eBay Inc marketplace model across Latin America. It has held its own against Amazon in Mexico and leads the Brazilian market in online sales, according to market research firm Euromonitor. Its Brazil unit grew 80 percent last year, providing nearly 60 percent of net revenue.

Last year, MercadoLibre opened a warehouse near Sao Paulo to store and ship third-party goods, accelerating delivery using a model similar to the pioneering “Fulfilled by Amazon” service. Brazilian retailers are also getting an assist from Silicon Valley. Alphabet Inc’s Google briefed its Brazilian advertisers last year on Amazon’s forays into markets such as India and Mexico to help them prepare, two people with knowledge of the matter said. Google’s head of retail in Brazil, Claudia Sciamia, acknowledged that Brazilian clients had been asking what a ramp-up by Amazon could mean. “What we’ve done is an exploratory study to understand how they might enter different markets,” Sciamia said. She declined to provide details.

Digital leap

Few Brazilian retailers have done as much to reinvent themselves in recent years as Magazine Luiza. Founded six

decades ago as a gift shop in the shoemaking hub of Franca, in Sao Paulo state, the unpretentious retailer became a national player in the 1990s selling appliances, furniture and electronics on credit to poor families ignored by bigger chains.

Chairwoman Luiza Trajano started on the sales floor as a teenager and in 1991 took over the company founded by her aunt. She steered it to a public listing in 2011, expanding operations to more than 800 locations across the country at present. Yet Magazine Luiza’s digital leap, with her son at the helm, may be the most dramatic transformation yet. Frederico Trajano launched e-commerce operations in 2000 and has made it the company’s central focus since becoming CEO in January 2016.

Using brick-and-mortar stores as delivery hubs to cut costs and win over wary online shoppers, Trajano is accelerating both internet sales and new store openings. Digital sales channels grew 61 percent last year to make up nearly a third of revenue, while profit more than quadrupled. Magazine Luiza plans to open about 100 new stores this year, up from nearly 60 in 2017, according to two people familiar with the matter. The company has said it may open more stores in 2018 than last year. —Reuters



This illustration picture taken on April 19, 2018 in Paris shows the tablet and smartphone app for Facebook. —AFP

ment. “But I have a job to do, and that’s protecting the rights and privacy of our citizens.” Facebook announced last week it would begin rolling out changes to how it handles private data to comply with forthcoming EU rules, with European residents seeing the measures first.

Meanwhile, the California-based company has opposed calls by Australian media companies for digital platforms to be regulated, amid an inquiry into their impact on competition in news and advertising markets. The European Parliament last week demanded Zuckerberg appear in person to answer questions about the Cambridge Analytica scandal, rejecting his offer to send a more junior executive in his place.

The EU is introducing tough new data protection rules, which Facebook has said it will comply with. The EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which comes into effect on May 25, aims to give users more control over how their personal information is stored and used online, with big fines for firms that break the rules. —AFP

Privacy fears weigh on Facebook with earnings ahead

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook reports quarterly results yesterday as it grapples with a data privacy scandal that strikes at how the huge social network makes money from what it knows about people. The earnings release comes just two weeks after Facebook co-founder and chief executive Mark Zuckerberg faced questioning in two congressional panels about revelations that personal data was harvested on 87 million users by Cambridge Analytica, a consultancy working for Donald Trump’s 2016 campaign.

Whether the scandal is taking a toll on membership or advertising at the online social network was not likely to be revealed in earnings numbers from the first three months of this year, but hints might be found in the company’s financial forecast. Using information about people’s lives to target advertising is a standard internet business model, and any effort to rein it in could ripple through the industry.

A freshly released eMarketer report downplayed the threat that the scandal could cause an exodus from Facebook. “Facebook is so large that it would take a lot of user defections to make a difference,” eMarketer principal analyst Debra Aho Williamson said in the report. But Williamson said some of Facebook’s momentum was already fading due to other factors such as disinformation, social media fatigue and new platforms attracting young people. “Facebook has already essentially maxed out its penetration in the US,” she said.

Stormclouds gathering?

Zuckerberg has said he sees no major impact on Facebook’s business from the privacy controversy. Yet some analysts say Facebook’s stunning growth pace of recent years, which has vaulted it to the top ranks of players in digital advertising, may be threatened. An eMarketer report last month said the so-called “duopoly” of Google and Facebook would capture 56.8 percent of the US digital ad market this year, compared with 58.5 percent last year, as rivals like Amazon and Snapchat experience faster-than-expected growth.

Brian Wieser of Pivotal Research Group said in a recent report that he sees “downside from the Cambridge Analytica episode” for Facebook, which relies on advertising for most of its revenues. “Our guess is that reduced trust in the platform paired with increasing awareness of toxicity of the platform... could mean ongoing erosion of usage throughout 2018,” he said.

Mark Mahaney of RBC Capital Markets said in a note to investors that the financial outlook for Facebook is unchanged for now but that “the very recent negative publicity may have removed ‘upside’ ad revenue opportunities and likely added uncertainty around user engagement and growth.”

Regulators take aim

Facebook also faces a specter of regulation at home and abroad. Two US senators introduced legislation Tuesday aimed at better protecting online privacy in response to the Facebook data scandal. The “Social Media Privacy and Consumer Rights Act” introduced by Republican Senator John Kennedy and Democrat Amy Klobuchar would require terms of service agreements to be in plain language, and enable users to see what information about them has already been collected and shared.

“I don’t want to hurt Facebook, and I don’t want to regulate them half to death, either,” Kennedy said in a state-

Parents of terminally ill UK toddler launch new legal bid

Pope Francis has intervened in the case

LONDON: The parents of terminally ill British boy Alfie Evans were to appeal Wednesday a decision preventing them from going to Rome for treatment following high-profile interventions in the case from Pope Francis and the Italian government. Toddler Evans, who suffers from a rare neurological disease, had his ventilator support removed late on Monday, but has continued breathing independently for more than a day.

A judge ruled on Tuesday that the 23-month-old could be taken home from Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool, northwest England, but could not be taken to Rome for further treatment. "The court of appeal have reached out to us and said they are going to set back three judges to hear the case," Tom Evans told reporters outside the hospital on Tuesday. "In reality, he could be in Italy right now. I'm not giving up because Alfie's breathing away, he's not suffering." The father said that he occasionally needed to give his son mouth-to-mouth "because his lips went blue and he was really fighting".

'Want him to die naturally'

Pope Francis has intervened in the case that has attracted worldwide attention, writing on Twitter that he hoped the parents' "desire to seek new forms of treatment may be granted". Italy has previously said it was granting citizenship to the toddler and an Italian defense ministry medical evacuation plane is on standby to fly Evans to Italy.

High Court judge Anthony Hayden on Tuesday rejected claims by the parents that Evans was "significantly better" since doctors first withdrew life support on Monday. The judge said the best they could hope for was to explore the options of removing the boy from intensive care either to a ward, a hospice or his home. Andrea Williams, chief executive of Christian Legal Centre, said that the parents were not being "unrealistic about his medical situation."

"The parents accept that the is profoundly unwell and that he may well die," she said. "They just don't want everything to be stopped. They want him to be fed and treated and to die naturally." Hayden on Monday rejected another appeal for a delay in order to give the parents time to present a new challenge. The ruling allowed doctors to withdraw treatment. British law states that parents "cannot demand a particular treatment to be continued where the burdens of the treatment clearly outweigh the benefits for the child".

High-profile battles

If agreement cannot be reached between the parents and the healthcare professionals, "a court should be asked

to make a declaration about whether the provision of life-sustaining treatment would benefit the child". The case is the latest in a series of high-profile battles between parents of ill children and the British authorities. The most recent example was that of Charlie Gard, who was born in August 2016 with a rare form of mitochondrial disease.

He died last year, one week short of his first birthday, after doctors withdrew life support treatment. Gard's parents fought a five-month legal battle for him to be taken to the United States for experimental treatment. The parents of Ashya King also defied professionals in 2014 when they snatched their cancer-stricken son from a British hospital and took him to Prague for proton beam therapy.

King, now eight years old, has since been declared clear of the disease. The Bambino Gesù (Baby Jesus) pediatric hospital in Rome, which is administered by the Vatican, has said a specially-equipped plane is on standby to fly to Britain to pick up Evans if he is released. Tom Evans met the pope in the Vatican last Wednesday after several statements of support made by the pontiff. At an audience last week, he told attendees in reference to the case: "I want to reiterate and strongly confirm that the only master of life, from the beginning to its natural end, is God, and our duty is to do everything to protect life." Hundreds of people have protested outside the Liverpool hospital in support of the father's plea for the boy to be discharged. — AFP



LIVERPOOL: Supporters react to the announcement that the European court of human rights refused to intervene in the case of British toddler Alfie Evans outside Alder Hey children's hospital. —AFP

Inuka, first polar bear born in the tropics, put down

SINGAPORE: Inuka, the first polar bear born in the tropics, was put down yesterday after a rapid decline in health, with Singapore Zoo mourning the loss of one of its best-loved animals. The bear, whose name means "Silent Stalker" in Inuit, had reached the grand old age of 27 — into his 70s in human years and two years older than the average lifespan of the creatures in captivity.

Born at the zoo, Inuka was particularly popular with visitors due to his playful antics in his enclosure. But in recent years he had suffered age-related ailments including arthritis, and an examination at the start of this month revealed his health was failing markedly. His weakened limbs had trouble supporting his body and he developed cuts on his paws and a wound on his abdomen.

After a final check-up, vets found that Inuka's health had not improved despite intensive treatment and decided not to revive him from anaesthesia. "Singaporeans have known Inuka from the time he was a cub, and have seen him growing up and ageing," said Mohan Ponichamy, one of his keepers. "It has been a privilege and honor being his caregiver, but difficult as it may be, it would not have been fair to prolong his suffering." Inuka had been put on a "seniors program" at the zoo for the past five

years to help elderly animals deal with the effects of ageing. He had slowed down in recent months, and became less interested in his daily play sessions.

Zoo's last polar bear

Singaporeans greeted the bear's death with a rare outpouring of grief, with over 3,000 people reacting on the Facebook page of the Straits Times. Housewife Pamela Lee said she brought her four-year-old daughter Bliss to see Inuka at the zoo after news broke that he had been sick. "It's a loss... she wanted to come and see him but it's too late, I suppose," Lee said. Zoo officials said a private memorial would be held on Thursday. Inuka was born on December 26, 1990. His father Nanook was caught in the wild in Canada while his mother, Sheeba, came from Cologne Zoo in Germany. —AFP

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What's On

The Ideal Mother Award by Al Sayer and Al-Kharafi Activity Kids Center



Al Sayer Medical Company, a subsidiary of Al-Sayer Holding and Group CSR have partnered as a "Gold Sponsor" for the Ideal Mother Award, to honor Lifelong Selfless Service of Mothers towards children with Intellectual Disabilities from Gulf Cooperation Council Countries & Arab world. The Ideal Mother Award which is being organized for the sixth year in a row by Al-Kharafi Activity Kids Center. During the event which was attended by over 600 people, 9 Ideal Mothers from Kuwait, 5 from the GCC and 3 from Egypt, Lebanon & Jordan were awarded at the event.

The pre event inauguration meet was attended by Hamad Musaed Al Sayer, CEO Al Sayer Franchisee

and member of the Al Sayer Sustainability Steering Committee and the final award ceremony was attended Sabeeka Al Jaser, Chairman of Sanad Kuwaiti Foundation for Disabled Children, Lulwa Al-Qattami Honorary President of The Women Cultural and Social Society, Sheikhha Al Abdallah Al-Sabah Honorary President of the Kuwait Disabled Sports Club, Sheikhha Awrad Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Sheikhha Azza Al-Sabah, officials and dignitaries along with members from Al Sayer including Bedour Al Sayer Deputy Marketing Manager, Ibrahim Al Fouzan Vice Chairman of Al Sayer Sustainability Steering Committee along with Dr Hossam Afify General Manager from Al Sayer Medical Company and Dr

Maha Magdy Sales Manager. "We convey our best wishes to the winners as well as all the participants of this prestigious award. We are confident this initiative by Al-Kharafi Activity Kids Center will encourage many more individuals to initiate engagements in such noble causes," commented Eng Ibrahim Al-Fouzan.

The distinguished mothers were honored for their enduring love and hope to raise and develop the children with intellectual disabilities. They were recognized for setting examples as role models by encouraging parents to cope with such situation and letting the society accept them with respect and care.

According to Dr Hossam Afify "Al Sayer LifeCare, our premium healthcare outlet provides world class

solutions that focus on innovation, functionality and value to incorporate a healthy life style, improve overall quality of life."

Al Sayer Medical Company and CSR participated in the event with 2 display stands. Al-Sayer LifeCare exhibit featured latest products and services available for the community with special needs in Kuwait encouraging them and promoting independent lifestyle. Al Sayer CSR Partner SAHI (@9aa7y.kw) created an awareness session at the booth for the parents and attendees on the importance of safe driving, to ensure them as a role models by avoiding sleeping or texting while drive.



Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah recently received the former Kuwait National soccer and Qadisiya club player, Nuhair Al-Shemmari at the White Palace, where

he honored him in appreciation of his contributions to sports in Kuwait. Al-Shemmari retired after playing his final match against Al-Arabi club at Jaber Stadium recently.

LOYAC regional conference

LOYAC recently held its first regional conference which gathered LOYAC branches in various Arab countries for the first time. The conference was held at the Four Units Hotel including representatives from Jordan, Yemen, Lebanon, Egypt and Kuwait. Speaking on the occasion, LOYAC's chairperson, Fare'a Al-Saqqaf said that this was first conference after 16 years since LOYAC had been established. She added that conference was a great opportunity for LOYAC branches to display their achievements as well as a chance for Kuwaiti youth to explore such achievements.

On her part, the projects manager at Jordan's LOYAC, Heba Al-Hamayda said that each country has its own challenges and that the main one in Jordan was unemployment. "That is why the focus on training undergraduate youth to prepare them for labor markets after graduation", she underlined noting that much emphasis was put on spreading the concept of volunteering.

On her part, director of Lebanon's LOY-



AC, Sally Humoud stressed that one of the main challenges her branch was facing was the fact that over two million Syrian refugees had fled their country into Lebanon, which is already a small country facing enough problems in finding enough job opportunities for its subjects.

Also speaking on the occasion, director of Yemen's LOYAC branch, Haifa Al-Saqqaf stressed that her branch was striving to rebuild a nation. She added that in view of the war going on in Yemen, LOYAC there was facing different challenges topped by the

need to rebuild the state from scratch starting with women education, fighting illiteracy, child support, fighting spreading diseases and epidemics, repairing ancient ruins and providing the poor with all kinds of aids.

Egypt's LOYAC spokesperson, Manal Abdul Ra'of said that she had worked in LOYAC for over ten years and that her dream now was to establish LOYAC's branch in Egypt. On her part, LOYAC's regional media and communications manager, Nadia Ahmed spoke about her experience in Yemen ever since the war there started in 2015.



Jumeirah Beach Hotel welcomes new Executive and Pastry Chefs

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa is pleased to announce the appointment of Executive Chef Pascal Etienne and Executive Pastry Chef Norbert Bataillard.

General Manager, Savino Leone, said: "We are delighted to welcome the new chefs to our team. They will be the driving force to an already seasoned team of chefs and I am confident that with their expertise and extensive knowledge of the culinary field, they will further elevate the hotel's award-winning cuisine and inspire the dining experiences of our local and international diners. They add a unique flair through their creativity and international experiences that our diners will surely relish and remember." Having worked globally as Executive Chef in renowned restaurants,

Etienne spear-headed culinary teams in Intercontinental Muscat in Oman, Maradiva Villas Resort & Spa in Mauritius, Swissotel Tallinn in Estonia, Amanjena Resort & Spa in Morocco in addition to acquiring years of extensive gastronomic experience in his hometown Belgium. Chef Etienne will oversee and lead the culinary operations of the resort's seven restaurants. He will be enriching the current menus with authentic flavors and artful presentations that highlight the freshness of the ingredients. Recognized as creative and diversely skilled, the Executive Pastry Chef Bataillard brings decades of expertise from around six continents. He has previously worked as Executive Pastry Chef for luxurious hotels in Dubai such as One & Only Royal Mirage. Previously, he worked in Sokha Phnom Penh Hotel & Residence in Cambodia, Barcelo Bavaro Beach Resorts Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic, La Grenouille in New York, Jalousie Hilton Resort & Spa in St Lucia. He also worked as Head Pastry Chef of Bora Bora Lagoon Resort in French Polynesia. The French native will oversee the Pastry Department where his pastry philosophy will surely bring an elevated sweetened experience to all the Hotel's guests.

Indian Learners Own Academy workshop

Indian Learners Own Academy conducted a workshop in coordination with Laxmi Publications under the aegis of Council of CBSE affiliated schools in the Gulf via Kuwait Chapter on 21st April 2018 for the teachers of 14 Indian Schools in Kuwait. 63 teachers attended this workshop entitled "Essential skills for the teachers". Three resource persons were roped in to train the persons namely Ruchika Sukh, Sakshi Gupta and Gayathri Chandrasekhar. The workshop started with an invocation of the blessings of God. It was followed by a cordial welcome of the eminent guests, by the principal, Asha Sharma.

During her address principal, Asha Sharma, set the tune for the day's proceedings emphasizing the need for the teachers to sharpen their skills from time to time. The chief resource persons were Sakshi Gupta - Executive Director Laxmi Publications (co-host of the workshop), Ruchika Sukh a life coach and transformation facilitator and Gayatri Chandrasekhar famous dancer and expert in tarot readings and akashik records.

The other Guest of honor was T Prem Kumar, Secretary of Gulf Council, Principal of IES Bhartiya Vidyha Bhawan, a very passionate, committed and dedicated educator in the Middle East. Arul the Principal of Integrated



Indian School also graced the occasion. A brief introduction of the resource persons and the guest of honor was given by Anju, faculty member ILOA

The main thoughts were -the Class room is the reflection of the teachers' mindset which is based on the positive vibration between educators and the learners to cultivate a positive atmosphere in the classroom and release the learning obstacles of the learners. One should be identifying oneself as who we are and our state of being.

Learners are mirror of educators' mind and

vice -versa. Learners are good at reading a teacher by observing facial expressions rolling at the eyes, hands on hips and many other gestures that shows feelings. Being a teacher, we should be joyful or have a good sense of humor and be able to laugh with the students' teacher should be relaxed it's all about the power of mind teacher should shape up their mind and body because whatever we do to ourselves we are doing that to our students. A teacher should not fix a perception about the learners which in return limit their learning process.

TV



01:15 Suicide Squad
03:25 Hunting The Phantom
05:10 Captain America: The Winter Soldier
07:30 Seven Years In Tibet
09:50 Suicide Squad
12:00 The Bodyguard
13:35 Captain America: The Winter Soldier
15:55 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part II
18:15 Term Life
19:55 Allegiant
22:00 The Assignment
23:40 Beyond Valkyrie: Dawn Of The Fourth Reich



00:45 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
01:40 Cats 101
02:35 Swamp Brothers
03:00 Swamp Brothers
03:25 Tanked
04:15 The Pool Master
05:02 North America
05:49 Untamed & Uncut
06:36 Swamp Brothers
07:00 Swamp Brothers
07:25 Swamp Brothers
07:50 Swamp Brothers
08:15 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
09:10 Cats 101
10:05 North America
11:00 Swamp Brothers
11:28 Swamp Brothers
11:55 Tanked
12:50 The Pool Master
13:45 Cats 101
14:40 North America
15:35 Untamed & Uncut
16:30 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
17:25 Whale Wars
18:20 North Woods Law
19:15 Cats 101
20:10 Swamp Brothers
20:38 Shamwari: A Wild Life
21:05 Whale Wars
22:00 North Woods Law
22:55 North America
23:50 Untamed & Uncut



00:25 The Good Karma Hospital
01:15 Death In Paradise
02:10 Orphan Black
02:50 Orphan Black
03:35 Doctors
04:05 Doctors
04:35 EastEnders
05:05 Holly City
06:00 Doctors
06:30 EastEnders
07:00 The Corner
07:50 Last Tango In Halifax
08:45 Doctors
09:15 EastEnders
09:45 EastEnders
10:15 Death In Paradise
11:10 The Corner
12:00 Last Tango In Halifax
12:55 Holly City
13:50 Doctors
14:20 EastEnders
14:50 EastEnders
15:20 Death In Paradise
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17:05 Last Tango In Halifax
18:00 Doctors
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19:00 Death In Paradise
20:00 Mum
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21:10 Holly City
22:00 Death In Paradise
22:55 Doctors
23:25 EastEnders
23:55 Mum



00:05 Workaholics
00:30 Tosh.O
00:55 Why? With Hannibal Buress
01:20 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
01:45 South Park
02:10 South Park
02:35 Tosh.O
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:25 Tosh.O
03:50 South Park
04:15 Nathan For You
04:40 Key And Peele
05:05 Catch A Contractor
05:30 Disaster Date
05:55 Ridiculousness Arabia
06:25 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
06:55 Takeshis Castle Thailand
07:20 Takeshis Castle Thailand
07:45 Lip Sync Battle
08:08 Key And Peele
08:30 Disaster Date
08:55 Workaholics
09:20 Nathan For You
09:45 Lip Sync Battle
10:10 Catch A Contractor
10:35 Friends
11:00 Key And Peele
11:25 Disaster Date
11:50 Ridiculousness Arabia
12:20 Friendszone
12:45 Key And Peele
13:10 Friends
13:33 Friends
13:55 Nathan For You
14:20 Workaholics
14:45 Disaster Date
15:10 Friends
15:35 Key And Peele
16:00 Nathan For You
16:30 Friendszone
16:55 Friends
17:20 Friends
17:45 Disaster Date
18:10 Takeshis Castle Thailand
18:35 Takeshis Castle Thailand
19:00 Friends
19:25 Friendszone
19:50 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
20:12 Friends
20:35 Friends
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
22:00 Russell Simmons Presents: The Ruckus
22:25 Takeshis Castle Thailand
22:50 Takeshis Castle Thailand
23:15 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
23:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah



00:05 What Happened Next?
00:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
00:55 Kids Do The Craziest Things
01:20 How It's Made

01:45 How It's Made
02:10 Out Of Egypt
03:00 Tanked
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 How To Build... Everything
05:05 How To Build... Everything
05:30 What Happened Next?
05:55 What Happened Next?
06:20 How It's Made
06:40 How It's Made
07:00 Kids Do The Craziest Things
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11:35 Kids Do The Craziest Things
12:00 How It's Made
12:25 How It's Made
12:50 Space Dealers
13:40 Secret Space Escapes
14:30 Out Of Egypt
15:20 How It's Made
15:45 How It's Made
16:10 Ultimate Survival
17:00 Out Of Egypt
17:50 Tanked
18:40 Destroyed In Seconds
19:05 Destroyed In Seconds
19:30 Space Dealers
20:20 Secret Space Escapes
21:10 How It's Made
21:35 How It's Made
22:00 Ultimate Survival
22:50 Space Dealers
23:40 Secret Space Escapes



00:45 Most Evil
01:40 Jodi Arias: From Lust To Murder
02:35 Locked State Killer: People Magazine Investigates
03:30 Evil Lives Here
04:25 Blood Relatives
05:20 I Almost Got Away With It
06:10 Evil Online
07:00 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
07:25 Shadow Of Doubt
08:15 Blood Relatives
09:10 Evil Online
10:05 Murder Comes To Town
11:00 Scene Of The Crime With Tony Harris
11:55 I'd Kill For You
12:50 I Almost Got Away With It
13:45 Evil Online
14:40 Murder Comes To Town
15:35 Forbidden: Dying For Love
16:30 I'd Kill For You
17:25 Blood Relatives
18:20 I Almost Got Away With It
19:15 Grave Secrets
20:10 Reasonable Doubt
21:05 I Am Homicide
22:00 Murder Chose Me
22:55 The Perfect Murder
23:50 Jodi Arias: From Lust To Murder



00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
00:50 Evermoor Chronicles
01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:30 Binny And The Ghost
02:55 Hank Zipzer
03:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
03:20 Hank Zipzer
03:45 Alex & Co.
04:10 Alex & Co.
04:35 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
05:00 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
05:25 Binny And The Ghost
05:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
05:50 Rolling With The Ronks S1 Splits
06:00 Kitty Is Not A Cat S1 Splits
06:15 Kitty Is Not A Cat S1 Splits
06:25 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
06:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
06:55 Tangled: The Series
07:20 Stuck In The Middle
07:45 K.C. Undercover
08:10 Bunk'd
08:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
09:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
09:25 Lolorock
09:50 Lolorock
10:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
10:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
11:05 Hank Zipzer
11:30 Alex & Co.
11:55 Alex & Co.
12:20 Lolorock
12:45 Lolorock
13:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
13:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
14:00 The Zhuzhus S1
14:15 Bunk'd
14:40 K.C. Undercover
15:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
15:10 Kitty Is Not A Cat S1 Splits
15:20 Kitty Is Not A Cat S1 Splits
15:35 Elena Of Avalor
16:00 Tangled: The Series
16:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
16:50 Bizaardvark
17:15 Stuck In The Middle
17:40 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
18:05 K.C. Undercover
18:30 Bunk'd
18:55 Descendants Wicked World
19:00 Raven's Home
19:25 Liv And Maddie
19:50 Jessie
20:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
20:20 Tangled: The Series
20:45 Bizaardvark
21:10 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
21:35 Stuck In The Middle
22:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
22:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
22:50 Lolorock
23:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:35 Binny And The Ghost



00:00 Trulli Tales
00:30 PJ Masks
00:55 Trulli Tales
01:20 Henry Hugglemonster
01:35 Calimero
01:50 Henry Hugglemonster
02:05 Art Attack
02:30 The Hive
02:40 Loopdidoo
02:55 Henry Hugglemonster

03:10 Art Attack
03:35 Loopdidoo
03:50 Calimero
04:05 Art Attack
04:30 Henry Hugglemonster
04:45 Henry Hugglemonster
05:00 Art Attack
05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
05:45 Loopdidoo
06:00 Henry Hugglemonster
06:15 Calimero
06:30 PJ Masks
07:00 Trulli Tales
07:30 Jungle Junction
07:50 Handy Manny
08:10 PJ Masks
08:30 Vampirina
09:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
09:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
10:00 Puppy Dog Pals
10:30 Puppy Dog Pals
11:00 The Lion Guard
11:30 The Lion Guard
12:00 Sofia The First
12:30 Sofia The First
13:00 PJ Masks
13:30 PJ Masks
14:00 P-King Duckling
14:30 Vampirina
15:00 Puppy Dog Pals
15:30 Sofia The First
16:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
16:30 Doc McStuffins
17:00 PJ Masks
17:05 PJ Masks
17:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
18:00 The Lion Guard
18:30 Puppy Dog Pals
19:00 Trulli Tales
19:30 The Lion Guard
20:00 Vampirina
20:30 PJ Masks
21:00 Trulli Tales
21:30 Sofia The First
22:00 P-King Duckling
22:30 Puppy Dog Pals
23:00 Miles From Tomorrow
23:30 PJ Masks



00:15 Ice Cold Gold
01:05 Jungle Gold
01:50 Gold Rush: White Water
02:35 Gold Divers
03:20 Street Outlaws
04:05 Buying Alaska
04:27 Buying Alaska
04:50 Kidging Customs
05:35 Storage Hunters
06:00 The Liquidator
06:23 Dallas Car Sharks
06:45 Storage Hunters
07:10 Storage Wars Canada
07:35 Buying Alaska
07:57 Buying Alaska
08:20 The Liquidator
08:45 Dallas Car Sharks
09:10 Kidging Customs
09:55 Jungle Gold
10:45 Gold Rush: White Water
11:30 Gold Divers
12:20 The Liquidator
12:43 Dallas Car Sharks
13:05 Storage Hunters
13:30 Storage Wars Canada
13:55 Kidging Customs
14:40 Ice Cold Gold
15:30 Jungle Gold
16:15 Gold Rush: White Water
17:05 Gold Divers
17:50 Buying Alaska
18:15 Buying Alaska
18:40 Kidging Customs
19:25 Ice Cold Gold
20:15 Street Outlaws
21:00 Impossible Engineering
21:50 Flipping Ships
22:40 What On Earth?
23:30 Buying Alaska
23:53 Buying Alaska



06:00 DuckTales
06:25 Lab Rats
06:50 Gravity Falls
07:15 Marvel's Spider-Man
07:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
07:45 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
08:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
08:35 Supa Strikas
09:00 Supa Strikas
09:25 Mighty Med
09:50 Mighty Med
10:20 Phineas & Ferb
10:45 Phineas & Ferb
11:10 Lab Rats
11:35 Lab Rats
12:00 Right Now Kapow
12:25 Two More Eggs
12:30 Right Now Kapow
12:55 Kirby Buckets Warped
13:20 Kirby Buckets Warped
13:45 Gravity Falls
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Gravity Falls
14:40 Pair Of Kings
15:05 Pair Of Kings
15:30 Lab Rats
15:55 Two More Eggs
16:00 DuckTales
16:25 DuckTales
16:50 Mech-X4
17:15 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
17:40 Marvel's Spider-Man
18:05 Gravity Falls
18:35 Right Now Kapow
19:00 DuckTales
19:25 DuckTales
19:50 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
19:55 Kickin' It
20:20 Kickin' It
20:45 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
21:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
21:35 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Lab Rats
22:10 Lab Rats
22:35 Phineas & Ferb
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am



00:05 Botched
00:55 Botched
01:50 El News
02:50 Botched
03:40 Botched
04:35 Botched
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Botched
06:55 El News Middle East
07:10 Botched
08:10 El News: Daily Pop
09:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
10:05 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
11:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
12:00 El News Middle East
12:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
13:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians

14:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:00 El News Middle East
15:15 El News: Daily Pop
16:15 Botched
17:10 Citizen Rose
19:00 El News
20:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
21:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
22:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
23:00 El News Middle East
23:15 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian



00:10 Paul O'grady's Animal Orphans
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 The Chase
03:25 Victoria
04:20 Him
05:15 Paul O'grady's Animal Orphans
06:15 Guess This House
07:10 The Chase
08:05 Victoria
09:00 Him
09:55 Paul O'grady's Animal Orphans
11:00 Guess This House
11:50 The Chase
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Coronation Street
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Guess This House
15:10 The Chase
16:00 Cannonball
16:55 Change Your Tune
17:50 Alphabetical
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Coronation Street
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 The Chase
21:00 Cannonball
21:55 Change Your Tune
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Coronation Street
23:40 Coronation Street



00:00 Ancient Discoveries
01:00 America's Book Of Secrets
02:00 UFO Hunters
02:50 Ancient Aliens
03:40 Al Capone
04:30 Hoard Hunters
05:20 Hangar I: The UFO Files
06:10 Hangar I: The UFO Files
07:00 Ancient Discoveries
08:00 America's Book Of Secrets
09:00 UFO Hunters
10:00 Ancient Aliens
11:00 Al Capone
12:00 Hoard Hunters
13:00 Ancient Discoveries
14:00 America's Book Of Secrets
15:00 UFO Hunters
16:00 Ancient Aliens
17:00 Al Capone
18:00 Ancient Discoveries
19:00 America's Book Of Secrets
20:00 UFO Hunters
21:00 Ancient Aliens
22:00 Ancient Impossible
23:00 Hoard Hunters



00:20 Milwaukee Blacksmith
00:45 Pawn Stars
01:10 Battle 360
01:40 Swamp People
02:50 Counting Cars
03:15 Car Hunters
03:40 Project Impossible
04:30 Milwaukee Blacksmith
04:55 Pawn Stars
05:20 American Pickers
06:00 Swamp People
06:50 Milwaukee Blacksmith
07:15 Pawn Stars
07:40 Counting Cars
08:05 Car Hunters
08:30 Project Impossible
09:20 Swamp People
10:10 Alone
11:00 Milwaukee Blacksmith
11:25 Pawn Stars
11:50 Counting Cars
12:15 Car Hunters
12:40 Project Impossible
13:30 Swamp People
14:20 Milwaukee Blacksmith
14:45 Pawn Stars
15:10 Alone
16:00 American Pickers
16:50 Counting Cars
17:15 Car Hunters
17:40 Project Impossible
18:30 Swamp People
19:20 Milwaukee Blacksmith
19:45 Pawn Stars
20:10 American Pickers
21:00 The Curse Of Oak Island
21:50 Buried: Knights Templar Revealed
22:40 Milwaukee Blacksmith
23:05 Pawn Stars
23:30 Swamp People



00:15 Maximum Foodie
00:45 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
01:10 Miguel's Feasts
01:40 Confucius Was A Foodie
02:35 Maximum Foodie
03:00 Sinful Sweets
03:30 John Torode's Korean Food Tour
04:25 The Food Files
04:50 The Food Files
05:20 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
06:15 Pond Stars
07:10 Confucius Was A Foodie
08:05 Maximum Foodie
08:30 Sinful Sweets
09:00 John Torode's Korean Food Tour
09:55 The Food Files
10:20 The Food Files
10:50 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
11:45 Pond Stars
12:40 Confucius Was A Foodie
13:35 Maximum Foodie
14:00 Maximum Foodie
14:30 John Torode's Korean Food Tour
15:25 The Food Files
15:50 The Food Files
16:20 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
17:15 Pond Stars
18:10 Carnival Eats
18:35 United Plates Of America
19:05 Maximum Foodie
19:30 Maximum Foodie
20:00 John Torode's Korean Food Tour

21:00 The Food Files
21:30 The Food Files
22:00 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
22:55 Pond Stars
23:50 Carnival Eats



00:10 Miracle Hospital
01:00 Before The Flood
03:00 Showdown Of The Unbeatables
04:00 Miracle Hospital
05:00 Hustling America
06:00 Ultimate Survival Alaska
07:00 One Strange Rock
08:00 Car SOS
09:00 Hustling America
10:00 Stalking Hitler's Generals
11:00 Surrender
12:00 Fight Club Asia
13:00 Ultimate Survival Alaska
14:00 Car SOS
15:00 One Strange Rock
16:00 Nazi Death Camp: The Great Escape
17:00 Surrender
18:00 Psychedelic Underworld
19:00 One Strange Rock
20:00 Nazi Death Camp: The Great Escape
20:50 Surrender
21:40 Psychedelic Underworld
22:30 One Strange Rock
23:20 Car SOS



00:20 Africa's Hunters
01:10 Monster Fish
02:00 Africa's Wild Kingdom
Reborn
02:50 World's Deadliest
Compilations
03:45 World's Weirdest: Animal
Taboo
04:40 Bandits Of Selous
05:35 Africa's Wild Kingdom
Reborn
06:30 World's Deadliest
Compilations
07:25 World's Weirdest: Animal
Taboo
08:20 Bandits Of Selous
09:15 Paradise Islands
10:10 Wild Case Files
11:05 Dr. K's Exotic Animal ER
12:00 Strike Force
12:55 Africa's Hunters
13:50 World's Deadliest
Compilations
14:45 World's Weirdest Pets
15:40 Bite Sting Kill
16:35 Paradise Islands
17:30 Wild Case Files
18:25 Bite Sting Kill
19:20 World's Weirdest Pets
20:10 Bite Sting Kill
21:00 Paradise Islands
21:50 Wild Case Files
22:40 Bite Sting Kill
23:30 Strike Force



00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig
01:48 Sanjay And Craig
02:12 Winx Club
02:36 Winx Club
03:00 Harvey Beaks
03:24 Harvey Beaks
03:48 Rabbids Invasion
04:12 Rabbids Invasion
04:36 Breadwinners
05:00 Breadwinners
05:24 The Loud House
05:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
06:36 Harvey Beaks
07:00 Breadwinners
07:24 Get Blake
07:48 Sanjay And Craig
08:12 Rabbids Invasion
08:36 The Loud House
09:00 Regal Academy
09:24 Winx Club
09:48 100 Things To Do Before High School
10:12 Game Shakers
10:36 School Of Rock
11:00 Henry Danger
11:24 The Thundermans
11:48 I Am Frankie
12:12 Rank The Frank
12:36 Massive Monster Mayhem
13:00 Hunter Street
13:24 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
13:48 Toon Marty
14:00 Toon Marty
14:12 Harvey Beaks
14:36 Breadwinners
15:00 Sanjay And Craig
15:24 Rabbids Invasion
15:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
16:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
16:36 The Loud House
17:00 Toon Marty
17:12 Toon Marty
17:24 Massive Monster Mayhem
17:48 Hunter Street
18:12 Henry Danger
18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
19:00 School Of Rock
19:24 Game Shakers
19:48 The Thundermans
20:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
20:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
21:00 Harvey Beaks
21:24 Breadwinners
21:48 Get Blake
22:12 Sanjay And Craig
22:36 Rabbids Invasion
23:00 The Loud House
23:24 Regal Academy
23:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles



00:06 Max & Ruby
00:29 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
00:40 Kiva Can Do!
00:51 The Day Henry Met
00:56 Blaze And The Monster Machines
01:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
01:41 Paw Patrol
01:53 Kid-E-Cats
01:57 Kid-E-Cats
02:03 Shimmer And Shine
02:25 Nella The Princess Knight
02:37 Paw Patrol
03:00 Max & Ruby
03:23 Dora The Explorer
03:47 Sunny Day
04:09 Nella The Princess Knight
04:31 Shimmer And Shine
04:54 Wallykazam!
05:17 Zack & Quack
05:28 The Day Henry Met
05:32 The Day Henry Met
05:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
06:00 Rusty Rivets
06:13 Paw Patrol
06:25 Paw Patrol

06:37 Dora The Explorer
07:00 Nella The Princess Knight
07:22 Kiva Can Do!
07:33 Kiva Can Do!
07:43 Blaze And The Monster Machines
08:06 Paw Patrol
08:17 Paw Patrol
08:29 Shimmer And Shine
08:52 Nella The Princess Knight
09:15 Paw Patrol
09:39 Rusty Rivets
10:01 Wallykazam!
10:24 The Day Henry Met
10:30 Bubble Guppies
10:53 Team Umizoomi
11:15 Kid-E-Cats
11:21 Shimmer And Shine
11:44 Sunny Day
12:07 Max & Ruby
12:29 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
12:40 Kiva Can Do!
12:51 The Day Henry Met
12:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
13:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
13:42 Paw Patrol
13:54 Kid-E-Cats
13:59 Kid-E-Cats
14:04 Shimmer And Shine
14:26 Nella The Princess Knight
14:39 Paw Patrol
15:01 Max & Ruby
15:24 Dora The Explorer
15:47 Sunny Day
16:09 Nella The Princess Knight
16:31 Shimmer And Shine
16:53 Wallykazam!
17:17 Zack & Quack
17:27 The Day Henry Met
17:32 The Day Henry Met
17:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
18:00 Rusty Rivets
18:14 Paw Patrol
18:25 Paw Patrol
18:37 Dora The Explorer
19:00 Nella The Princess Knight
19:22 Kiva Can Do!
19:33 Kiva Can Do!
19:43 Blaze And The Monster Machines
20:06 Paw Patrol
20:17 Paw Patrol
20:29 Shimmer And Shine
20:52 Nella The Princess Knight
21:15 Paw Patrol
21:39 Rusty Rivets
22:01 Wallykazam!
22:24 The Day Henry Met
22:30 Bubble Guppies
22:53 Team Umizoomi
23:15 Kid-E-Cats
23:21 Shimmer And Shine
23:44 Sunny Day



01:30 Pirates Of The Caribbean: Curse Of The Black Pearl
04:15 Herbie Fully Loaded
06:15 Tarzan II
07:45 Monsters University
09:45 The Little Mermaid
11:15 Herbie Fully Loaded
13:15 The Lion King
15:00 Pocahontas
16:45 Pirates Of The Caribbean 2: Dead Man's Chest
19:30 The Game Plan
21:30 The Lion King
23:15 Pocahontas



00:00 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
01:00 APB
01:50 The Fosters
02:40 The Voice
03:30 Marvel's Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.
04:20 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
05:20 Chicago Med
06:10 Switched At Birth
07:00 Good Morning America
08:00 Marvel's Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.
11:00 Chicago Med
12:00 Switched At Birth
13:00 Chicago P.D.
14:00 The Flash
15:00 The View
16:00 Live Good Morning America
18:00 Switched At Birth
19:00 Chicago Med
20:00 Chicago P.D.
21:00 Supergirl
22:00 Lethal Weapon
23:00 S.W.A.T.



00:15 Jackass 3
01:55 The Time Of Their Lives
03:45 Christmas Eve
05:25 Step Dogs
07:00 Nacho Libre
08:35 My Bakery In Brooklyn
10:20 Step Dogs
11:55 Nacho Libre
13:30 My Bakery In Brooklyn
15:15 A Date With Miss Fortune
17:00 Made In America
18:55 The Discoverers
20:45 A Stand Up Guy
22:15 Fired Up!
23:50 Jackass 3.5



00:05 A Dangerous Woman
01:55 Dare To Be Wild
03:45 One True Thing
06:00 Roman Holiday
08:05 Tini - El Gran Cambio De Violetta
09:55 Dare To Be Wild
11:45 One True Thing
14:00 The Benefactor
15:40 The Shamer's Daughter
17:25 The Challenger
19:10 All The Wilderness
20:35 Roger Waters: The Wall
22:55 Brick



00:25 Micropolis
01:55 Teo: The Intergalactic Hunter
03:20 Beyond Beyond
04:50 Papeulcho & The Martian
06:15 The Emperor's Secret
07:50 A Doggone Adventure
09:25 Back To The Sea
11:05 Ploddy Police Car
12:25 Catcher: Cat City 2
14:05 Beyond Beyond
15:35 Papeulcho & The Martian
17:00 The Snow Queen 3
18:35 Ploddy Police Car
19:55 Rainbow Valley Heroes
21:30 Freddy Froggy
23:00 The Snow Queen 3



01:25 Fathers And Daughters
03:30 Brooklyn

05:25 Alvin And The Chipmunks: Chipwrecked
07:00 The Big Year
08:45 Brooklyn
10:40 Oleanna
12:20 Alvin And The Chipmunks: The Road Chip
13:55 Diary Of A Wimpy Kid: Dog Days
15:35 Around The World In 80 Days
17:40 Star Trek Beyond
19:45 Beverly Hills Cop 3
21:35 Mr. Right
23:15 Gone Girl



00:30 How Do They Do It?
00:55 Food Factory USA
01:20 How It's Made
01:45 How It's Made
02:10 Da Vinci's Machines
03:00 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
03:48 Mythbusters
04:36 How Do They Do It?
05:00 Food Factory USA
05:24 How It's Made
05:48 How It's Made
06:12 Da Vinci's Machines
07:00 How Do They Do It?
07:26 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
08:14 Mythbusters
09:02 Da Vinci's Machines
09:50 How Do They Do It?
10:14 Food Factory USA
10:38 How It's Made
11:02 How It's Made
11:26 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
12:14 Mythbusters
13:02 How Do They Do It?
13:26 Food Factory USA
13:50 Da Vinci's Machines
14:38 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
15:26 How It's Made
15:50 How It's Made
16:14 Mythbusters
17:02 Da Vinci's Machines
17:50 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
18:40 Mythbusters
19:30 Street Science
19:55 Street Science
20:20 How Do They Do It?
20:45 Food Factory USA
21:10 Da Vinci's Machines
22:00 Street Science
22:25 Street Science
22:50 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
23:40 Mythbusters



00:50 Shivaay
03:00 Shivaay
03:40 The Front ROW
04:05 Koffee With Karan
05:00 Pyaar Tune Kya Kiya
07:05 Little Krishna - The Darling Of Vrindavan
08:50 Ekkees Toppon Ki Salaami
11:20 My Friend Ganesha 2
13:25 Kya Love Story Hai
15:35 Hayaizaada
17:55 Dabang 2
20:00 Pink
22:35 Indu Sarkar



00:45 A Walk To Remember
02:30 When Love Came To Town
04:15 Admission
06:00 Sleepwalking
07:45 Music Of The Heart
10:00 Confidence
11:30 The Blair Witch Project
13:00 A Walk To Remember
14:45 Dirty Dancer - Havana Nights
16:15 Avengers: Age Of Ultron
18:30 The Animal
20:00 Australia
23:00 Frank





Rihanna is rumored to working on a double album

Rihanna is rumored to be working on two new albums. The 'Diamonds' hitmaker is said to be disappointed with how her last L.P. 'Anti' performed, so she is planning to storm the charts with a double-disc record of sizzling tracks. A source told Metro.co.uk "Rihanna wasn't happy with how her last album performed - even though she loved how it turned out, she knows she needs a new project full of smash hits to avoid two back-to-back flops. "She's currently recording two albums - one full of chart-friendly songs, and another made up of moody and experimental tracks - and is considering releasing a double disc if she feels the songs won't mesh well on the same album." 'Anti', the 30-year-old singer's eighth studio album, was released in 2016 and was placed at number 32 in the UK end of year charts and five in the 2016 US Billboard 200. Rihanna excited fans last week by teasing an image on social media - prompting speculation it was linked to new music she was about to release. But it has now been confirmed by the 'Umbrella' hitmaker to be connected to her new lingerie line under the name Savage x Fenty. Rihanna tweeted: "got a lil treat for my ladies.... #SAVAGEXFENTY is coming to you worldwide on MAY 11th [sic]" It was reported last year that Rihanna had registered two new songs with the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers copyright organization (ASCAP) titled 'Phatty' and 'Only One Who Knows'. 'Phatty' is thought to have been co-written with reggae artist Buju Banton.

Kanye West cut ties with Scooter Braun

Kanye West has split from his long-time manager Scooter Braun. The 'Good Life' rapper is believed to have cut ties with the 36-year-old talent agent reportedly in order to "leave the traditional music business", however, the decision has not sat well with Scooter who has accused the hip-hop star of being disloyal. Scooter - who also works for the likes of Justin Bieber and Ariana Grande - confirmed on Twitter: "A man's loyalty is truly tested when he is willing to stand by someone who will never show that same respect. "Don't show that same love and loyalty waiting for reciprocation .. do it because your integrity demands it. (sic)" However, sources have told Billboard that "the two men's companies will continue to work together" on other projects. Kanye is reportedly also planning on having his whole Yeezy brand - which includes the multi-million-selling fashion and lifestyle range - "in-house". According to 'The Blast, Kanye is said to have asked Scooter to work with him exclusively, however, he turned the offer down because he is committed to his roster of artists. It's a busy time for Kanye as he's just revealed he's "hand-producing" five albums, including his own record, a collaborative Kid Cudi LP as new do Kids See Ghosts and rapper Nas' next effort, which are all set for release in June. The departure of Scooter comes after Kanye is believed to have parted ways with another long-time manager. Izvor 'Izzy' Zivkovic - who started working with the rapper on his 2010 album 'My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy' - co-managed the 'All Day' hitmaker Scooter. Neither, Kanye - who is represented CCA - or a representative for Zivkovic commented on why they'd gone separate ways. The Split Second Management owner looks after acts including Arcade Fire and Banks.



Filan doesn't speak to McFadden

Shane Filan has ruled out having Brian McFadden back in Westlife because they don't speak. The 38-year-old singer says he sees the Irish band as just four now - completed by original members Mark Feehily, Nicky Byrne and Kian Egan - and should the 'Flying Without Wings' hitmakers ever reunite they won't be inviting Brian along because they've lost contact since he quit in 2004. Shane told The Sun newspaper: "I haven't seen Brian in 10 years. We've just lost touch, it's like going to school with somebody and then not speaking. "I wouldn't speak to him to reminisce, not all all. We all had a good relationship with Brian then he just left the band very early on and I don't think we would ever reunite with him. "I honestly see Westlife as being four people now - the four people who started and finished Westlife are what I consider the band. "Brian has been out of the band longer than he was in it. "If we ever reunited down the line it would only be the four of us." The group's manager Louis Walsh previously

predicted that a Westlife reunion will happen - but without Brian. The 'X Factor' judge wants the "Fab Four", Shane, Mark, Nicky and Kian to be involved in any reformation, not the 37-year-old singer - who left to pursue solo projects - despite Brian saying "never say never" to rejoining his former bandmates in the future. Louis said recently: "Brian won't be involved, it will be the Fab Four. Totally. "The four of them just see them themselves as Westlife." The entertainment professional wants it to be just the four of them because they'll be "happy", and said it's more convenient considering three of them all live in the same town. When asked if Brian begged to be included, Louis replied: "No, I prefer a happy band and four happy people. "They all know each other, they all respect each other. "Three of them live in the same town in Sligo, so it makes more sense." Westlife split in 2012 after 14 years together. They sold over 50 million records worldwide and landed 14 number one singles in the UK.



Avril Lavigne: Everyone will relate to my music



Avril Lavigne wants everyone to be able to "relate" to the music on her new album. The 'Complicated' hitmaker is working on new music - her first release since 2015 - and has been penning tracks that are "true and honest and sincere". She said: "I've been writing songs that are really just powerful and true and honest and sincere and I think people will really be able to relate to it. I've gone through a lot of personal stuff in the past two years and so I've really drawn from that. I mean, I always do but this album is so different ... It's more of a vocal record and just like, hearing the lyrics and really hearing the emotion in the vocal. It's very piano-driven, too." And the 33-year-old singer has "promised" that her album will be worth the wait for her fans. She told E! News: "I know my fans have been waiting for a long time and some of them are unhappy. They're like, 'O.K., what is going on with this album?' "But trust me, I'm doing everything I can and I just want it to be ready and everything to be perfect and a lot of like, care has gone into this. All the waiting and the hard work on my end will pay off, I promise." Back in September, Avril promised fans her new album will arrive "before they know it". She wrote on Twitter: "To my fans. I just want to thank everyone for their patience as I work on putting together this new album. It's been a long recovery and I want to make sure that this is perfect for you guys! "You only deserve my best effort and that's what I'm going to deliver! I can't wait to share the new music I'm working on, I promise it'll be here before you know it!"



MONAE'S ALBUM FEATURES BRIAN WILSON AND PHARRELL

Janelle Monae's new album features The Beach Boys' Brian Wilson. The 32-year-old singer-and-actress unveiled the full tracklisting for her third studio album 'Dirty Computer' on Tuesday through an interactive website, which requires fans to type in the words "I'm a dirty computer" to access the titles, and it revealed that the opening song, which is the same name as the album, features the 'Good Vibrations' hitmaker. Pharrell Williams appears on 'I Got The Juice' and Lenny Kravitz's daughter Zoe on 'Screwed'. Sharing a link to the "tracklist experience", she tweeted: "Repeat after me, "I am a Dirty Computer." - then click the following link to enter the #DirtyComputer tracklist reveal experience... (sic)" Janelle previously released 'Make Me Feel', which resembles Prince's hit song 'Kiss', 'PYNK' featuring Grimes and 'Django Jane' from the LP. The late 'Purple Rain' hitmaker's influence is because he actually worked on the record, acting as a mentor to Janelle before his death in April 2016. Janelle previously revealed she and Prince - who previously featured on her last LP 'The Electric Lady' - had been "collecting sounds" ahead of his untimely passing, which is why his presence is so strong on the collection of songs. She said: "It's difficult for me to even speak about this because Prince was helping me with the album, before he passed on to another frequency. [His death was] a stab in the stomach. The last time I saw him was New Year's Day. I performed a private party in St Bart's with him, and after we sat and just talked for five hours. He was one of the people I would talk to about things, him and Stevie Wonder." Janelle met Prince after she sent her debut LP 'The ArchAndroid' to the music icon and Stevie Wonder before it was released in 2010, along with a handwritten tracklist, to get their opinion on her music. 'Dirty Computer' is released on April 27.

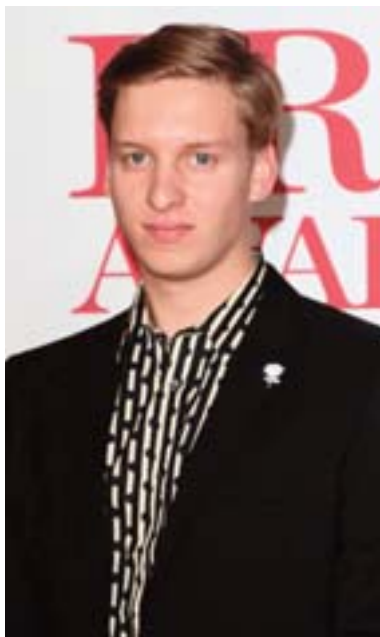
Mabel and Yungen for second Spotify's Who We Be Live gig

Mabel and Yungen are among the acts set to perform at the first Spotify Presents: Who We Be Live' gig to be held in Birmingham. The 'Cigarettes' hitmaker - who recently supported Harry Styles on his UK tour - and the 'Vroom' rapper will be joined by the likes of Jaykae, MIST, Ms Banks and Sneakbo at the concert, which will be held at Birmingham's O2 Academy on June 14. Austin Daboh, Senior Editor at Spotify, said: "Spotify launched Who We Be Live in the UK last November and the response was phenomenal - from the artists, managers, labels, and most importantly, the fans. We knew we had to go even bigger for 2018, and we have! We are so excited to be taking this event to Birmingham, where there is a such a vibrant music scene, as well as bringing it back home to Ally Pally in November." The show marks the second year of Spotify's 'Who We Be Live', which hosted its inaugural gig at London's Alexandra Palace last year with a line up including Cardi B, Giggs, Dizzee Rascal, J Hus and Stefflon Don perform. 'Who We Be Live' - which is inspired by the Spotify playlist which features the very best in Rap and Grime - will return to London in November this year, with a separate line-up which will be announced at a later date. Austin Daboh, Senior Editor at Spotify, said: "Spotify has worked tirelessly to support British talent over the last year, and we're proud to have played a key role in the success of various urban genres such as grime and rap. Who We Be Live at Alexandra Palace is Spotify's first ever concert in the UK and will bring together some of the biggest and most exciting artists under one roof for an unforgettable night." From today Spotify will be emailing fans of the artists performing, followers of the 'Who We Be' playlist in the UK, and O2 customers, with an opportunity to purchase pre-sale tickets.



George Ezra collects tea towels

George Ezra collects tea towels. The 'Paradise' hitmaker has revealed that when he goes to other people's gigs he always buys the souvenir as a keepsake. Speaking on the latest episode of his 'George Ezra & Friends' podcast, he shared: "I always buy a tea towel when I go to gigs. "I don't know if that's just me, I love a tea towel." The 24-year-old singer even has his own towel among the merchandise fans can purchase at his concerts or from his website. Meanwhile, the 'Budapest' singer - who released his second LP 'Staying At Tamara's' last month - recently admitted he's not able to have wild nights out on the road anymore. George used to party hard when he first found fame, but these days lots of sleep and a healthy lifestyle win out over boozy nights out. He confessed: "The first year of touring I indulged - it's hard not to at 19, and people want



to show you the best party every night. But it catches up with you. Peers of mine drink every night and it doesn't affect their performance, but I am not that guy. If it's my name above the door and I can't sing, there's no point the show going ahead. "This isn't very rock'n'roll, but I am useless unless I get plenty of sleep. I get off stage and go straight back to the tour bus. It's more important to get my head down than to please selfie-hunters. I'll probably fall asleep listening to a 20-hour audio book on my minor obsession, the Tudor monarchy. At home, I put my phone on airplane mode by 9pm, get into bed, read and drift off. I set the alarm for 8am and rise with the day. "I love walking and the countryside: I got a month off after my first album and walked the Cotswold Way alone. I read: I love Haruki Murakami and Philip Pullman. I like to go to the pub with friends."

Classifieds

Thursday, April 26, 2018



STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



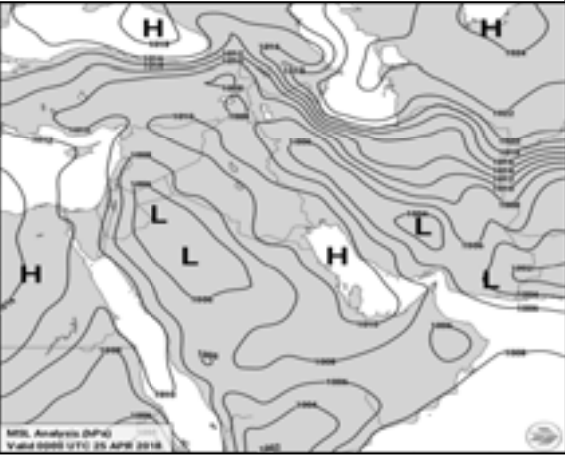
Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Clouds will increase gradually with light to moderate north easterly wind to south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h with a slight chance for scattered light rain later on.

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy with light to moderate south easterly wind to variable wind, with speed of 08 - 32 km/h with a chance for scattered rain.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 25/04/2018 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	32 °C	25 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	33 °C	24 °C		
ABDALY	34 °C	20 °C		
BUBYAN	32 °C	21 °C		
JAHRA	34 °C	24 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	30 °C	22 °C		
SALMIYAH	30 °C	25 °C		
AHMADI	30 °C	25 °C		
NUWAISIB	30 °C	24 °C		
WAFRA	35 °C	22 °C		
SALMY	33 °C	21 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	04/26	Partly cloudy to cloudy + rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery	35 °C	21 °C	SE	15 - 40 km/h
Friday	04/27	Partly cloudy + rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery later on	35 °C	21 °C	SE	15 - 45 km/h
Saturday	04/28	Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain	35 °C	22 °C	SE-NW	15 - 32 km/h
Sunday	04/29	Relatively hot and some high clouds will appear	36 °C	22 °C	VRB-NW	12 - 35 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:48
Sunrise	05:11
Zuhr	11:46
Asr	15:21
Sunset	18:20
Isha	19:42

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	33 °C
MIN. Temp.	18 °C
MAX. RH	51 %
MIN. RH	12 %
MAX. Wind	N 50 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

CHANGE OF NAME

I Natha Singh S/O Buta Singh R/O Kotli Ablu (Sri Muktsar Sahib) have changed my name to Natha Singh Brar. (C 5396)
24-4-2018

I, Durgam Anjanna holder of Indian Passport No. M4636381 has changed my name to Durgam Ganganna.(C 5395)
23-4-2018

ACCOMODATION

For Filipino ONLY
Farwaniya block 1, near gulfmart. Available 25 of May, Contact 94418396 or 69972330 23-4-2018

Embassy of India Kuwait

Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) for cleaning of Embassy of India premises

Embassy of India, Kuwait invites bids from interested companies till 10th May, 2018 for Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) for cleaning of Embassy of India premises. Details of scope of work, requirements etc. are available on Embassy's website www.indembkw.org under "Press Release"

All offers should be sent in a sealed cover marked "Offer for AMC for Cleaning of Embassy of India premises – To be opened by addressee only" and addressed to the "Head of Chancery", Embassy of India, Daeya, Diplomatic Enclave, Arabian Gulf Street, Safat 13015, Kuwait.

The offer must be delivered at the Embassy on or before 1200 hrs. on 10th May, 2018.
Embassy of India, Kuwait



Airlines

American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	
22418064/5/6	
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516

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- ⇒ 1 maid's bedroom
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- ⇒ Kitchen
- ⇒ Living room
- ⇒ Elevator
- ⇒ Public swimming pool

For further inquiries, please call in
Phone No: **55136363**

EMERGENCY

☎ 112

Automated enquiry
about the Civil ID card is

1889988



Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 26/4/2018				Departure Flights on Thursday 26/4/2018											
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	KAC	774	Riyadh	13:30	THY	764	Istanbul	23:15	QTR	1075	Doha	12:10
MSC	405	Sohag	00:05	JZR	792	Jeddah	13:40	WAN	136	Doha	23:15	JZR	176	Dubai	13:10
THY	772	Istanbul	00:15	KAC	779	Dubai	13:45	MSR	2614	Cairo	23:30	SAW	708	KAC	13:30
SAI	441	Lahore	00:15	IAW	157A	Al Najaf	13:55	FDB	072	Dubai	23:35	MSC	412	Asyut	13:30
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	QTR	1078	Doha	14:10	JZR	241	Amman	23:40	THY	767	Istanbul	13:40
KAC	504	Beirut	00:50	KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10					JZR	144	Doha	13:55
KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC	618	Doha	14:10	Airlines				JZR	124	Bahrain	14:00
JZR	539	Cairo	01:00	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:15	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05	JZR	552	Alexandria	14:05
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:15	SVA	500	Jeddah	14:15	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:10
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	FDB	073	Dubai	00:30	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	KAC	516	Tehran	14:20	JZR	528	Asyut	01:05	IAW	158A	Al Najaf	14:55
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	AZQ	4565	Dammam	14:30	MSC	406	Sohag	01:05	KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	15:00
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:00	KAC	798	Taif	14:40	SAI	442	Lahore	01:15	KAC	691	Muscat	15:00
AXB	395	Kozhikode	02:00	FDB	8065	Dubai	14:40	KAC	417	Manila	01:45	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	JZR	789	Riyadh	14:45	THY	773	Istanbul	01:45	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	KAC	788	Jeddah	14:50	DLH	625	Frankfurt	01:50	FDB	060	Dubai	15:05
JZR	553	Alexandria	02:50	KAC	304	Mumbai	15:05	JZR	502	Luxor	01:55	QTR	1079	Doha	15:15
JZR	267	Beirut	02:55	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:05	KAC	677	Dubai	02:00	FDB	8066	Dubai	15:40
JZR	607	Kochi	02:55	KAC	412	Bangkok	15:10	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:45	JZR	188	Dubai	15:45
MSC	403	Asyut	03:05	KNE	529	Jeddah	15:10	THY	765	Istanbul	02:50	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
RBG	215	Sohag	03:05	KAC	562	Amman	15:20	AXB	396	Kozhikode	02:55	KAC	283	Dhaka	15:50
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	OMA	645	Muscat	15:20	KKK	1269	Istanbul	02:55	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:55
MSR	606	Luxor	03:05	KAC	502	Beirut	15:35	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:10	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	ABY	127	Sharjah	15:35	UAE	854	Dubai	03:30	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:00
KAC	418	Manila	03:05	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45	JZR	142	Doha	03:45	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05
KAC	382	Delhi	03:10	SAW	705	Damascus	16:00	RBG	216	Sohag	03:45	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	JZR	535	Cairo	16:10	OMA	644	Muscat	04:05	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:15
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	QTR	1072	Doha	16:15	MSR	607	Luxor	04:05	KAC	619	Doha	16:15
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	KAC	118	New York	16:20	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
JAI	572	Mumbai	04:00	FDB	051	Dubai	16:20	MSC	404	Asyut	04:05	OMA	646	Muscat	16:20
KAC	544	Cairo	04:25	FEG	241	Alexandria	16:45	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15	AZQ	4566	Baku	16:30
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	JZR	125	Bahrain	16:55	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:40
JZR	609	Hyderabad	04:30	KAC	542	Cairo	17:00	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00	SAW	706	Damascus	17:00
KAC	284	Dhaka	04:50	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15	JAI	571	Mumbai	05:05	KAC	675	Dubai	17:00
PAL	668	Manila	05:00	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30	QTR	1077	Doha	05:15	KAC	503	Beirut	17:15
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	JZR	777	Jeddah	17:35	KAC	303	Mumbai	05:35	FDB	052	Dubai	17:20
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	JZR	145	Dubai	17:35	FDB	070	Dubai	06:00	QTR	1073	Doha	17:25
THY	770	Istanbul	05:15	JZR	177	Doha	17:40	JZR	750	Madinah	06:15	UAE	858	Dubai	17:40
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	QTR	1080	Doha	18:10	THY	771	Istanbul	06:30	FEG	242	Alexandria	17:45
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	JZR	483	Istanbul	18:20	GFA	212	Bahrain	06:50	KAC	381	Delhi	17:45
JZR	561	Sohag	05:55	WAN	874	Istanbul	18:25	RJA	643	Amman	07:00	KAC	331	Trivandrum	17:55
KAC	362	Colombo	06:00	WAN	966	Tbilisi	18:30	JZR	164	Dubai	07:15	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
BAW	157	London	06:10	MSR	620	Cairo	18:30	JZR	356	Mashhad	07:15	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:25	RJA	640	Amman	19:00	KAC	167	Paris	07:20	JZR	184	Dubai	18:20
QTR	8511	Doha	06:35	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:05	KAC	413	Bangkok	07:30	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:40	UAE	875	Dubai	19:05	PAL	669	Manila	07:40	JZR	608	Hyderabad	18:25
KAC	678	Dubai	06:45	KAC	744	Dammam	19:10	JZR	238	Amman	07:50	JZR	512	Sharm el-Sheikh	18:30
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	FDB	063	Dubai	19:10	JZR	778	Jeddah	08:00	JZR	240	Amman	18:30
JZR	605	Ahmedabad	07:05	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:20	KAC	501	Beirut	08:00	JZR	538	Cairo	18:35
JZR	143	Doha	07:20	KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	19:25	QTR	8512	Doha	08:05	WAN	135	Doha	18:40
JZR	529	Asyut	07:30	NIA	161	Cairo	19:30	BAW	156	London	08:20	JZR	266	Beirut	19:15
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:45	KAC	776	Riyadh	19:35	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35	QTR	1081	Doha	19:20
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:35	KAC	791	Madinah	09:00	WAN	135	Doha	19:25
JZR	503	Luxor	07:50	RBG	555	Alexandria	19:40	KAC	613	Bahrain	09:00	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
KAC	384	Delhi	08:05	FDB	057	Dubai	19:50	KAC	117	New York	09:05	GFA	218	Bahrain	19:50
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	KAC	616	Bahrain	20:00	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:05	FDB	064	Dubai	19:50
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:05	KAC	671	Dubai	09:15	RJA	641	Amman	20:00
WAN	352	Luxor	08:30	OMA	647	Muscat	20:05	WAN	133	Doha	09:30	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:00
IRA	673	Ahwaz	08:35	KNE	381	Taif	20:10	IRA	672	Ahwaz	09:35	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:00
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	KAC	620	Doha	20:15	KAC	561	Amman	09:40	NIA	162	Cairo	20:30
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	MEA	402	Beirut	20:15	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40	FDB	058	Dubai	20:30
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:05	JZR	189	Dubai	20:15	KAC	773	Riyadh	09:45	UAE	876	Dubai	20:35
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	KAC	692	Muscat	20:25	JZR	534	Cairo	09:45	DLH	624	Dammam	20:50
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	QTR	1088	Doha	20:40	UAE	856	Dubai	09:50	KNE	232	Riyadh	21:00
IAW	157	Al Najaf	10:00	JZR	553	Alexandria	20:50	KAC	482	Istanbul	09:55	KAC	353	Bengaluru	21:00
SYR	341	Damascus	10:00	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:00	KAC	101	London	10:00	OMA	357	Kochi	21:00
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	UAE	859	Dubai	21:15	KAC	515	Tehran	10:00	KAC	648	Muscat	21:05
JZR	751	Madinah	10:30	ALK	229	Colombo	21:15	KAC	541	Cairo	10:00	MEA	403	Beirut	21:15
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:15	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:00	KAC	1543	Cairo	21:20
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	KAC	168	Paris	21:20	KAC	797	Taif	10:05	JZR	550	Alexandria	21:30
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC	676	Dubai	21:35	IRA	668	Mashhad	10:05	KAC	301	Mumbai	21:35
WAN	114	Bahrain	11:10	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:50	KAC	617	Doha	10:10	QTR	1089	Doha	21:50
KAC	165	Dubai	11:45	KAC	564	Amman	21:50	WAN	873	Istanbul	10:15	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:20	QTR	1082	Doha	22:05	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:25	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00
MSC	411	Asyut	12:30	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:10	QTR	1071	Doha	10:40	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:05
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	WAN	416	Beirut	22:15	FDB	056	Dubai	10:40	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:10
THY	766	Istanbul	12:45	KAC	786	Jeddah	22:15	SGL	4101	IQA	11:00	ALK	230	Colombo	22:20
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	DLH	8456	Frankfurt	22:25	SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:25
WAN	542	KTM	12:50	AIC	981	Chennai/Ahmedabad	22:25	SYR	342	Damascus	11:00	KAC	383	Delhi	22:25
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	BBC	043	Dhaka	22:30	IAW	158	Al Najaf	11:00	UAE	860	Dubai	22:35
JZR	239	Amman	13:00	WAN	118	Bahrain	22:40	JZR	788	Riyadh	11:20	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:50
JZR	357	Mashhad	13:05	JZR	185	Dubai	22:50	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:00
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:10	TRQ	230	KRT	23:00	MEA	405	Beirut	11:55	QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
WAN	134	Doha	13:20	JAI	574	Mumbai	23:00	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:05	WAN	337	Alexandria	23:40
								WAN	975	Baku	12:10	JZR	560	Sohag	23:45
												TRQ	231	KRT	23:55



Rihanna is rumored to working on a double album

Rihanna is rumored to be working on two new albums. The 'Diamonds' hitmaker is said to be disappointed with how her last LP, 'Anti' performed, so she is planning to storm the charts with a double-disc record of sizzling tracks. A source told Metro.co.uk "Rihanna wasn't happy with how her last album performed - even though she loved how it turned out, she knows she needs a new project full of smash hits to avoid two back-to-back flops. "She's currently recording two albums - one full of chart-friendly songs, and another made up of moody and experimental tracks - and is considering releasing a double disc if she feels the songs won't mesh well on the same album." 'Anti', the 30-year-old singer's eighth studio album, was released in 2016 and was placed at number 32 in the UK end of year charts and five in the 2016 US Billboard 200. Rihanna excited fans last week by teasing an image on social media - prompting speculation it was linked to new music she was about to release. But it has now been confirmed by the 'Umbrella' hitmaker to be connected to her new lingerie line under the name Savage x Fenty. Rihanna tweeted: "got a lil treat for my ladies.... #SAVAGEXFENTY is coming to you worldwide on MAY 11th [sic]" It was reported last year that Rihanna had registered two new songs with the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers copyright organization (ASCAP) titled 'Phatty' and 'Only One Who Knows'. 'Phatty' is thought to have been co-written with reggae artist Buju Banton.

Kanye West CUT TIES WITH SCOOTER BRAUN

Kanye West has split from his long-time manager Scooter Braun. The 'Good Life' rapper is believed to have cut ties with the 36-year-old talent agent reportedly in order to "leave the traditional music business", however, the decision has not sat well with Scooter who has accused the hip-hop star of being disloyal. Scooter - who also works for the likes of Justin Bieber and Ariana Grande - confirmed on Twitter: "A man's loyalty is truly tested when he is willing to stand by someone who will never show that same respect. "Don't show that same love and loyalty waiting for reciprocation .. do it because your integrity demands it. (sic)" However, sources have told Billboard that "the two men's companies will continue to work together" on other projects. Kanye is reportedly also planning on having his whole Yeezy brand - which includes the multi-million-selling fashion and lifestyle range - "in-house". According to The Blast, Kanye is said to have asked Scooter to work with him exclusively, however, he turned the offer down because he is committed to his roster of artists. It's a busy time for Kanye as he's just revealed



he's "hand-producing" five albums, including his own record, a collaborative Kid Cudi LP as new do Kids See Ghosts and rapper Nas' next effort, which are all set for release in June. The departure of Scooter comes after Kanye is believed to have parted ways with another long-time manager. Izvor 'Izzy' Zivkovic - who started working with the rapper on his 2010 album 'My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy' - co-managed the 'All Day' hitmaker Scooter. Neither, Kanye - who is represented CCA - or a representative for Zivkovic commented on why they'd gone separate ways. The Split Second Management owner looks after acts including Arcade Fire and Banks.

Filan doesn't speak to McFadden

Shane Filan has ruled out having Brian McFadden back in Westlife because they don't speak. The 38-year-old singer says he sees the Irish band as just four now - completed by original members Mark Feehily, Nicky Byrne and Kian Egan - and should the 'Flying Without Wings' hitmakers ever reunite they won't be inviting Brian along because they've lost contact since he quit in 2004. Shane told The Sun newspaper: "I haven't seen Brian in 10 years. We've just lost touch, it's like going to school with somebody and then not speaking. "I wouldn't speak to him to reminisce, not at all. We all had a good relationship with Brian then he just left the band very early on and I don't think we would ever reunite with him. "I honestly see Westlife as being four people now - the four people who started and finished Westlife are what I consider the band. "Brian has been out of the band longer than he was in it. "If we ever reunited down the line it would only be the four of us." The group's manager Louis Walsh previously

predicted that a Westlife reunion will happen - but without Brian. The 'X Factor' judge wants the "Fab Four", Shane, Mark, Nicky and Kian to be involved in any reformation, not the 37-year-old singer - who left to pursue solo projects - despite Brian saying "never say never" to rejoining his former bandmates in the future. Louis said recently: "Brian won't be involved, it will be the Fab Four. Totally. "The four of them just see them themselves as Westlife." The entertainment professional wants it to be just the four of them because they'll be "happy", and said it's more convenient considering three of them all live in the same town. When asked if Brian begged to be included, Louis replied: "No. I prefer a happy band and four happy people. "They all know each other, they all respect each other. "Three of them live in the same town in Sligo, so it makes more sense." Westlife split in 2012 after 14 years together. They sold over 50 million records worldwide and landed 14 number one singles in the UK.



Avril Lavigne: Everyone will relate to my music



Avril Lavigne wants everyone to be able to "relate" to the music on her new album. The 'Complicated' hitmaker is working on new music - her first release since 2015 - and has been penning tracks that are "true and honest and sincere". She said: "I've been writing songs that are really just powerful and true and honest and sincere and I think people will really be able to relate to it. I've gone through a lot of personal stuff in the past two years and so I've really drawn from that. I mean, I always do but this album is so different ... It's more of a vocal record and just like, hearing the lyrics and really hearing the emotion in the vocal. It's very piano-driven, too." And the 33-year-old singer has "promised" that her album will be worth the wait for her fans. She told E! News: "I know my fans have been waiting for a long time and some of them are unhappy. They're like, 'O.K., what is going on with this album?' "But trust me, I'm doing everything I can and I just want it to be ready and everything to be perfect and a lot of like, care has gone into this. All the waiting and the hard work on my end will pay off, I promise." Back in September, Avril promised fans her new album will arrive "before they know it". She wrote on Twitter: "To my fans. I just want to thank everyone for their patience as I work on putting together this new album. It's been a long recovery and I want to make sure that this is perfect for you guys! "You only deserve my best effort and that's what I'm going to deliver! I can't wait to share the new music I'm working on, I promise it'll be here before you know it!"



MONAE'S ALBUM FEATURES BRIAN WILSON AND PHARRELL

Janelle Monae's new album features The Beach Boys' Brian Wilson. The 32-year-old singer-and-actress unveiled the full tracklisting for her third studio album 'Dirty Computer' on Tuesday through an interactive website, which requires fans to type in the words "I'm a dirty computer" to access the titles, and it revealed that the opening song, which is the same name as the album, features the 'Good Vibrations' hitmaker. Pharrell Williams appears on 'I Got The Juice' and Lenny Kravitz's daughter Zoe on 'Screwed'. Sharing a link to the "tracklist experience", she tweeted: "Repeat after me, "I am a Dirty Computer." - then click the following link to enter the #DirtyComputer tracklist reveal experience... (sic)" Janelle previously released 'Make Me Feel', which resembles Prince's hit song 'Kiss', 'PYNK' featuring Grimes and 'Django Jane' from the LP. The late 'Purple Rain' hitmaker's influence is because he actually worked on the record, acting as a mentor to Janelle before his death in April 2016. Janelle previously revealed she and Prince - who previously featured on her last LP 'The Electric Lady' - had been "collecting sounds" ahead of his untimely passing, which is why his presence is so strong on the collection of songs. She said: "It's difficult for me to even speak about this because Prince was helping me with the album, before he passed on to another frequency. [His death was] a stab in the stomach. The last time I saw him was New Year's Day. I performed a private party in St Bart's with him, and after we sat and just talked for five hours. He was one of the people I would talk to about things, him and Stevie Wonder." Janelle met Prince after she sent her debut LP 'The ArchAndroid' to the music icon and Stevie Wonder before it was released in 2010, along with a handwritten tracklist, to get their opinion on her music. 'Dirty Computer' is released on April 27.

Mabel and Yungen for second Spotify's Who We Be Live gig

Mabel and Yungen are among the acts set to perform at the first Spotify Presents: Who We Be Live' gig to be held in Birmingham. The 'Cigarettes' hitmaker - who recently supported Harry Styles on his UK tour - and the 'Vroom' rapper will be joined by the likes of Jaykae, MIST, Ms Banks and Sneakbo at the concert, which will be held at Birmingham's O2 Academy on June 14. Austin Daboh, Senior Editor at Spotify, said: "Spotify launched Who We Be Live in the UK last November and the response was phenomenal - from the artists, managers, labels, and most importantly, the fans. We knew we had to go even bigger for 2018, and we have! We are so excited to be taking this event to Birmingham, where there is a such a vibrant music scene, as well as bringing it back home to Ally Pally in November." The show marks the second year of Spotify's 'Who We Be Live', which hosted its inaugural gig at London's Alexandra Palace last year with a line up including Cardi B, Giggs, Dizzee Rascal, J Hus and Stefflon Don perform. 'Who We Be Live' - which is inspired by the Spotify playlist which features the very best in Rap and Grime - will return to London in November this year, with a separate line-up which will be announced at a later date. Austin Daboh, Senior Editor at Spotify, said: "Spotify has worked tirelessly to support British talent over the last year, and we're proud to have played a key role in the success of various urban genres such as grime and rap. Who We Be Live at Alexandra Palace is Spotify's first ever concert in the UK and will bring together some of the biggest and most exciting artists under one roof for an unforgettable night." From today Spotify will be emailing fans of the artists performing, followers of the 'Who We Be' playlist in the UK, and O2 customers, with an opportunity to purchase pre-sale tickets.



George Ezra collects tea towels

George Ezra collects tea towels. The 'Paradise' hitmaker has revealed that when he goes to other people's gigs he always buys the souvenir as a keepsake. Speaking on the latest episode of his 'George Ezra & Friends' podcast, he shared: "I always buy a tea towel when I go to gigs. "I don't know if that's just me, I love a tea towel." The 24-year-old singer even has his own towel among the merchandise fans can purchase at his concerts or from his website. Meanwhile, the 'Budapest' singer - who released his second LP 'Staying At Tamara's' last month - recently admitted he's not able to have wild nights out on the road anymore. George used to party hard when he first found fame, but these days lots of sleep and a healthy lifestyle win out over boozy nights out. He confessed: "The first year of touring I indulged - it's hard not to at 19, and people want



to show you the best party every night. But it catches up with you. Peers of mine drink every night and it doesn't affect their performance, but I am not that guy. If it's my name above the door and I can't sing, there's no point the show going ahead. "This isn't very rock'n'roll, but I am useless unless I get plenty of sleep. I get off stage and go straight back to the tour bus. It's more important to get my head down than to please selfhunters. I'll probably fall asleep listening to a 20-hour audio book on my minor obsession, the Tudor monarchy. At home, I put my phone on airplane mode by 9pm, get into bed, read and drift off. I set the alarm for 8am and rise with the day. "I love walking and the countryside: I got a month off after my first album and walked the Cotswold Way alone. I read: I love Haruki Murakami and Philip Pullman. I like to go to the pub with friends."

Lifestyle | Gossip



Ana de Armas cast in Danny Boyle's rom-com

Ana de Armas has been cast in Danny Boyle's new romantic-comedy film. The 29-year-old actress - who starred in 'Blade Runner 2049' last year - has been added to the star-studded line-up for the acclaimed director's latest project. Ana will appear alongside the likes of Lily James, Himesh Patel, Kate McKinnon and Ed Sheeran in the untitled movie, according to Deadline. Plot details of the new project are being kept under wraps for the time being, but it has been confirmed that the movie will be music-themed and set in the 60s and 70s. The film - which is based on a script by Richard Curtis - is set to hit cinema screens in 2019. Boyle has, of course, also been heavily to the new Bond project, which was originally handed a release date of November 8 next year. However, that

now appears to be unlikely, with actress Naomie Harris - who stars as Miss Moneybags in the franchise - recently admitting she hasn't spoken to anyone about the much-anticipated new film. She confessed: "It'll be very disappointing if I'm not involved. I really hope they ask me back. I haven't heard anything." Naomie, 41, is thrilled that Daniel Craig has agreed to reprise the role of Bond, and she's similarly excited about the prospect of Boyle directing the film. But the London-born star recently confessed she hasn't held any serious discussions about the highly anticipated movie. She shared: "I know it's going later in the year and released next year. I know quite excitingly that Daniel [Craig] is definitely back and I've heard that Danny Boyle is attached as director. Who knows."

Peyton stopped watching his favorite films ahead of Rampage

Brad Peyton stopped watching his favorite films in preparation for directing 'Rampage'. The 39-year-old filmmaker is a huge fan of the fantasy genre, but Brad has revealed he ceased watching his most-loved monster movies ahead of shooting 'Rampage' because he wanted to avoid outside influences. Speaking about his love of the genre, Brad shared: "I watch everything that's genre ... I see everything that's like, every Marvel movie, every 'Star Wars' movie. I grew up in a small town and one of the things I loved was Ultraman, you know all those Japanese monster movies in suits, all that stuff. "My entire life, I've always loved it. Anything that ever comes out like a Godzilla ... in fact, when I was making this movie, I had to stop watching it all, because I was like, 'I don't want to be influenced by it.' "I've seen it



all anyway, but I wanted to go and make my own thing. I don't want to be directly influenced by any of this stuff." Brad's latest project sees Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson star as a primatologist, and the director feels as though he succeeded in bringing something original to the genre. He told Collider: "I tried to bring something to the table that was different and unique. And I loved the idea that Dwayne was teaming up with one of the monsters in the movie - I loved that." Brad also ensured that most of his movie was filmed during daylight, meaning the protagonists couldn't escape the attention of the monsters. He explained: "Sometimes when you go and watch monster movies, they feel like they're over there. But here, 90 percent of the movie was in daylight, so you couldn't hide from it."



Ehrenreich reveals details of his Star Wars deal

Alden Ehrenreich has confirmed he's signed a multi-film 'Star Wars' deal. The 28-year-old actor plays the iconic Han Solo in the upcoming 'Solo: A Star Wars Story', and Alden has revealed he'll also appear in two other 'Star Wars' movies. Asked how many 'Star Wars' films he's signed up for, Alden told Esquire: "Three. I don't know if that's officially, uh, public. But, yeah." 'Solo: A Star Wars Story' is set to premiere at this year's Cannes Film Festival, which begins next month. And Alden recently joked that being in the film is like being in the CIA. He said: "There's a lot of cinema history in this movie. There's a great card game. "I can't say for sure that there is a card game. It's

like being in the CIA. It's like 'All The President's Men'. Blink twice if you are in distress!" Before landing the role, Alden had to undergo six screen tests and was resigned to not getting the part. The American actor - who is starring as the younger version of the character made famous by Harrison Ford - shared: "I was very much ready to not get it." The 'Hail, Caesar!' star found out he'd won the iconic role three months before the news was leaked, but he still had to deny it was his until he was officially unveiled some time afterwards. Alden recalled: "People were coming up to me in restaurants and congratulating me and I had to be like, 'Sorry, I don't know what you're talking about.'"

Ne-Yo launching movie career



Ne-Yo is penning a script for his first movie in a bid to launch a career in Hollywood. The 'So Sick' hitmaker has started pursuing his desire to start working in the film and television industry, though he admits he is finding it a whole new experience writing for a feature than song lyrics. The 37-year-old musician has already starred as himself in last year's 'Girls Trip' and TV's 'Empire', but he wants to work more behind the camera. He told The Sun newspaper: "I want to get more into the TV and film space, maybe not in front of the camera. "I want to direct and write. "I have started writing a movie. I'm not totally confident how good it is yet, as I'm still learning. "There's a major difference with writing a story in three minutes versus a story you spend an hour to two watching - there's a lot more detail." However, it seems Ne-Yo - whose real name is Shaffer Chimere Smith - isn't planning on retiring from the music world, with his new record 'Good Man' set for release on June 8. The singer touches on the #MeToo movement - which was launched in the wake of the Hollywood sexual harassment scandal - on the record, which includes a host of female artists, including Stefflon Don and Bebe Rexha. He said: "It's time for me to put a spotlight back on what chivalrous values are and why we've lost them and what they're supposed to be." In 2015, Ne-Yo revealed he'd like to star in a Marvel movie and that he has turned down roles in biopics because he would find them too consuming. He said: "I want to be in some of the Marvel movies. I'm a huge comic-book fan. "I'm getting a lot of biopic offers, but you've got to dedicate yourself to that. James Brown was one they asked me about playing. I actually wanted to do that, but knew I wasn't going to have the time. "You have to become somebody else. I can't be James Brown on Monday and then be Ne-Yo on Tuesday again."



Sam Rockwell joins Scarlett Johansson in Jojo Rabbit

Sam Rockwell is joining Scarlett Johansson in World War II movie 'Jojo Rabbit'. The 'Avengers: Infinity War' actress is already on board to play a mother who is hiding a Jewish girl in her home during the reign of Adolf Hitler when her German son discovers her secret. Rockwell, 49 - who most recently appeared in the multi-award-winning film 'Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri' - has joined the cast in an unknown role, according to Deadline. The pair previously worked together on 'Iron Man 2'. 'Thor: Ragnarok' director Taika Waititi has penned the script and is set to direct and will also appear in the movie playing a version of Nazi dictator Hitler. Waititi will also produce alongside Carthew Neal and Chelsea Winstanley and the film is about to begin shooting. The director has reportedly been offered numerous offers to helm movies following the success of the third 'Thor' movie. However, the New Zealand filmmaker - who is currently filming his 'What We Do in the Shadows' pilot - made it clear 'Jojo Rabbit' would be his next film. Meanwhile, it has also been confirmed that Johansson, 33, will reprise her role as Russian spy Black Widow in her very own spin-off movie. The actress has appeared as the character seven times to date in the other Marvel movies. 'Blacklist' screenwriter Jac Schaeffer has been hired by Marvel to work on a script. While Johansson's contract was due to expire after 'Avengers 4' - which will hit the big screen in 2019 - it is said she may have signed an extension to continue playing the former spy.

JANNEY REJOINS I, TONYA CO-STAR IN TROUPE ZERO

Alison Janney is to be reunited with her 'I, Tonya' co-star McKenna Grace in new movie 'Troupe Zero'. The 58-year-old actress swept the board in the Best Supporting Actress category at this year's awards season for her performance as Tonya Harding's cold-hearted mother LaVona Golden in the biopic. Now Janney has signed up to star alongside 11-year-old McKenna, who played a young Tonya in the forthcoming flick, according to Deadline. Details of the project are being kept strictly under wraps for now. It is to be directed by 'Dance Camp' duo Bert & Bertie, and Viola Davis has a leading role. 'Beasts Of The Southern Wild' writer Lucy Alibar penned the script and 'Antwone Fisher's Todd Black is producing, the Amazon-financed feature. Since her awards success in 'I, Tonya' which also starred Margot Robbie as the controversial ice skating champion, Janney went straight back to work on hit TV show 'Mom'. Speaking on Oscars night she said: "I'm happy to have a job after something like this because it can go to your head... I'm going to have a big crash-down after this so I'm happy to have the folks of 'Mom' to lift me up." The former 'West Wing' actress admitted she had "given up" on the idea of ever winning an Oscar. She said: "I kind of didn't dare to have dreams like this, because I didn't want to be disappointed. "At a certain point I had given up thinking this could happen to me. I just wasn't being given the right kind of roles in films." — Bang Showbiz





Japan pop star accused of forcibly kissing teen

A member of popular Japanese boy band Tokio has been accused of forcibly kissing a high school girl at his apartment, local media said yesterday. Tatsuya Yamaguchi's agents have acknowledged the incident and apologized. Police have referred the incident to prosecutors, local media said. Yamaguchi, 46, is accused of asking the high school girl, whose age has not been revealed, to come to his apartment in Tokyo in February and forcibly kissing her, public broadcaster NHK said. In a statement his agents apologized and said he had been drinking at the time. "We're really sorry that he drank alcohol and

kissed the victim without thinking about how she felt," the powerful Johnny & Associates agency said. The agency represents several hugely popular Japanese acts including SMAP, a boy band that split up in 2016. Its bands attract adoring crowds in Japan and also elsewhere in the region, including Taiwan and Hong Kong. Tokio is known for its clean-cut image and has appeared at events to promote the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. The group has also worked to promote food from the Fukushima region after a drop in demand following the 2011 tsunami and nuclear disaster. Fans expressed their shock on Twitter.

"I'm surprised. It's unbelievable... Maybe he was stressed but he cannot do that to a minor," one Twitter user said. "I liked him so much... so I'm in shock," said another. The agency and the teen have already reached an unspecified agreement and she has withdrawn a complaint but prosecutors will still investigate, NHK said. Tokio regularly appear on television and have a new album scheduled for release next month. — AFP



Tatsuya Yamaguchi



Years & Years

Years and Years announce new LP Palo Santo

Years & Years have announced their brand new album 'Palo Santo'. The electronic pop group - fronted by Olly Alexander - surprised fans on Tuesday night (24.04.18) by unveiling the tracklisting to their long-awaited follow-up to 2015 debut LP 'Communion'. Sharing the track titles on Twitter, they captioned the post: "#PALOSANTO has been revealed.... (sic)" The record includes latest single 'Sanctify' and 'Hypnotised', which featured in the H&M commercial for their Erdem range directed by Baz Luhrmann. It does not appear to include the 'DNA', which the 'King' hitmakers performed at Radio 1's Sound of 2018 show in London in January. A small clip of the song was previously previewed on Olly's documentary 'Growing Up Gay', but this was the first time it had been heard in full.

On the chorus, Olly belts: "Cause I'm gonna show you that history can change/The bad times in my youth/The cut on my DNA/Yes, I'm gonna pull through/My story is not made/The past is a false truth/I'll break with my DNA (sic)" 'Communion' was the fastest-selling debut album of the year from a UK signed band. The singer previously confessed that the delay in their album was partly down to playing the 'Zelda' video game, which was taking up precious recording time. He admitted: "The new album is being made. It's in the process. We are going to get it done. I can't get a word in. We are currently playing the new 'Zelda' game which is amazing. We are just playing 'Zelda' and playing music at the same time. But we are just in the process of getting it together. It's very different than the previous album but that's all I can say." A release date for their second album is yet to be announced.

The 'Palo Santo' tracklisting is as follows:

1. 'Sanctify'
2. 'Hallelujah'
3. 'All For You'
4. 'Karma'
5. 'Hypnotised'
6. 'Rendezvous'
7. 'If You're Over Me'
8. 'Preacher'
10. 'Lucky Escape'
11. 'Palo Santo'
12. 'Here' (Interlude)
13. 'Howl' (Bonus track)
14. 'Don't Panic' (Bonus track)
15. 'Up In Flames' (Bonus track) — Bang Showbiz

'Father of disco' Moroder still behind the decks aged 78

Pioneering Italian composer Giorgio Moroder, famed for the Oscar-winning soundtracks to Flashdance, Top Gun and Midnight Express, and for his collaboration with music royalty like Donna Summer and Daft Punk, is showing no sign of slowing down as he turns 78. Known as one of the 'fathers of disco', the veteran musician will celebrate his birthday by playing a DJ set in Los Angeles. A household name in the 70s and 80s, Moroder was propelled back into the limelight in 2013 when French electro stars Daft Punk contacted him.

"I've always liked the group," Moroder told AFP, admitting that when Daft Punk got in touch, he thought that the duo wanted him to compose something for them. "Actually they just asked me to talk, and they recorded," he said. "We composed the music together, but it was mostly their work." In the resulting hit entitled "Giorgio by Moroder" the disco legend's subtle accent floats over the top of Daft Punk's electro beat and he recalls his beginnings in music: from his "big dreams", to his years driving to "discotheques" in Germany to perform, and sleeping in his car until he got his break.

Working with the group gave Moroder a new lease of life in the industry, and in 2015 he released an album "Deja Vu", collaborating with top artists like Sia, Britney Spears and Kelis. But the Italian says his best memory dates back to 1979 when he won his first Oscar for the soundtrack to prison drama Midnight Express. "I was known for disco, for pop, and usually

composers who make soundtracks have a classical music background. For me, winning that Oscar was not only a surprise, but an achievement."

Over his career, he has worked with rock giants like Freddie Mercury, David Bowie and Debbie Harry, but it was his long collaboration with disco star Donna Summer, that brought him international fame in the 70s. He reveals, however, that their erotic 1975 hit "Love to Love You Baby," famous for Summer's sexy moans, was not all that it seemed. "Donna's parents weren't very happy and she was also a bit embarrassed, it was more of a joke when we recorded it," he recalls, adding that he never believed the song "would become such a success." A pioneer in the industry, Moroder was one of the first artists to use a synthesizer in his 1972 song "Son of my Father".

"It allowed you to create sounds which didn't exist, effects that you can do with a guitar or piano, the possibilities were immense," said Moroder. Now approaching 80, the producer-turned-DJ divides his time between his native Italy and Los Angeles and insists he will continue to perform, with plans for a tour in the pipeline. And has he got any regrets from his long career? Perhaps only one thing: not composing the music for "Fame" when given the opportunity. — AFP



Music composer, DJ and record producer Giorgio Moroder poses in his house.



Rapper Meek

Rapper Meek Mill freed from US jail after months-long campaign

Rapper Meek Mill, who had been incarcerated for five months on a probation violation, was released from a Pennsylvania jail on Tuesday, his attorney said, after the state's top court granted him bail, capping a fear-laden campaign to have him freed. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court ordered a lower court to release the "All Eyes on You" rapper and grant him a new hearing because of "credibility issues with a police officer who was a 'critical witness'" in his 2008 gun and drug convictions, court documents show.

Meek Mill's attorney, Joe Tacopina, said on Tuesday that the 30-year-old rapper had been released from jail near Philadelphia. "I'd like to thank God, my family and all my public advocates for their love, support and encouragement during this difficult time," Meek Mill said in statement on Twitter. "While the past five months have been a nightmare, the prayers, visits, calls, letters and rallies

have helped me stay positive," he added. Meek Mill, whose legal name is Robert Williams, was sentenced in November to two-four years in state prison for probation violations stemming from his 2008 conviction.

His case, which became a cause for recording artists, athletes and celebrities, was seen by criminal justice reform advocates as emblematic of a legal system they say treats minorities unjustly and hands out too harsh of punishments. Actor and comedian Kevin Hart was filmed visiting Meek Mill in prison on Tuesday. Meek Mill counted Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney, rapper Jay Z and the owner of football's New England Patriots, Robert Kraft, among his most prominent supporters. "I understand that many people of color across the country don't have that luxury and I plan to use my platform to shine a light on those issues," Meek Mill said in Tuesday's statement. — Reuters

Con man versus pathological liar? Closings at Cosby trial

A con man who exploited his fame as "America's Dad" to betray women's trust by drugging and sexually assaulting them, or a misguided married man hoodwinked by a money-grabbing, pathological liar? The defense and prosecution delivered closing arguments at Bill Cosby's sexual assault retrial Tuesday. At the end of a long day, the jury indicated they were "exhausted" and the judge said he would instruct them before they can begin deliberations in the first celebrity trial of the #MeToo era.

The frail 80-year-old Cosby could spend the rest of his life behind bars if convicted of aggravated indecent assault against Andrea Constand, then a Temple University employee, in January 2004. The case has trashed the legacy of the actor once adored by millions for his role as lovable father and obstetrician Cliff Huxtable on the 1984-92 hit television series "The Cosby Show." The perpetrator of that con?" asked prosecutor Kristen Feden, turning on its head the central defense claim that Constand is a con-artist in dramatic and emotional closing remarks. "That man!" she shouted, striding at speed toward and pointing at an impassive Cosby in the Norristown court, just outside Philadelphia.

Feden said Cosby used his fame to gain the trust of unsuspecting women, time and time again, deliberately drugging Constand so that she would be unable to resist his advances. Five other accusers testified that Cosby was a serial rapist and predator who preyed on them in a similar manner. "He's laughing like it's funny?" Feden shouted in Cosby's direction at one point, seemingly in response to his behavior.

"There's nothing funny about that Mr Cosby." The once pioneering African American actor claims he gave the Canadian Constand an over-the-counter antihistamine to relieve stress and that their relations were consensual.

'Pathological liar'

Constand says Cosby gave her three blue pills, saying they would help her relax but passed out. She woke up to find him penetrating her vagina with his fingers and making her masturbate his penis, she says. The prosecutor said the case was about trust, betrayal and the inability to consent, tearing into the defense's "vicious" and "filthy" character assassination attempts against Cosby's accusers. Cosby's high-flying defense team urged the jury to acquit their client on all three counts of aggravated indecent assault and save a "distinguished", legally blind, elderly man from "absolute ruin."

Cosby's wife of more than half a century, Camille, wearing an elegant orange coat and sunglasses, attended the defense closings, embracing him tenderly and beaming, but left during the lunch break. "Mr. Cosby must be acquitted of all counts. He must walk out of here free," said defense lawyer Tom Mesereau, best known for getting the late Michael Jackson acquitted of child molestation. "You're dealing with a pathological liar, members of the jury, you are," said Mesereau, who has called 45-year-old Constand a "con artist" who pursued a lonely, grieving father and falsely accused the star to bag a \$3.38 million civil settlement in 2006 to escape debt. — AFP

Marvel heroes together en masse for 'Avengers: Infinity War'

More than two dozen superheroes. One big battle. Let the mega-battle begin! And waddle the box office receipts pile up. This week, Marvel Studios unleashes the highly-anticipated "Avengers: Infinity War" on theaters worldwide, almost 10 years to the day that it introduced movie fans to its ever-expanding comic book world with "Iron Man." The film, set to hit US theaters on Thursday night, is sure to be one of the biggest blockbusters of the year-and the unofficial kick-off to the summer movie season. "Infinity War" is the 19th film in the so-called Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) — it combines a whopping nine franchises, and the cast list reads like a who's who of Hollywood's A-list. Robert Downey Jr will don the red and yellow metal suit once again as Iron Man; Benedict Cumberbatch is Doctor Strange; Scarlett Johansson is back as Black Widow; and Australia's Chris Hemsworth is Thor. Also back for more? Black Panther-the Marvel breakout of the year after the massive opening of the stand-alone pic in February, Captain America, the Hulk, Spider-Man, Hawkeye, the Guardians of the Galaxy and their assorted allies.

Their mission? To prevent the powerful purple alien Thanos (Josh Brolin) from destroying the universe. "We took a picture of every single person whose character has been in the MCU.

We hung it up on a wall all around us," co-director Anthony Russo, who helms the pic with his brother Joe, told reporters ahead of the film's release. "We basically spent months and months and months talking about where we could go with each character, how we could draw them through the story," he added. "Every one of these characters... has been on a very specific journey through the MCU to arrive at this moment."

This is the third "Avengers" film, with the final, untitled saga set for next year. At the press conference in Beverly Hills, the directors and stars were careful not to reveal too many details about the film's plot. But expectations are high after the massive success of "Black Panther," which so far has raked in more than \$1.3 billion worldwide and has broken the all-time North American record set by "Titanic," with more than \$680 million in the US and Canada. Some projections have it opening at more than \$235 million, and even higher, according to Variety-the record opening weekend of \$248 million for "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" is within reach. "It was great to go from what we did with 'Black Panther', and bringing some of that into 'Avengers'," said Chadwick Boseman, who portrays the character-the first black superhero to front a movie. "It's its own thing."

Hero in pajamas?

An important source of inspiration is the Marvel canon-the storylines developed over decades in the original comic books. "Infinity War" is drawn from the "Infinity Gauntlet" series from the early 1990s. "It starts with those comics and us beginning to rip pages out or rip copies of pages out and put them on the walls and start to be inspired," explains Kevin Feige, the president of Marvel Studios, which is owned by Disney. "It's a North Star for us as we lead these giant productions into reality." In the movie's trailer, Gamora (Zoe Saldana) — Thanos's daughter, of sorts explains that the villain believes that if he annihilates half of the universe,

he can save the other half. He needs the so-called Infinity Stones to do it. So, the heroes need to keep him from getting them.

The film—which cost an eye-watering \$300 million to make, according to Hollywood media—is likely to wow audiences with its cutting-edge special effects. And Marvel legend Stan Lee—the co-creator of numerous heroes including Spider-Man, the Hulk and Black Panther, who is facing claims of sexual assault makes his usual cameo appearance. "It was about the most fun creative exercise I think I've ever been through in my life," said Anthony Russo. "We thought about everybody in the MCU. Tom Holland, the young British actor who is the latest to wear the Spider-Man suit, says his only disappointment was not getting to wear the "Iron Spider" armor, which is instead digitally edited into the film. "It's too amazing to exist in real life," says Holland. "So I joined the wonderful Mark Ruffalo... and stood amongst these gods wearing pajamas," he joked. — AFP

Actors Samuel L Jackson and Tom Hiddlestone arrive for the World Premiere of the film 'Avengers: Infinity War' in Hollywood, California. — AFP photos



Gwyneth Paltrow arrives at the Premiere Of Disney And Marvel's 'Avengers: Infinity War'.



Actor Robert Downey Jr arrives at the World Premiere of the film 'Avengers: Infinity War'.



A handout picture released by Anthropology Professor Nathaniel Dominy at the Dartmouth College and co-authored of a paper published in the journal Royal Society Open Science about human thigh bone daggers shows a combination of pictures (up from left to right) two photographs made on September 1909 in the Malol lagoon, Aitape, northern New Guinea by Anthropologist Albert Buell Lewis, picturing a bone dagger attached to the left arm of the man in the center of the canoe and armbands of woven rattan used to secure daggers and other overt adornments, and (down left to right) two photographs made in Asmat by Bruno Zanzottera picturing a cassowary bone dagger attached to the left arm of an Asmat man in a pirogue on the Seper River, and a view revealing the removal of mediolateral cortical bone to create a flatter blade. — AFP photos

In New Guinea, human thigh bone daggers were hot property

New Guinea warriors harvested thigh bones from their dead fathers to fashion into ornamental but deadly daggers used to kill and maim enemies, sometimes to eat them. But why use human bone when equally lethal daggers were made from the shin bones of large, flightless birds called cassowaries—abundant, and easier to catch and kill? Experts have long hesitated between inherent bone ruggedness and symbolism as the reason for the proclivity.

Yesterday, an unusual study concluded that human thigh bone did not make for better dagger material, but was rather a symbol of prestige. This can be deduced from the fact that daggers made from human bone were designed differently to bird ones, said Nathaniel Dominy of Dartmouth College in the United States, who co-authored a paper published in the journal Royal Society Open Science. Dominy and a team compared the strength of cassowary shin bone to that of the human thigh, and found they had similar properties, “so they are equally good for making daggers.”

But the human bone dagger was designed to last longer. “The human bone dagger is stronger because men gave it a slight different shape—it has greater curvature,” the researcher told AFP. “We believe that such a shape was done deliberately to minimise the chance of the dagger breaking during fighting. And the reason that men engineered human bone daggers to resist breaking is because human bone daggers carried a lot of social prestige.” The value was partly determined by the fact that “suitable sources for human bone daggers were rare,” added Dominy. “It had to come from a man’s father or some other highly respected community member.”



A handout picture shows a human bone dagger attributed to the Upper Sepik River (up) and cassowary bone dagger attributed to the Abelam people (down).

Fight to the death

The daggers were used until the 20th century in hand-to-hand combat. They were designed to stab an opponent in the neck, either killing him outright or to “finish off” those wounded with arrows or spears, said the study. According to one account, bone daggers were used for “stabbing prisoners, taken in a fight, through their hip joints, knees or ankles” to be kept alive “until needed for a later cannibal feast”. The daggers had elaborate designs carved into them, and were worn in armbands as adornment—within easy reach if needed. They were also thought to confer the strength of the person the bone was harvested from onto the dagger user. — AFP

Mediterranean fears bitter future for citrus crops

Could we soon be forced to do without a glass of orange juice or a slice of grapefruit at breakfast? The answer is unfortunately yes. After decimating orange groves in Florida and trees in California and Brazil, citrus greening disease now threatens the key producing region of the Mediterranean, according to researchers. The disease “has spread since the mid-2000s with a phenomenal speed and impact,” said Eric Imbert of CIRAD, an agricultural research centre based in the French city of Montpellier. The only citrus producing region as yet unaffected, “the Mediterranean can’t remain untouched by citrus greening disease,” the researcher added.



Citrus fruits with the citrus greening disease are pictured at the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD).

Imbert said one species of the insect which spreads the disease has already been found on the Arabian peninsula. The disease emerged in the first half of the last century in Asia, where it is called yellow dragon disease by the Chinese. It is spread by small insects called plant lice or psyllids which jump from tree to tree to suck the sap. When they do they introduce the bacteria which ends up blocking the channels along which the sap flows. As the bacteria chokes off the flow of nutrients the leaves turn yellow, the fruit is deformed, and eventually the tree dies. The African psyllid, which spreads a less virulent form of the disease, has already been detected in northern Spain and in Portugal, where trees were rapidly uprooted to prevent any further spread.

‘Screaming in a desert’

“While not wanting to panic ... if we don’t do anything in terms of prevention, we could end up suffering a major catastrophe, with prices doubling or tripling,” said Imbert. What happened in Florida proves he may well be right. The Sunshine State saw its orange production tumble by 60 percent from 2005 to 2017. And as production costs soared, the wholesale price of concentrated orange juice more than doubled to \$2,500 per tonne.

“We are not immune from a phenomenon of similar magnitude on the Mediterranean fresh citrus market,” Imbert said. According to the trade magazine FruitTrop,

just over one fifth of the oranges, clementines and lemons consumed in the world come from the Mediterranean region. It accounts for 70 percent of the world’s exports of citrus fruits. “Researchers hit the alarm button long ago,” said Imbert, trying to get the attention of European authorities in particular. “But we have the impression we are screaming in a desert.”

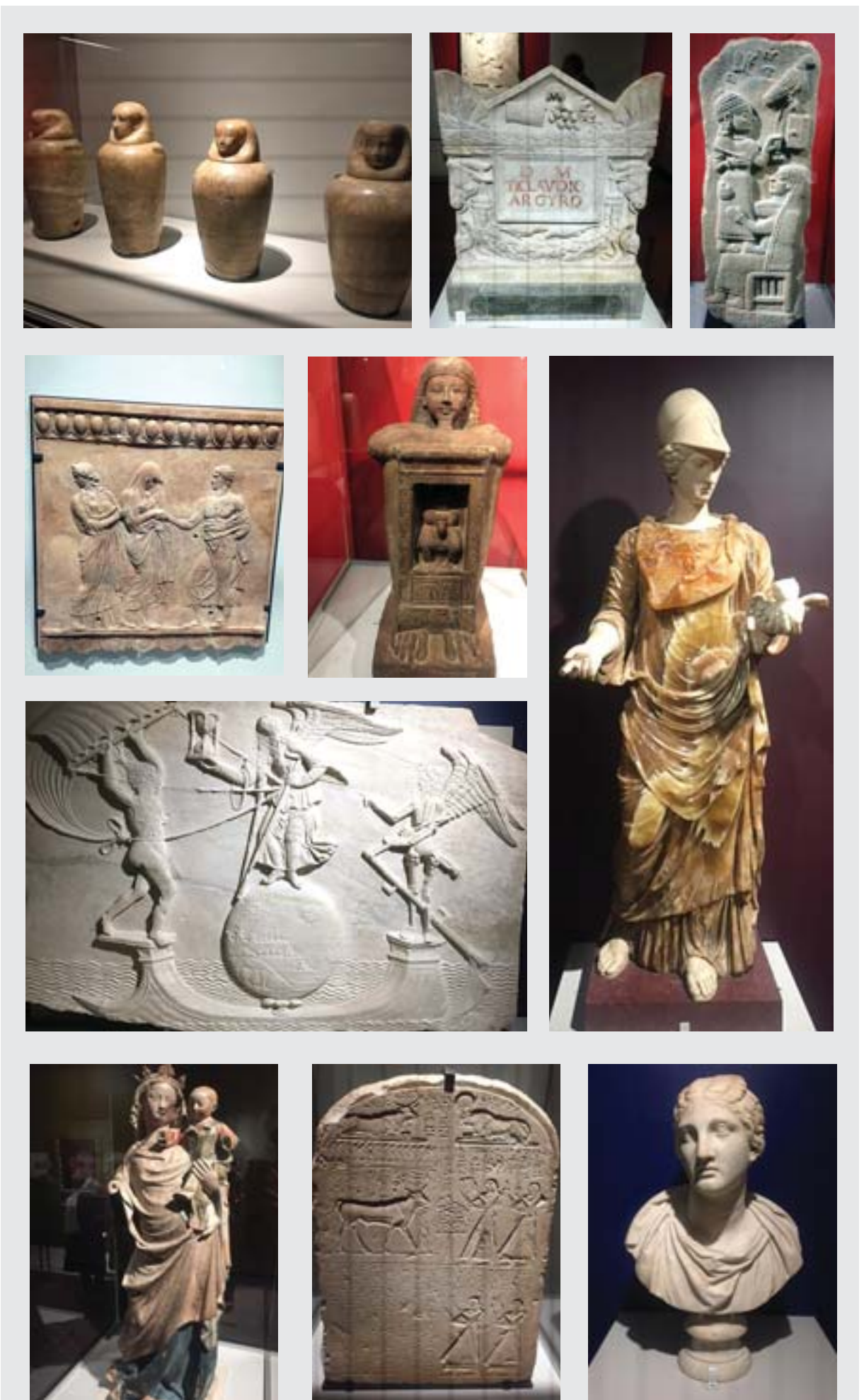
‘Incredibly damaging’

Countries around the world are trying different methods to combat the spread of citrus greening disease. Brazil, a major exporter of orange juice, has relied heavily on pesticides. In California, farmers have gone with an expensive option—uprooting their sick trees and replanting. Farmers in Florida were only able to use limited amounts of pesticide as their groves are located close to residential areas. Moreover, their orange groves were already weak after being ravaged by several hurricanes, which meant the trees succumbed to the disease even more quickly.

Should lice carrying the virulent strain of citrus greening disease arrive in the Mediterranean region, experts expect it to spread rapidly, as it will also be difficult to use pesticides extensively. “There are lots of small farms surrounded by residential areas,” said Imbert. Rushing to get ahead of the game, researchers are trying various approaches to combat the disease. With the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe already infested, French researchers have gained valuable experience. “Today Guadeloupe has to import limes for ti punch as over several years it has lost nearly all of its citrus trees,” said Yann Froelicher, a researcher at the INRA national agricultural research institute, referring to a rum-based drink popular in the Caribbean. “It was incredibly damaging as there were family-owned groves everywhere and everyone had an orange tree in their garden.” The researchers suspect nurseries infected in greenhouses were distributed across the island.

‘No miracle solution’

The response has been to ship in seeds from a repository that INRA runs on the Mediterranean island of Corsica which has a collection of some 10,000 citrus varieties. Once on Guadeloupe they are grown in special greenhouses that are made insect proof before being sold to growers. A type of small wasp that attacks the lice that spread the disease has also been released. But studying the bacteria to directly combat citrus greening disease has proved hard because “you can’t cultivate it in the laboratory,” said Raphael Morillon, a researcher at CIRAD in Guadeloupe. Researchers meet every two years in Orlando, Florida to review their efforts. “The Americans boast of having solutions, but last year everyone was guarded, no one speaks of a miracle solution,” said Morillon. So far only France’s Indian Ocean island Reunion seems to have found a way to keep the disease at bay: replanting at higher altitudes where the lice haven’t yet followed. — AFP



Louvre museum in Tehran holds exhibition

The National Museum of Iran played host to Louvre museum in Tehran, an exhibition showcasing some 53 artifacts, antiquities, and art pieces celebrating various global civilizations. Opened last March and lasting

until June eighth, the Louvre museum in Tehran has pieces borrowed from the main museum in France on display.

— Photo features by Fawaz Al-Otaibi



Yann Floelicher inspects citrus sprouts ready to be grafted at the INRA, the French National Institute for Research in Agronomics, research center, in San-Guilliano on the French Mediterranean island of Corsica. — AFP photos

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 2018



Dancers Alison Parsons (left) and Georgia Paton-Durrant pose in a floral display during a photocall on the eve of the Harrogate Spring Flower Show at the Great Yorkshire Showground in Harrogate, northern England yesterday. The flower show, which features over 500 exhibitors, opens today and runs until April 29, 2018. — AFP

‘Golden cabbage’ leaves stolen off Vienna landmark

Thieves have stolen half a dozen of the gilded leaves that make up the famous “golden cabbage” dome on the iconic Secession building in Vienna, police said yesterday. The Art Nouveau building, completed in 1898, is undergoing restoration and the culprits made use of the scaffolding to clamber up and prise off six to eight of the leaves, police spokeswoman Irina Steirer said. The theft from the roof, visible from afar and a well-known landmark in the Austrian capital, took place on Monday night, Steirer said.

The building by architect Joseph Maria Olbrich was constructed to house works by Gustav Klimt and other artists after they quit the stuffy Kuensterhaus to found a new art association called the Secession. Not everyone in Vienna, a vibrant hub of art, science and philosophy at the time, was impressed however, and the original site on the famous Ringstrasse boulevard was abandoned after a public furore. For the renovation work, due to be completed at the end of May, around 2,500 leaves and 311 “berries” were restored and repaired over recent months and were in the process of being put back. The leaves, around 60 centimeters (nearly two feet) long made of steel and coated with gold leaf, are worth less than 1,000 euros (\$1,200) each. Secession spokeswoman Karin Jaschke told AFP. “Security measures are being increased,” Jaschke said. — AFP



Thieves have stolen half a dozen of the copper leaves that make up the famous ‘golden cabbage’ on the roof of the iconic art nouveau Secession building in Vienna. — AFP

NIGERIA’S FAVORITE COCKTAIL PACKS A PUNCH

Nigerians may be fond of a glass of champagne but it’s another fizzy drink—and one that’s unashamedly non-alcoholic—that’s dearest to their hearts. Garnet red and tooth-achingly sweet with a surprisingly tart kick, the Chapman is served with a slice of orange and cucumber in a pint glass with a plastic straw. “This is our drink, not champagne,” said Toyedayo Osilaja, a patron of the Ikoyi Club, one of the oldest private clubs in Lagos, Nigeria’s thriving commercial capital. “The (champagne) fever is dying. You’ve had enough hiccups and heartburn,” he told AFP. “Chapman is just a popular drink we all love.”

Chapman’s universal appeal is undeniable in a religiously conservative country where temperance is widely seen as a virtue. It’s a staple on restaurant menus and a favorite at weddings; President Muhammadu Buhari serves it at meetings; bestselling novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is on the record as a fan. Enjoyed by both children and adults and eyed by beverage companies as a next big mass-produced hit, the Chapman is sometimes referred to as a “Nigerian sangria”.



A barman prepares a non-alcoholic cocktail called Chapman.

But that’s a misnomer, as unlike in Spain and Portugal, it’s not made with wine but soft drinks, while the orange and cucumber is a garnish. Other than getting the approximate color right, there’s no standard way to make a Chapman. That’s partly because despite the drink’s ubiquity, its origins are shrouded in mystery. Rumor has it there once was an expat by the name of Chapman who worked at a club in Lagos and made the drink. Others maintain it was a Nigerian. No one knows for sure, though everyone agrees it was conceived in the country and is a made-in-Nigeria drink.

Mysterious origins

“It’s been (served) here for the longest,” said Osilaja, staking a claim on the Chapman for the Ikoyi Club, as a barman in a black waistcoat pours a Chapman from a drink dispenser on the bar. In a sign of the drink’s importance, the first thing Osilaja did when he accepted a volunteer post as bar advisor was to standardize the drink’s recipe across the expansive club’s 15 bars. He consid-



Some of the ingredients of the notorious Nigerian non-alcoholic cocktail called Chapman displayed on the bar of a restaurant in Lagos. — AFP photos

“ Chapman is just a popular drink we all love ”

ered it was being “badly mixed” and for months he allowed only his most trusted bartender to prepare the drink. Members are thrilled with the result, he reports happily. “There’s some story about a Chapman making it but we have no records,” said Osilaja, adding that he’s enjoyed Chapmans for all his 46 years at the club his parents first brought him to as a child to enjoy the pool, tennis courts and other facilities.

A splash of Angostura bitters is considered the hallmark of a perfectly executed Chapman, giving it echoes of the cocktails enjoyed during the British colonial era. “It looks like the earlier versions had ingredients that were a little more British than the current one—bitter lemon or lemonade and tonic water—instead of Sprite,” said David Wondrich, a cocktail historian based in New York. “With those ingredients, its origins in a British club are more likely, although most British colonialists would have put alcohol in it.” Like other colonial-era drinks, including the Singapore Sling, the Chapman is probably an African cousin of punch, said Wondrich. “Punch, the great ancestor of all modern mixed drinks, is a British invention, as is the Pink Gin (gin and bitters) and the Collins,” he said.

Mass market dreams

Beverage companies are hoping to cash in on the Chapman’s popularity, to sell it as a ready-to-go drink. With Nigeria’s booming young population, analysts say there’s more than enough room for a Chapman to carve out a niche like Dr Pepper in the United States. “There’s room for new innovations,” said Maurice Abuah, analyst at Euromonitor, a market research firm. There are already two Chapman drinks in stores today but invariably are

different from their freshly made counterparts.

The color isn’t a deep sunset red while there’s a lingering distinct aftertaste, which is especially noticeable when the drink begins to warm in the tropical heat. “It’s significantly different from a drink that you can get at a bar,” admitted Nelson Nsitem, research analyst at Asoko Insight, a Lagos-based business intelligence firm. “The thing about the Chapman drink is that it’s the way it’s prepared and consumers know it’s different,” he added. “There’s something about it, especially when it’s made well,” he said. “There’s a bit of, I don’t know what. It feels totally different.” — AFP



A barman adds the final touches to a non-alcoholic cocktail called the Chapman in a restaurant in Lagos.