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Amir urges closer Arab-China cooperation, hails strong ties

Beijing pledges \$20 billion in loans for Arab states



BEIJING: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah waves after giving a speech as China's President Xi Jinping looks on during the 8th Ministerial Meeting of China-Arab States Cooperation Forum at the Great Hall of the People yesterday. — AFP (See Page 3)

BEIJING: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday called for pushing forward mechanisms of cooperation between Arab countries and China to attain mutual interests and strengthen historical ties. Addressing the 8th session of the ministerial meeting of China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, held in Beijing yesterday, HH the Amir said that Arab countries should work with China in order to overcome the crises in some Arab nations thanks to China's international weight and influence as well as sincere commitment to the UN Charter.

"We believe that boosting mechanisms of cooperation between us will contribute to achieving supreme interests of our Arab nation and our friends, and to enhancing historical relations between the two sides, which we are keen to develop and promote in all fields," the Amir said. He added that the promotion and development of cooperation with China would help achieve political consultations and coordination on ongoing issues and crises, thus maintaining regional and international security and stability.

Thanking Chinese President Xi Jinping for inviting him as a guest of honor, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad said the meeting comes within the framework of the forum so as to complete the march of long and historical relations through which cooperation with China is viewed with broad horizons and unlimited optimism.

"This cooperation, which was forged a decade and a

half ago, would see neither growth nor continuation, and would not even reach the desired goals, as long as we are living tense and unstable situations in our Arab nation, since the Palestinian cause, which is our central issue, is still far from being given the due world attention and priority. Yet, all this poses a threat to our security and stability," he said. "The tragic conditions in Yemen, Syria, Libya and Somalia are still breaking the hearts of our Arab nation's sons as their destiny is still unknown, prompting us to resort to our Chinese friends so as to work together to overcome our challenges," he lamented.

Sheikh Sabah believed that China could play a role in this regard thanks to its international weight and influence as well as sincere commitment to the principles of the UN Charter. HH the Amir called for pushing forward Arab-Sino cooperation to new horizons with a view to attaining mutual interests, stressing support for China's policy, territorial integrity and One-China Principle, along with its efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflicts over territories and territorial waters through friendly consultations and negotiations, and in line with bilateral agreements and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The Amir said that there were talks with Chinese friends on gigantic future projects that reflect a real partnership with Beijing, referring to practical steps in

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NATO summit to focus on deterrence, fight against terrorism

BRUSSELS: The leaders of 29 NATO member states and many partner nations will meet in Brussels today and tomorrow for a summit at the alliance's new headquarters. Speaking at a press conference yesterday, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said, "Together, they will take decisions to strengthen NATO's deterrence and defense, and also take decisions to step up NATO's role in the fight against terrorism." "They will agree to launch a new training mission in Iraq, with hundreds of NATO trainers. Military schools will also be set up to increase the professionalism of Iraqi forces. In

addition, allies will agree more support for key partners in the Middle East and North Africa, including Tunisia and Jordan," he said.

Stoltenberg noted that in tomorrow's summit meeting, defense spending and burden-sharing will be high on the agenda. "We expect eight allies to spend at least two percent of GDP on defense this year, compared to just three allies in 2014," said Stoltenberg. To strengthen NATO's deterrence and defense, leaders are expected to adopt a Readiness Initiative. "This is a commitment to have by 2020: 30 mechanized battalions; 30 air squadrons; and 30 combat vessels, ready to use within 30 days or less," said the secretary general.

Allies will also agree a new NATO Command Structure, including a new command for the Atlantic in the US' Norfolk, Virginia, a command for military mobility in Europe in Ulm, Germany, and a Cyber Operations Centre. The NATO summit will end tomorrow with a meeting on Afghanistan, joined by Resolute Support partners. "At the summit, I expect we will also agree to extend

funding for the Afghan forces beyond 2020. And we'll express our full support for President Ghani's bold peace initiative. And his government's reforms," he said.

Finally, the NATO chief said he expects that following last month's historic agreement on the 'name' issue between Greece and Macedonia, they will agree to invite Skopje to start accession talks. Once the agreement is finalized and implemented, "we will be able to invite the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to become NATO's 30th member under its new name - the Republic of North Macedonia," he added.

NATO and the EU earlier yesterday signed a new joint declaration setting out a shared vision of how NATO-EU cooperation can make all stronger and safer. Meanwhile, NATO has invited two journalists from Kuwait: Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait Times, and Rabaa Al-Juma from the Kuwait Journalists Association, to cover the summit and participate in special programs on its sidelines. — KUNA



BRUSSELS: Editor-in-chief of Kuwait Times Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan and Rabaa Al-Juma from the Kuwait Journalists Association are seen at the NATO headquarters yesterday. — KUNA

All 12 boys and coach rescued from Thai cave

MAE SAI, Thailand: The final five members of a young football team were rescued from a flooded Thai cave yesterday after spending 18 harrowing days trapped deep inside, completing an astonishing against-the-odds rescue mission that captivated the world. Elite foreign divers and Thai Navy SEALs

extracted the final batch of four boys, plus the 25-year-old coach, yesterday afternoon via a treacherous escape route that required them to squeeze through narrow, water-filled tunnels in darkness.

"All 12 'Wild Boars' and coach have been extracted from the cave," the SEALs said in a Facebook post, referring to the boys by the name of their football team. "All are safe," they added, then signed off with what has become their trademark "Hooyah" that they used to celebrate the successful extractions of the other eight boys over the previous two days.

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Ronaldo joins Juventus from Real for €100m

MADRID: Cristiano Ronaldo has joined Italian champions Juventus from Real Madrid on a four-year contract for 100 million euros (\$117.34 million) signaling the end of nine years at the Spanish giants filled with trophies and goals. The two European giants yesterday announced the much-anticipated deal for the five-times world player of the year who joined Real from Manchester United in 2008 for a then world record £80 million (\$106 million).

The 33-year-old Portugal forward is the Spanish club's all-time top scorer with 451 goals in all competitions and won two La Liga titles and four Champions League trophies with them. The signing of the latest Ballon d'Or winner and top scorer in the Champions League for the last six seasons represents a major coup for Juve, who have had a stranglehold on the Italian title since 2012 but have not won Europe's top prize since 1996.

The signing also strikes a blow for the profile of Serie A against La Liga, which has now lost two of its three most famous players in the last year after Paris St Germain signed Neymar from Barcelona for a world record fee last August. Real paid tribute to Ronaldo, who is the all-time top scorer in the Champions League, in a lengthy statement on



Cristiano Ronaldo

their website and said the player had asked to be transferred. "Real Madrid announces that it has agreed to transfer Cristiano Ronaldo to Juventus FC due to the will and desire

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Israel planning its first moon launch in Dec

YEHUD, Israel: An Israeli organization announced plans yesterday to launch the country's first spacecraft to the moon in December, with hopes of burnishing Israel's reputation as a small nation with otherworldly high-tech ambitions. The unmanned spacecraft, shaped like a pod and weighing some 585 kg at launch, will land on the moon on Feb 13, 2019 if all goes according to plan, organizers SpacEL told a news conference in Yehud, central Israel.

The vessel will be launched via

a rocket from American entrepreneur Elon Musk's SpaceX firm and its mission will include research on the moon's magnetic field. Its first task, however, will be to plant an Israeli flag on the moon, organizers said. The project began as part of the Google Lunar XPrize, which in 2010 offered \$30 million in awards to encourage scientists and entrepreneurs to come up with relatively low-cost moon missions. Three young Israeli scientists, Yariv Bash, Kir Damari and

Continued on Page 24



YEHUD: Israeli Aerospace Industries director of Space division Ofer Doron (right) and billionaire investor Morris Kahn (second right) present the moon modular during a press conference to announce the launch of a spacecraft to the moon yesterday. — AFP



CHIANG RAI: Motorists pass a billboard with a photograph showing members of the Thai children's football team 'Wild Boar' and their coach with a message 'welcome home brothers' yesterday. — AFP

Local

Crown Prince receives Sheikh Nasser; Premier meets inventor

Parliament speaker returns from Ankara



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with inventor Adel Al-Wusais.



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem returns home after participating in Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's inauguration ceremony.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received inventor Adel Al-Wusais, who won four international patents, in addition to the gold medal for his 'safety belt' invention in Malaysia's Innovation and Technology Exhibition (ITEX).

Separately, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem returned home from the Turkish capital, Ankara, where he represented His Highness the Amir

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's inauguration ceremony. The speaker was received at the airport by several members of parliament.

In other news, Ghanem is slated to be the first head of parliament to attend the Arab Economic Forum, an event organized by Lebanon's Economy and Business Group, as a guest, the forum's Executive Director Rauf Abu Zaki said. The forum, which opens tomorrow, hosted heads of government of regional countries in the past, but decided to invite Ghanem this year because of his leading role at Arab level, as well as reflection of solid Lebanese-Kuwait relations, Abu

Zaki added. "Ghanem is a dynamic person who plays a major role as National Assembly speaker inside Kuwait, and a leading parliamentary figure at Arab and regional levels," he said.

Abu Zaki said the forum would highlight political and economic developments in the region, and gathered decision-making, businessmen and investors. He said Kuwait and Lebanon enjoyed deep-rooted relations, and the Gulf country was the first country to invest in Lebanon. These relations and investments were not affected by the political and security uncertainties, he noted. Kuwaiti people have always been visiting Lebanon and maintained their investments,

said Abu Zaki, who estimated Kuwaiti investments at over \$2 billion.

Abu Zaki talked about the economic and financial condition of Lebanon, describing it as 'difficult' due to the decline of remittance from the Gulf and African countries. He said movement of goods with neighboring Syria also declined following the eruption of the conflict, thus the transport of goods to Gulf countries halted. The economic crisis in Lebanon, he explained, caused rise in unemployment and affected the middle class. The Arab Economic Forum will be held under auspices of Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri. —KUNA

Passenger traffic increased 18 percent in June

KUWAIT: Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said passenger traffic at Kuwait International Airport increased by 18 percent last June with 1,222,449 passengers compared to 1,034,477 passengers in June 2017. In a

statement, Deputy Director-General of Air Transport Emad Al-Jalawi said yesterday that passenger traffic reached 505,653 passengers last June compared to 417,337 passengers in June 2017.

Departing passengers were 716,796 in June versus 617,140 passengers in June 2017, Jalawi said. The total number of flights to and from Kuwait International Airport last June reached 10,071 flights as opposed to 8,998 flights in June 2017. Freight traffic at Kuwait International Airport was about 19.2 million kilograms last June compared to June 2017 with 18.75 million kilograms, he added. Shipping traffic in June was about 14.91 million kg versus 14.31 million kg in June 2017. — KUNA

Zain strategic partner of Coded Summer Camp

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced its strategic partnership of Coded Juniors Summer Camp, an educational program that aims at teaching children the basics of coding and technology using the latest tools and gadgets. The program comes in collaboration with Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center.

Zain's strategic partnership of Coded Juniors Summer Camp comes in line with its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility Strategy towards the Education sector, through which the company is keen on contributing to the development and advancement of tech innovation within all age groups, including school children, to boost their coding and technology skills, as such skills are essential for the modern digital world.

Coded Juniors Summer Camp mainly aims at teaching school children (ages 7-12) the basics of coding languages and technology using the latest tools and gadgets like robots, smart toys, computers, and more, as well as traditional learning methods such as art, drawing, and music. The program features a fun educational environment that lasts for 4 weeks in the Space Museum at Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Center.

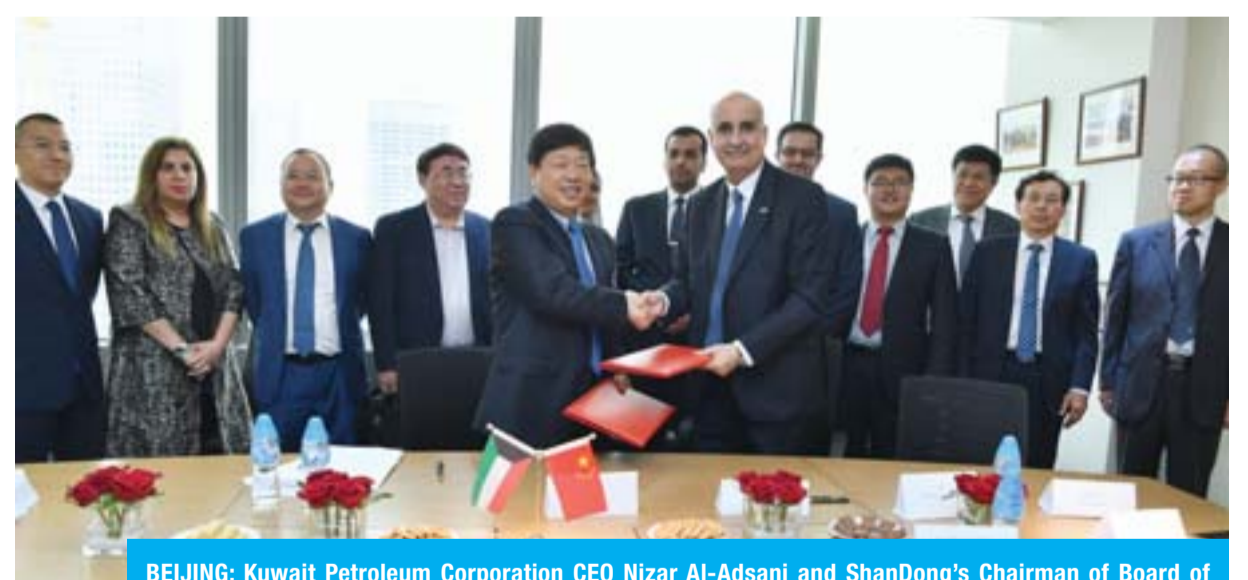
Through supporting this unique program, Zain seeks to offer the best educational environment



for children in Kuwait to nurture their talents, enrich their skills, and promote tech innovation within them from an early age. Zain believes in the important role tech innovation plays in building the future and progressing the national economy.

Zain is keen on playing a vital role as an integrated digital service provider in light of the rapid digital changes witnessed by the modern world. The company always seeks to reach new levels of excellence with its customers through offering the best innovative services, meeting their needs and aspirations, as well as supporting programs and initiatives that embrace tech innovation and aim at developing it.

Zain further reaffirms its commitment to supporting any entity that offers the proper educational environment for the next generation as per the highest international standards. The company will spare no efforts in offering its support to such initiatives and programs that serve the community and contribute to the further progress of the country.



BEIJING: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation CEO Nizar Al-Adsani and ShanDong's Chairman of Board of Directors Li Xiangping shake hands after signing the agreement. — KUNA

Kuwait, China sign crude oil joint marketing deal

BEIJING: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) signed yesterday a cooperation agreement with China's ShanDong Refining and Chemical Group to market Kuwaiti crude oil. The agreement was signed by KPC's CEO and Deputy Chairman of the Board Nizar Al-Adsani and ShanDong's Chairman of Board of Directors Li Xiangping. The deal, which was inked on the sidelines of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit to China, aims to expand joint investment platform in oil and logistic industries, Adsani said. ShanDong, named after a

coastal province in East China, is one of the leading oil industry bases in the country and known for hosting a large number of private and state-owned oil refineries, he noted.

Last April, KPC hosted a visiting high-level delegation of representatives from a number of oil refinery companies in the province, Adsani recalled. The delegation was acquainted with the Kuwaiti expertise in petroleum manufactures, he added. The visit had a positive impact on boosting cooperation between KPC and Chinese oil companies, resulting in inking a mutual agreement to export the first Kuwaiti crude oil batch to ShanDong Group at the end of July, said Adsani.

Meanwhile, Li expressed joy at signing the deal with KPC, and forecasted huge economic outcomes as a result, for both sides and countries. He affirmed the Group's willingness to continued cooperation with KPC in various fields, particularly crude oil, reiterating full cooperation with Kuwait in all areas to attain mutual profitable outcomes. — KUNA

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Local

Chinese-Arab cooperation can lead to peace, stability: Amir

Sheikh Sabah returns home after concluding historic China visit



BEIJING: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Chinese President Xi Jinping and other officials pose for a group photo during the 8th session of the ministerial meeting of China-Arab States Cooperation Forum. —Amiri Diwan and AFP photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah returned home yesterday after concluding an official state visit to the People's Republic of China, during which the two countries signed several bilateral agreements for greater cooperation in the future. At His Highness's reception at the airport were His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and top state officials.

The delegation accompanying His Highness comprised of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, Minister of Finance Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeh, Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan and Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Bakheet Al-Rashidi. The delegation accompanying His Highness also included, Chief of Staff of His Highness the Amir's Office Ahmad Fahad Al-Fahad, Advisor at the Amiri Diwan Dr Youssef Al-Ibrahim, Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohammad Abulhassan, Chief of Amiri Protocols and Ceremonials Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah and Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah.

The delegation also gathered the Chairman and CEO of the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority, Eng Salem Al-Othaina, Director General of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development's (KFAED) Abdulwahab Al-Bader, Head of Media and Cultural Affairs at Amiri Diwan Youssef Al-Roumi, Head of Political and Economic Affairs at Amiri Diwan Sheikh Fawaz Al-Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, CEO of the apparatus for developing the Silk City (in Al-Sabbiah) and Boubyan Island, Faisal Al-Medlej and top officials at the Amiri Diwan, Foreign Ministry and Oil Ministry.

Upon their departure from Beijing, His Highness the Amir and his delegation were seen off at the airport by

Assistant Foreign Minister for West Asian and North African Affairs Chen Xiaodong, Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Wang-Di, and Kuwait's Ambassador to the People's Republic Samih Hayat and Kuwait Embassy staffers.

His Highness the Amir later sent a cable to President of China Xi Jinping, expressing gratitude for the warm hospitality His Highness and the accompanying official delegation received during the state visit to the friendly People's Republic of China. His Highness the Amir praised the fruitful results from this visit, especially regarding the distinguished bilateral relations between the two friendly countries. The visit reflected the depth of the relations, which reflected the joint determination to move forward towards developing and enhancing cooperation in various fields, especially economic, trade, investment, cultural and military. His Highness the Amir called on the Chinese President to pay an official visit to Kuwait to enhance such ties even further.

Several agreements

During his state visit to China, His Highness the Amir and Chinese President Xi Jinping held official talks, and oversaw the signing of several agreements aiming at boosting cooperation between the two countries in various fields. His Highness the Amir also attended the 8th round of the Ministerial Meeting of the Sino-Arab States Cooperation Forum, during which he asserted that the constructive and continued Sino-Gulf cooperation represents strong catalyst for the joint cooperation within the Arab framework.

Bilateral cooperation, which is based on the fact that China is Kuwait's key trade partner, represents an essential dimension and important addition in line with mechanisms of cooperation with Beijing, His Highness said. Negotiations of a free trade zone between GCC member states and China are a reflection of this joint cooperation, he said, estimating Arab-Sino trade exchange at \$191 billion in 2017. Arab countries are looking forward to promising partnership in the Belt and Road Project which has strategic goals and unlimited opportunities for promoting cooperation and linkage, facilitating transportation, doubling investment openings and boosting global economy, His Highness the Amir noted.

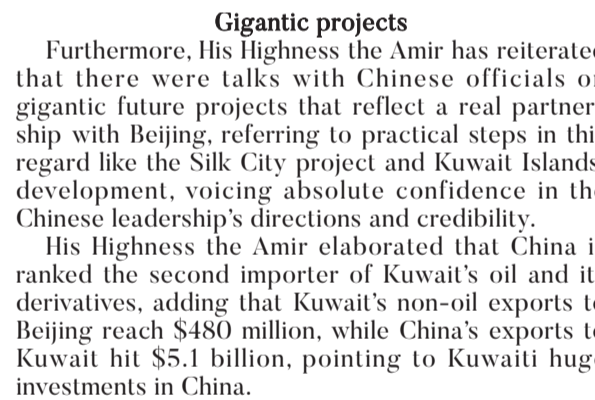
New era of partnership with China



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivers a speech during the 8th session of the ministerial meeting of China-Arab States Cooperation Forum.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah welcomes His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah upon his arrival back to Kuwait.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Chinese President Xi Jinping arrive for the 8th session of the ministerial meeting of China-Arab States Cooperation Forum.

Gigantic projects

Furthermore, His Highness the Amir has reiterated that there were talks with Chinese officials on gigantic future projects that reflect a real partnership with Beijing, referring to practical steps in this regard like the Silk City project and Kuwait Islands' development, voicing absolute confidence in the Chinese leadership's directions and credibility.

His Highness the Amir elaborated that China is ranked the second importer of Kuwait's oil and its derivatives, adding that Kuwait's non-oil exports to Beijing reach \$480 million, while China's exports to Kuwait hit \$5.1 billion, pointing to Kuwaiti huge investments in China.

"We believe that boosting mechanisms of cooperation between us will contribute to achieving supreme interests of our Arab nation and our friends, and to enhancing historical relations between the two sides, which we are keen to develop and promote in all fields," His Highness the Amir said.

His Highness the Amir said that Arab countries should work with China in order to overcome the crises of some Arab nations thanks to China's international weight and influence as well as sincere commitment to the UN Charter.

"This cooperation, which was forged a decade and a half ago, would see neither growth nor continuation, and would not even reach the desired goals, as long as we are living tense and unstable

situations in our Arab nation, since the Palestinian cause, which is our central issue, is still far from being given the due world attention and priority. Yet, all this poses a threat to our security and stability," he said. "The tragic conditions in Yemen, Syria, Libya and Somalia are still breaking the hearts of our Arab nation's sons as their destiny is still unknown, prompting us to resort to our Chinese friends so as to work together to overcome our challenges," he lamented. —KUNA

Sino-Arab talks encapsulate vibrant ties, says Kuwaiti FM

BEIJING: A major forum over China's ties with the Arab region and Beijing's 'Belt and Road Initiative' embody the vibrant relationship both sides share, Kuwaiti Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said yesterday.

The Chinese government's 'Belt and Road Initiative', a development strategy proposed by Beijing to focus on connectivity and cooperation with Eurasian nations, has been a launch pad for closer bilateral ties, he said on the sidelines of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF).

"Lack of geographical proximity notwithstanding," the Kuwaiti foreign minister, who heads his country's delegation to the CASCF's ministerial-level talks, urged the need to establish a platform for dialogue as a constant form of engagement. Meanwhile, he spoke of Chinese President Xi Jinping's earnest desire to reach out to Arab states and his concern over some of the most pressing issues facing that region.

"As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, we need to engage China in constructive dialogue over these issues," the Kuwaiti foreign minister said, citing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular.

He also underlined China's contributions towards efforts to rebuild a number of Arab nations that have been torn apart by war, with Beijing allocating a sum of

\$100 million in aid for Syria and Yemen, among other countries.

FM meets Yemeni counterpart

Separately, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled met with Yemen's Foreign Minister Khaled Hussein Al-Yamani on the sidelines of CASCF. The meeting discussed boosting bilateral relations in all fields, latest developments on the Yemeni arena and the international efforts aimed at finding a political solution to the crisis in Yemen. It also tackled alleviating the suffering of the Yemeni people in addition to the latest regional and international developments.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled renewed Kuwait's firm position in supporting Yemen. Kuwait and through its non-permanent membership in the Security Council will continue its efforts to support Yemen and reach a peaceful solution that will restore security and stability to Yemen according to the Gulf initiative and its executive mechanism, outcomes of the comprehensive national dialogue as well as resolution of the UNSC 2216, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Ambassador Aziz Rahim Al-Daihani, Assistant Foreign Minister for Foreign Minister's Office Affairs, Ambassador Saleh Salem Al-Loughani, Kuwait's Ambassador to China, Samih Johar Hayat and number of senior Foreign Ministry officials. —KUNA



BEIJING: Kuwaiti Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah attends the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum. —Amiri Diwan photos



Kuwaiti Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Yemen's Foreign Minister Khaled Hussein Al-Yamani.

Local

Disagreement brewing as MPs prepare to discuss court ruling's aftermath

Lawmaker calls for meeting with Amir to ask for amnesty

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Disagreement is brewing amongst lawmakers prior to a meeting MP Mohammed Al-Mutair has called for at his diwaniya tomorrow to discuss taking accelerated measures in protest of a ruling by the court of cassation sentencing those who broke into the parliament, including MPs Waleed Al-Tabtabaei and Jamaan Al-Harbash, to prison, well-informed sources said.

Around 14 lawmakers, including Shuaib Al-Mowaziri, Mohammed Hayef, Abdulwahab Al-Babtain and the host Mutair will attend the meeting, the sources said, pointing out that these MPs proposed submitting collective resignations that would lead to dissolving the current parliament, urging the government to issue a general amnesty or grilling and deposing His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Further, the sources said that members of the '26 bloc' which was formed at the beginning of this parliament's tenure, including the four MPs in addition to Tabtabaei and Harbash, see that resigning will not be fruitful because it would cost MPs their parliamentary positions which they can use instead to apply more pressure. The sources also noted that the head of the parliamentary legislative committee and the attorney who defended the defendants in the case of breaking into the parliament, MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei, will head the committee's meeting tomorrow to prepare a report on how to react to Tabtabaei and Harbash's memberships after they were sentenced to three years and six months in prison. "Subaei will argue that both MPs took part to demand reform and not for criminal reasons," the sources highlighted.

On the other hand, the sources said that the government refuses holding an urgent session to discuss imprisoning Tabtabaei and Harbash and declaring their positions vacant, and calls to postpone this matter till the next term at the end of October. "The speaker and some MPs are in favor of postponement," stressed the sources.

Moreover, the sources said MP Adel Al-Damkhi, who is also a member of the 26 bloc, called for requesting a direct

meeting with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to ask for a special amnesty to prevent imprisoning those indicted in the case. "Such an amnesty will only prevent imprisoning the MPs but will end their political careers, because the sentence will stay in their records," the sources remarked.

Replacement plans

The parliament's employment committee is set to create a monitoring body in the next parliamentary term that will be responsible for following up 'Kuwaitization' and replacement plans in state departments, where unnecessary expatriate employees will be laid off to create jobs for citizens, parliamentary sources said.

The parliament has been very patient with the government with regards to implementing the policy of terminating expats and replacing them with citizens in various government bodies, the sources explained. "The government gave accounts of expats officially appointed, but withheld information about thousands of others hired through companies," the sources underlined, referring to subcontracted employees. The sources explained that the body to be founded will be responsible for examining information provided to the employment committee, because some government bodies had been providing what they described as 'misleading information'.

The sources demanded that expats' certificates be endorsed by the Ministry of Higher Education, the foreign ministry and relevant embassies of the countries in which workers have studied, claiming that this is not done all the time presently. They argued that some expats take advantage of this situation by receiving degrees online, get hired in the public sector, and once they reach retirement age, they get appointed as advisors. "Such situations cannot continue any longer," the sources warned, noting that the employment committee found employees appointed in certain bodies had appointed their siblings, cousins and children. "Having controlled the entire body he works for, how can such an expat employee report in favor of the replacement policy?" the sources wondered.



The National Assembly.

Umrah trips

The court of appeals yesterday issued a final verdict cancelling a Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) decision on banning co-op societies from organizing umrah trips for shareholders and mandating those co-ops to subsidize governorates with five percent of the shareholders' money.

The court issued the verdict after Qairowan Co-op

Society's president filed a case against MSAL's decisions. Meanwhile, MSAL's assistant undersecretary for cooperation affairs Abdul Aziz Shuaib said regulations concerning small and medium projects in various co-ops will soon be amended in order to prevent having two projects with the same activity at one co-op. "MSAL is not after profits - it aims at creating more job opportunities for youth in various co-ops," he reiterated.

MPs demand early debate for rejected retirement law

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Five lawmakers yesterday submitted a request to the national assembly calling for urgently debating the early retirement law, which was rejected by the government, at the start of the next term in October.

The assembly passed the law around two months ago with an overwhelming majority despite reservations from the government which rejected the law and returned it to the national assembly last week.

The law calls for allowing male and female Kuwaiti government employees to seek early retirement and still obtaining full pension benefits. The government opposed the law because of its huge financial cost and its burden on the finances of the Public Institution for Social Security. But MPs ignored government reservations and passed the highly popular law. Under Kuwait law, the government has the right to reject laws passed by the national assembly which can override the rejection by re-approving the legislation with a two-third majority in the same term or with a simple majority in the next term.

MPs Ali Al-Deqbasi, Abdullah Fahhad, Riyadh Al-Adasani, Khaled Al-Oteibi and Mohammad Al-Dallal signed the request. MP Deqbasi told reporters that he is confident that the law will be approved comfortably by the assembly at the start of the next term. He said MPs want the law to be debated during the inaugural session. If passed again, the government has no option but to accept and implement the law.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Housing Jenan Boushehri said yesterday that the ministry will start the distribution of 12,000 housing plots in the south of the country from next Sunday, adding that the distribution will be made to those who applied before 2005.

Speaking after a meeting with the housing committee in the national assembly, the minister said that infrastructure for the new area will be completed soon. She said that the announcement is in implementation of a government pledge to distribute 12,000 units every year for five years to help find a solution for the housing problem in the country.

Crimes

Prostitute charged KD 1,000 per night

KUWAIT: Vice detectives received tips about a Ukrainian prostitute in a rented apartment in seaside Shaab who charged KD 1,000 per night. Investigations confirmed that the information was correct, so a warrant was obtained and an undercover agent was sent to her. When he gave a signal, the apartment was raided and the suspect arrested. Detectives found large amounts of money on her that she had received from clients. A security source said the suspect made appointments online through a prostitution site. The woman arrived in Kuwait eight days before her arrest, the sources noted, adding that she is currently held for questioning prior to her deportation.

Ruling upheld

The appeals court upheld the ruling of the court of first instance exonerating a female citizen who also has Jordanian and Iraqi nationalities of forgery and false information charges. A detective from the Interior Ministry's nationality and travel documents department said the woman married a Kuwaiti citizen and had two daughters with him before he died in 1988. She then married a Jordanian man living outside Kuwait to prevent Kuwaiti authorities from knowing about the marriage, so she could be naturalized. She meanwhile gained Jordanian nationality, then later received the Kuwaiti nationality, claiming she was still a widow and did not remarry. Lawyer Tariq Al-Kharas told the court the forgery crime exists only if the suspect deliberately changes facts as described in the law, and accusations against his client are not valid. The detectives' investigations state that his client deliberately got her marriage certificate abroad so it is not shown in her official documents in Kuwait.

Thieves caught

A shepherd resisted an attempt by two thieves to steal his sponsor's sheep using knives. He then called his sponsor and told him what happened. The sponsor told police that he detained two armed thieves in his farm in Salmiya. Police responded and went to the farm and found the two bound thieves. The suspects were arrested and the shepherd was rewarded with a free sheep.

Post office theft

Thieves stole from the mailboxes of subscribers at Fintas post office, taking advantage of the fact that the building lacks security cameras and guards. Employees found the main gate broken and discovered the theft. Police and detectives were called, who checked for evidence. Investigations are underway.

Fight

Four people were hospitalized with cuts and bruises they sustained when three others attacked them in Salmi. The fight was over animal feed vending stands on Salmi road that escalated to a fight. Three Egyptians rushed to help a colleague, and two Indians sided with their compatriot, before police were able to break up the fight. Investigations are underway. — Translated by Kuwait Times from the Arabic press

Interior Minister, US official discuss cooperation

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah held talks yesterday with Acting US Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Sigal Mandelker, focusing on bilateral ties. In his meeting with Mandelker, who also serves as undersecretary of the

US Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, the Kuwaiti interior minister highlighted the camaraderie that both nations share, particularly, their security cooperation, read a statement by the interior ministry.

Meanwhile, the US official said that Washington's security cooperation with Kuwait is a testament to the breadth of bilateral ties. As part of her official visit to Kuwait, Mandelker also had an encounter with Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for the Affairs of the Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister's Office Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah. The talks, which brought together senior officials and diplomats from both nations, primarily dealt with Kuwait's contributions towards the global fight against terrorism, the Kuwaiti foreign ministry



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah meets with Acting US Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Sigal Mandelker. — KUNA

MoH commends approval of illicit tobacco trade protocol

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) commended the government Monday for approving the World Health Organization's (WHO) Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, a move that would boost Kuwait's international status. Kuwait was among the first countries to join the protocol and complies with it, MoH spokesman Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti said in a statement.

Shatti, also vice-chairman of smoking combating program, said the cabinet's approval of the protocol coincided with preparations for a high-level UN meeting for prevention of non-communicable diseases, due in New York on September 27. He explained the UN meeting aimed at reviewing reports by countries over prevention of non-communicable diseases. — KUNA



This archive photo shows a young diver paints the bottom of a ship during 'Al-Habbab and Shouna' event.



Ships sail during the annual Pearl Diving Trip in this file photo.



Captain Khalifa Al-Rashid

Preparations underway for 30th Pearl Diving Trip

KUWAIT: Kuwait Sea Sports Club (KSSC) has launched preparations for the 30th Pearl Diving Trip which takes place between July 19 and July 26, 2018 under auspices of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Participants will take part in the event, boarding dhows presented by the His Highness the Amir as well as the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, said Ali Al-Qabandi, Chairman of the Marine

Heritage Committee at KSSC.

Meanwhile, Qabandi added that 'Al-Habbab and Shouna' event starts at 5:30 this afternoon. This event features the participants clean and repaint the ships, and also load them with supplies, under supervision of captain Hamed Al-Sayyar. He also noted that the event would take place at KSSC's headquarters in Salmiya, while a special ceremony with traditional marine songs would be held under the supervision of KSSC's heritage committee advisor Thamer Al-Sayyar.

Moreover, Qabandi said that participants would undergo a training course at the club to prepare them to handle various situations and deal with harsh weather conditions. He also thanked the Gulf Bank for its platinum sponsorship and support, along with other sponsors including Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company, Dar



Ali Al-Qabandi

Al-Khalej Engineering and Al-Roudhatain Water Company.

KSSC's heritage committee consultant and veteran captain Khalifa Al-Rashid, who had taken part in all previous expeditions since 1986, will miss the event as he is currently hospitalized at the Amiri Hospital, where he was visited by KSSC Chairman Fahad Al-Fahad, Secretary General Khaled Al-Fouderi, Qabandi, Thamer and Hamed Al-Sayyar and veteran Bahraini captain Abdul Rahman Al-Menaie.

Local

'My family thought I was dead': Domestic helpers narrate tales of mistreatment

Unpaid salaries for up to 15 years, abuse and empty promises

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A majority of people working in Kuwait are happy, even in the household service sector, where they are cared for and treated well by employers. But a few reported cases of mistreatment at the hands of abusive sponsors make the headlines of local dailies. These are documented cases of abuse, and sadly, sometimes result in the death of domestic helpers.

According to Human Rights Watch, Kuwait has more than 660,000 domestic workers in a population of 4 million. The group has documented cases of abuse of domestic helpers, including confiscation of passports, forcing them to work excessively for hours without rest or a weekly day off, confining them to employers' homes, verbally abusing them and in some cases, physically and sexually assaulting them. Furthermore, suicides and deaths of domestic workers are reported every year in Kuwait.

According to records provided by embassies, Sri Lankans in Kuwait number 94,348, of which 70,013 are domestic helpers, while the Philippines has about 250,000 nationals here with 160,000 of them domestic helpers. From February to May this year, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte banned Filipinos from accepting jobs in Kuwait after the death of a Filipina housemaid Joanna Demafelis, whose body was found stuffed in a freezer in a Maidan Hawally apartment. Duterte alleged employers routinely rape their Filipina workers, force them to work 21 hours a day and feed them scraps.

The domestic labor tension between the Philippines and Kuwait escalated further towards mid-April, when several videos of rescue operations by the Philippine Embassy were posted on social media, which upset the Kuwaiti authorities. It resulted in the expulsion of the Philippine ambassador and declaring him persona non grata in May. Later, the two countries agreed to end the tension by formally signing a memorandum of agreement. Kuwait Times spoke to Sri Lankan and Filipino housemaids who were abused and mistreated to the extent that their salaries were not paid for years.

No salary

Sri Lankan housemaid AR was employed in a Kuwaiti household in Andalus for more than 15 years, and during this period, received no salary. How did this happen, and why didn't she receive any support from her government, recruitment agencies and the host government? Why did she wait this long before escaping? After arriving in Kuwait,

AR initially worked for a few months, but decided to transfer to a new employer when she felt that she wasn't treated well. After pleading with her agency, she was transferred to another household without knowing she would be working there for 15 years without pay. AR, 56, was born and raised at Panadura, a large town in Kalutara district in western Sri Lanka. AR entered Kuwait on a domestic helper visa when she was 40.

Her father died when she was a child, but her mother was able to send her to school. AR is the second child in her family. Since the eldest was a boy, she had to look after her six sisters and two younger brothers. She was eventually convinced by her mother to go abroad. She went to Saudi Arabia to work as a domestic helper from 1999 to 2000. In 2001, she went to Kuwait, but was not happy with her sponsor, so she quit and went back to Sri Lanka. She tried to apply for another job again and eventually came to Kuwait for the second time in 2003.

AR's first sponsor wasn't good, so she only worked there for seven months. At the second employer's house where she was transferred to, she was treated well, but she wasn't paid any salary. She hoped that one day her salary would be given, so she waited - for 15 years. "They are good employers and treated me just like a member of the family. But during my first year, they took away all contact details of my family, so there was no way I could communicate or contact them at all. I pleaded and searched for my contact information. I even told them to take me to the Sri Lankan embassy, but it remained a promise. So I left without anything," she told Kuwait Times through an interpreter.

AR said she only got KD 20 five months ago before she fled to her embassy on April 29, 2018 for assistance. The embassy filed a case with the domestic workers' department to get back salaries of 14 years and 3 months. The authorities in Kuwait tried to convince her sponsors to attend hearings at the police department, but they didn't

bother to show up. Her case was elevated to the local court and is supported by the Sri Lankan Embassy.

Abuse and mistreatment

Another Sri Lankan housemaid named Marina, 47, sought her embassy's assistance for non-payment of salary, abuse and mistreatment. "I suffered a lot from both my female sponsor and her husband, who is a police officer," she sobbed while narrating her story. "My employers would always hit my head with anything. He would curse me and my parents and would threaten to kill me. They would grab my neck if I committed any mistakes," she said.

Marina was born in the eastern Sri Lankan province of Batticaloa, and got married at a very young age. Her husband was completely paralyzed due to cancer 11 years ago. Marina is a mother of four children (two daughters aged 19 and 17 and two sons 16 and 13). Like AR, she went to Saudi Arabia in the 1990s and worked there for several years as a domestic helper. In 2016, she came to Kuwait and worked for a year and got a regular monthly salary. However, for the next seven months she got no salary, prompting her to run away on Feb 16, 2018. "I was taken twice to Saudi Arabia by my Kuwaiti sponsors and worked there for several months with their relatives," she added. Her case is also being heard at domestic workers' department.

Nothing but promises

Another maid from Batticaloa, Punyawathie, also sought the embassy's assistance for non-payment of salary. She claims she hasn't been paid for the last 15 months. She is a widow with three children. She also went to Saudi Arabia in 2011 and then to Kuwait in 2015. During her two years of stay, she was getting a regular monthly salary of KD 40. But for the next year and three months, she got nothing but promises. She decided to run away and went to her embassy on April 4, 2018.

Abuse and lies

Joy, 37, is a Filipina housemaid suffered mistreatment and abuse at the hands of her Kuwaiti employer. She hasn't been paid for almost 10 years of service as a domestic helper. Since running away in 2015, she is at the embassy's shelter awaiting the resolution of her case. She said her case is dragging due to her uncooperative employer and negligence by the officer handling her case.

"According to the people at the embassy, my lawyer (provided by the embassy) filed my complaint at the wrong office, so my case has been dragging for the last three years. But more than anything, it's because of my uncooperative employer. If they had paid me in the first place, probably I would not be staying here this long. But thank God, I have made friends here at the embassy and have become an office helper. I stayed because of my case, and I want to fight for my rights until the end. It's okay for me to stay a bit longer here as long as I get my rights and compensation for the last years," she said.

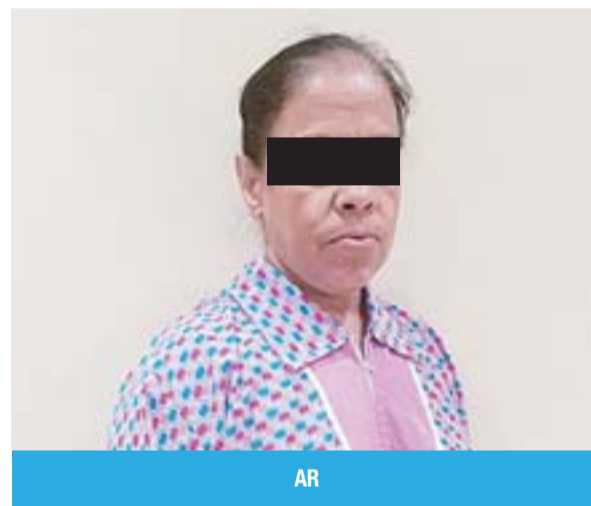
Joy's employer made her believe that her salary was deposited in the bank and some money was remitted to her family in Manila. She initially believed her employer, but eventually found out that all of those claims were lies. "My family told me that they never received any amount for 10 years. I found out the truth because they said they had been trying their best to find me in Kuwait. I was able to communicate with my family again when I escaped and reached the safety of the embassy. Of course, my family was shocked to hear my voice - they thought I was dead," she said. A native of Davao, Joy came to Kuwait when she was 24. At that time, her only dream was to help her parents raise her younger siblings, who were living in dire poverty. Kuwait Times asked her if there was a chance for her to leave her employer during the past 10 years. "No. My boss' sons and daughters kept me in close watch wherever I went and even in the malls. I was closely monitored," she said.

Fake receipt

Nora, another Filipina victim of abuse, claims seven years of unpaid salary. She worked with her Syrian employer for 13 years but received no salary during the last six years of service. Since 2012, her employer would tell her that her salary was being sent to her family in the Philippines, showing her a fake receipt of remittance under the sponsor's name. She has no contact with her family because she was not allowed to have a mobile of



KUWAIT: In this file photo, Philippine Embassy officials announce the resumption of the deployment of Filipino domestic helpers to Kuwait on June 4 at the embassy premises. —Photos by Ben Garcia



AR



Marina



Punyawathie

her own. At that time, she thought that having a mobile phone was only for those who could afford it.

"Whenever I wanted to communicate with my family, my female employer would buy an international calling card, but that was during my first six years. After six years, whenever I wanted to communicate with my family, she would simply say no, claiming they had no money," she said. "I wanted to jump out of the window, but was always hesitant due to the fact that I would meet a gruesome death. So I waited for an opportunity to leave - at least my sponsors were not trying to kill me," noted Nora. "The wife of my sponsor was very aggressive. She got angry even over small mistakes. She would hit me on my head with hard things, sometimes with broomsticks or even a vase. She would also slap me in my face often. The husband would just watch while his wife inflicted pain on my body," she said. Nora added she was kept in a small room among the family's household stuff. "I only had a small space to sleep. I couldn't move in that room, but stayed because I knew God would help me," she said. While waiting for the resolution of her case, Nora serves as a houseparent at the embassy's shelter. She has been at the embassy for more than a year. "I refused to be sent back home during the amnesty because I want to get the money I worked for. I was included in the list of amnesty takers in April but my case is still being heard. I know that I am safe here at the embassy and I can follow up my case at any time. If I go back home, I am sure my case will not progress," she said.

Irregular pay

Lastly, a Filipina housemaid named Christine claims she has been unpaid for one year and seven months. She worked all around her employers' house, from being a nanny to cleaning and cooking. She is a widow from Bulacan with two children. "My husband died in 2014 from severe asthma. When he died, I felt I lost my hands. But I couldn't watch my kids eat unhealthy foods every day just because their father died. At the end of the day, it's my responsibility to feed them and send them to

school, so I told my mother that in order for me and my kids to survive, I needed to go abroad. She agreed so I accepted this job offer in Kuwait," she said.

"During my first year, I received KD 80 from my monthly salary of KD 110. My arrangement with my boss was to keep the KD 30 every time I got my salary as savings. They agreed, but towards the end of 2016, my salary became irregular, and when I asked for my money, they always said 'inshallah'. I kept asking until they became irritated. I was rescued from my employer's house by the embassy's staff accompanied by a police officer. I have a case against my employer and I have been waiting at the embassy for six months," Christine said.

Christine used to sleep in a small room with a baby. She slept on the floor while the baby slept on a small bed. She managed to take rest when the baby was asleep, but had to wake up at 4:00 am to prepare breakfast for the family.

Kuwaiti team tours Europe to bring awareness to Crohn's disease

PARIS: A group of Kuwaiti youth went on a tour on bicycles through Europe to bring awareness towards Crohn's disease, in cooperation with the Global Biking Initiative (GBI). Kuwait Ambassador to France Sami Al-Suleiman, who received the team yesterday, stressed the importance of the youth's tour to spread awareness towards a disease suffered by many people in Kuwait and the world. He noted that the team chose France as a start point for their tour since the country is very famous in treating medical cases and conducting research in the field.

Meanwhile, head of the team Sara Al-Hubail said the initiative aims to aid those suffering the disease and many of them are young people, due to lack of awareness on the sickness. The Kuwaiti group along with 400 others from around the world went on a tour last week visiting different international organizations related to education, health and sports in Denmark, Germany, Sweden and finally Paris, where they learned the causes and symptoms of the disease and ways to prevent it, she added. Hubail noted that this is the first time a

Kuwaiti team takes part in this event, adding that the tour also aims to fund local charitable bodies such as the Patients Helping Fund Society and Kuwait Food Bank.

Hubail says that the idea of forming the group dates back to 2012 when her brother was diagnosed with the disease. She added that after the spread of the disease, she decided to form a team to raise awareness on the illness, noting that the team has 20 male and female members. The team is taking part in a global biking race to shed light on diseases and set up a fundraising campaign for combating these illnesses, she explained, referring that this year's race is held under the slogan of "we cycle for charity".

Meanwhile, Salem Al-Hubail, the team's captain, expressed his thanks and gratitude to partners for their varied efforts, noting that the team's message is to fight the disease and spread consciousness as well as highlight prevention so as to provide cure for Kuwaiti citizens and residents. Turning the team into a benefit society is an aim in the future in order to help patients and take part in many global events, he revealed. For further details about

Crohn's disease, head of digestive unit at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital Ahmad Al-Fadhli was asked about the illness. He said it is an immune illness which affects the digestive system without clear reasons. He added that the disease causes painful intestine colic, chronic diarrhea and severe loss of weight. He noted that there are some factors, which increase effects of the Crohn's disease like smoking, junk food and others.

Crohn's disease is an inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) that causes inflammation of the digestive tract, leading to abdominal pain, severe diarrhea, fatigue, weight loss and malnutrition. The disease is chronic and inflammation caused by it can involve different areas of the digestive tract in different people. Over the last 15 years, about 5,000 people, aged 15-35, suffered from the disease in Kuwait, Fadhli pointed out. The IBD is a group of inflammatory conditions of the colon and small intestine. Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are the main types of the IBD. Crohn's disease affects small intestine, large intestine, mouth, esophagus, stomach, anus and others. —KUNA



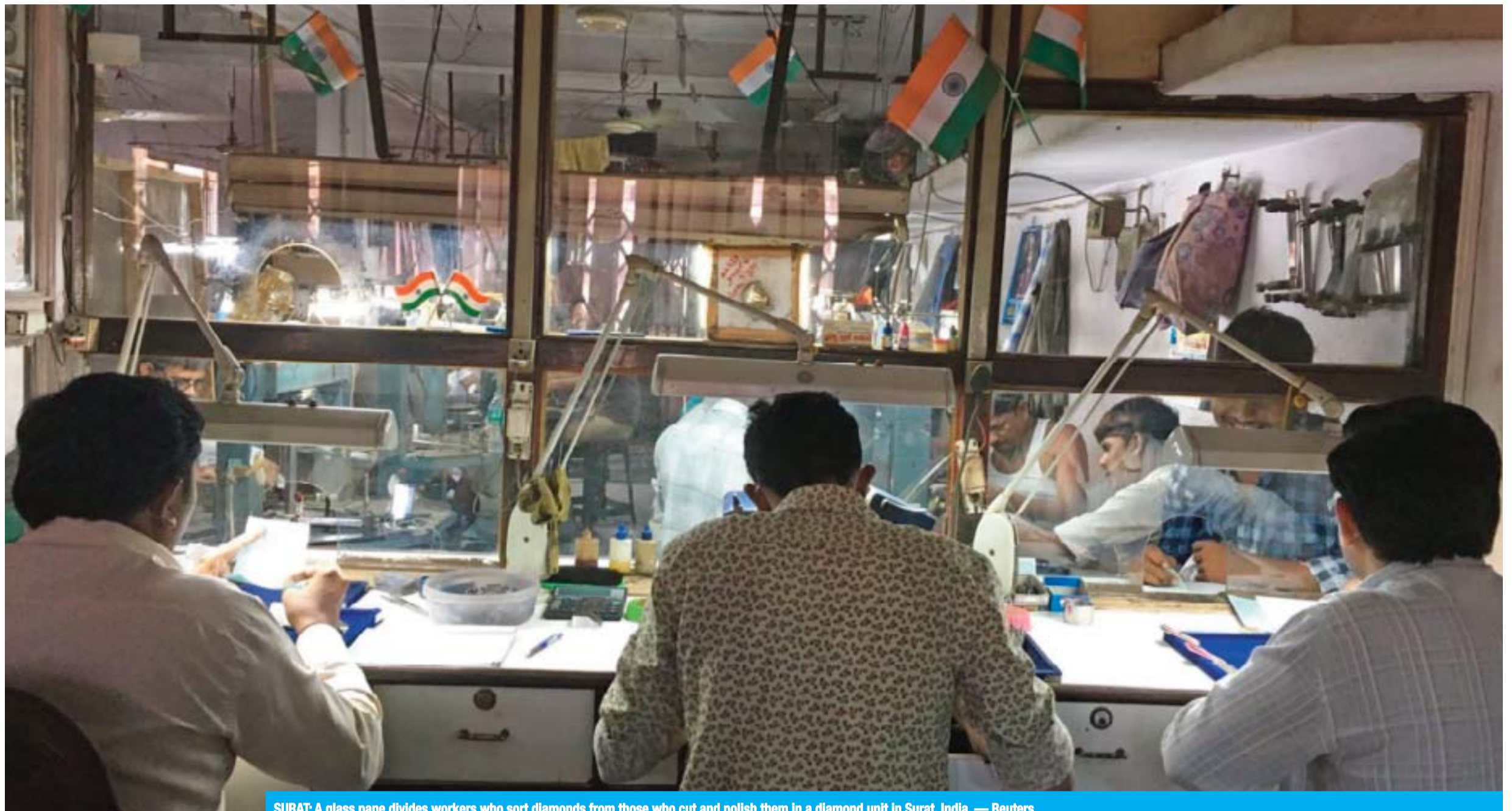
PARIS: Members of a Kuwaiti team who went on a tour on bicycles through Europe to bring awareness towards Crohn's disease. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Ambassador to France Sami Al-Suleiman meets with members of the Kuwaiti youth team.



Families speak after 20 years as Ethiopia restores phones to Eritrea



SURAT: A glass pane divides workers who sort diamonds from those who cut and polish them in a diamond unit in Surat, India. — Reuters

Suicides wipe the shine off India's gem trade

Death by Diamonds: Low wages, poor work conditions

SURAT: After polishing diamonds destined for luxury stores from New York to Hong Kong for nearly 10 hours in a cramped workshop in western India, Vikram Rajibhai went home, waited for his family to leave, and locked the front door. Rajibhai doused himself in kerosene and lit a match. His family returned to find the 29-year-old's charred body, his case the latest in a series among workers with low wages and poor work conditions in India's booming diamond industry, as uncovered by a Thomson Reuters Foundation investigation.

Investigations spread over a year in the western Indian state of Gujarat found a pattern of suicides - many shrouded in silence - in the industry that cuts and polishes 90 percent of gems sold globally, with many workers paid per stone. A few workers in the industry earn fixed wages - some even up to 100,000 Indian rupees (\$1,450) or more a month - but over 80 percent of the total workforce earn a piece rate of 1 to 25 rupees for each stone they polish and have no social benefits.

Interviews with diamond unit owners, brokers, labor groups, families and the police revealed nine suicides since last November in the city of Surat, a hub for the trade, and the Saurashtra region where the workers are from. But experts said this was likely to be just the tip of the iceberg in India, where industry figures show diamond exports surged 70 percent in the past decade, with no mandatory certification to ensure diamond processing is labor abuse free.

Families are reluctant to blame the diamond business, which employs over 1.5 million men - mainly from drought-prone parts of Saurashtra - for fear of losing work, with few other options. Rajibhai's mother Wasanben is still coming to terms with the death of her son, the sole breadwinner after her husband, also a diamond polisher, died a decade ago of a heart attack. "Vikram started polishing diamonds when he was 16. He had been struggling to get more work," Wasanben said as she pulled open the curtains of the room where her son died in January.

Sitting outside the soot-layered room in a slum in Bhavnagar town in Saurashtra, Wasanben said her son was worried about mounting expenses and being unable to find love and marry. "He earned 6,000 Indian rupees (\$90) a month, but we were a family of seven and the money was never enough," she said. "I assured him things will be fine and we were managing to eat. That day he waited for us to leave for a wedding (to kill himself)."

Suicide files

The skills of Indian polishers, after generations in the industry, and low labor costs ensure major mining firms from De Beers - the world's largest diamond producer by value - to Russia's Alrosa get raw diamonds processed in India. When asked about worker suicides, De Beers - of the Anglo American Plc Group - the world's second biggest mining company Rio Tinto, and Russia's Alrosa said they had not encountered any cases in firms to which they sell rough diamonds.

Government officials said workers were paid well and the industry is "positive", setting up schools, hospitals and giving jobs to relatives of workers who died or committed suicide. But campaigners said while most big firms have air-conditioned workshops and fixed wages, many smaller outfits have no toilets or ventilation and workers live, eat and sleep in the workshops in slave-like conditions. Rough diamonds imported to India must be certified 'conflict-free' by the Kimberly Process scheme to ensure they have not been used to fund civil wars and are free of human rights abuse, not so called "blood diamonds". KP members account for about 99.8 percent of global production of rough diamonds.

But certification of cut and polished diamonds given by the global non-profit Responsible Jewelry Council (RJC) is optional. Only about 90 firms from about 15,000 big and small diamond companies in Gujarat are certified RJC members. About 30 are authorized buyers of rough diamonds from De Beers that binds them to follow a set of labor rules.

But no one is pushing companies for certification of processed diamonds. India's Gem and Jewelry Export Promotion Council - set up by the Indian government to boost the country's exports of gems - said it was up to unit owners to seek certification.

Gujarat labor officials said they had no role to play except ensuring the country's labor laws were enforced. But campaigners are concerned about the welfare of workers paid by stone and with no social benefits, who often take on debt to feed and educate their families. "The business has grown, there is better technology ... but only about 25 percent of workers earn enough to sustain themselves," said Gautam Kanani, commerce professor at Surat's JD Gabani Commerce College who studied the industry in 2007.

For some diamond workers the consequences can be fatal. Stories of suicides gleaned from police files show a pattern a seemingly untroubled worker suddenly killing himself. The highest number of more than 5,000 suicides reported in Surat city since 2010 were in areas where diamond workers live, police data the Surat police shared with the Thomson Reuters Foundation shows. In Surat, the Thomson Reuters Foundation analyzed the suicides of 23 men between January and April and found six cases of diamond workers who had hanged themselves or drank poison. It found three similar cases in the Saurashtra region.

Police investigations

Police officer Ashish Dodiya this year investigated the suicides of two diamond workers in their early twenties who drank poison. Bharatbhai Jatharabhai Bhammar, 22, moved to



Rajibhai doused himself in kerosene and lit a match

Surat three years ago and lived in the workshop where he polished diamonds. He was at work when he drank poison in April this year.

"His job was to give the final polish to the diamond. He worked 10 hours every day like we all do," said his cousin, Lakshmanbhai Khodubhai Bhammar, who also polishes gems in Surat. "I got a call from his workshop that day. He asked me to save him when I was rushing him to the hospital." The other suicide victim, Rajeshbhai Makwana, had been polishing diamonds in Surat for six years and made about 13,000 rupees a month. He ended his life after an argument with his wife in February this year.

"He had no problems," Makwana's brother Santosh told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Dodiya dismissed a link between the deaths and work in the cases he investigated.

"They didn't die because of the diamond business. There are more cases of diamond worker suicides because of their high numbers in this area," he said. "No diamond worker will die of starvation. They are paid on time, every month." Other police officers stationed in the area where diamond workers live in Surat did see a link between the suicide cases they investigated and diamond work. "(The workers) take loans and are never able to repay them. We get such cases (suicides) when the (global) demand for diamonds drops and employers do not pay them," said Rameshbhai Gulabrao, who investigated two worker suicides this year.

Some workers said they go without wages for at least two months every year when business is slow and they have

to borrow money to make ends meet. In one case, a few kilometers from Bhammar's home in a cramped settlement in Surat, Miteshbhai Hiteshbhai Kansara, 22, hanged himself in March this year from a kitchen fan in the one-room flat he shared with his parents and younger brother. "He worked with big diamonds and earned a fixed monthly salary of around 10,000 rupees. This is good money in Surat," said Kansara's younger brother Vatsal. "He was good at studies. He studied up to 12th grade and was planning to go to college. He didn't want to polish diamonds."

Ramesh Ziliriya, who set up a diamond labor association in Rajkot in 2013 to protect workers rights, said while debt bondage and child labor may be a thing of the past in the diamond industry, "slavery and suppression continues". "Workers do not protest their low wages as they fear losing their jobs," the former gem polisher said. The Ratna Kalakar Vikas Sangh - a welfare body of diamond workers in Surat - recorded nearly 2,000 labor disputes between 2016 and 2017, mainly involving workers being laid off. Two years ago, the group tried investigating the suicide of a worker who jumped from the fifth floor of a diamond workshop. But his family didn't complain and the probe was abandoned, said Jaisukhbhai Nanjibhai Gajera, who heads the welfare body.

He said the precarious nature of the industry can be difficult for workers, with diamonds competing in the luxury goods market with designer bags, cars and cruises, and any drop in demand having a knock-on effect on workers' wages. About a decade ago, economist Indira Hirway found 50 suicides of diamond workers in Surat during the 2008 global recession as workshops shut down and workers were laid off. Labor unions said up to 300 workers killed themselves then and the suicides continue today, but families are reluctant to link the deaths to their relatives' working lives.

They said most suicides were linked to unpaid loans and low wages which stopped workers feeding or educating their families. "Diamond workers don't complain as they get these jobs often from someone within the family or the community. Most of them are school dropouts," said Indira Hirway, who led a UNDP study on the 2008 recession's impact on diamond workers. "That is the way globalization is working in India where traders and exporters make huge money, but people at the bottom get low wages and are exploited badly," said Hirway, director at Centre for Development Alternatives in Ahmedabad.

Daily wages

At the Sri Diamond Worker Union in Surat, Mukeshbhai Waljibhai Kanjaria sifts through the letters he has written to state authorities about the problems diamond workers face. "Earlier, a worker would polish 50 diamonds for, say, eight rupees a piece," said Kanjaria, the union president. "Now there are machines and he can polish 500 diamonds in one day, but his earnings have remained the same." Kanjaria said workers lack social benefits that other factory workers get, like pensions and subsidized medical care.

But labor officials in Gujarat said diamond industry workers earn more than the minimum wage of 8,300 rupees a month. "They are not interested in social security as it involves paperwork and both workers and their employers are in most cases illiterate," said Ashish Gandhi, assistant labor commissioner. "Whenever there is fluctuation (in demand) and downsizing, they face problems, but (their welfare) depends on the philosophy of the employer." Some workers do break away from polishing to start their own businesses, but few manage to advance up the ladder, with many adding to mounting debt by going to local money lenders.

Bharatbhai Rathod worked as a diamond polisher in Bhavnagar for almost 15 years before deciding to start his own unit. His business was short-lived. "He drank the pesticide we use in the farmland one day," said Shobhaben, Rathod's wife, who works at a cotton farm in Damrala village



SURAT: A man checks a diamond for its quality at the diamond trading hub Mahidharpura in Surat, India. — Reuters

in Bhavnagar, about 500 km from Surat. "We didn't know of anything that was bothering him - he didn't say anything. We found later he had taken a loan for raw material (rough diamonds) and was being threatened," Shobhaben said, smarting tears as she plucked cotton.

Red herring

On a sweltering afternoon in Surat, scores of men sat on the footpath of a bustling street, cradling in their laps blue trays spattered with diamonds like grains of sand that they picked and checked through tiny magnifying glasses. Mahidharpura is Surat's gem trading hub, where businessmen sell rough diamonds bought from mining companies in Africa, Israel and Belgium to owners of the factories where they are cut and polished before being sold on to jewelry manufacturers. Diamonds processed in Surat are sold to jewelry makers in a bazaar, but nearly 90 percent are couriered to one of the world's largest diamond bourses in Mumbai, and then exported.

Behind the seemingly transparent trade in diamonds are layers of complex transactions that mean workers are often clueless about the real worth and destination of diamonds. Ashish Dansangh Bawalwa, 35, had been polishing diamonds for 12 years when he noticed a currency symbol on the little paper pouch containing the diamonds he was polishing. "It was a dollar sign."

That day I realized we were being paid in rupees to polish diamonds sold in dollars," said Bawalwa, who left Surat as he was unable to sustain his family. — Reuters



SURAT: A man opens a paper pouch of diamonds on the roadside at the diamond trading hub Mahidharpura in Surat, India. — Reuters

International

Turkish leader ushers in new, executive presidential system

Erdogan names son-in-law Turkish Finance Minister

ISTANBUL: Turkey's Tayyip Erdogan ushered in the new, executive presidential system he had long campaigned for by putting his son-in-law in charge of the economy and promising a greater overhaul of a country he has dominated for 15 years. Hours after he was sworn in with sweeping new powers at a ceremony in the capital of Ankara late on Monday, Erdogan named Berat Albayrak as treasury and finance minister. Albayrak, 40, previously served as energy minister and, before that, led a company seen as close to the government.

His appointment - and the absence of familiar, market-friendly ministers from the cabinet - has helped send the lira sharply lower. Erdogan has said the powerful executive presidency is vital to driving economic growth and to ensure security after a failed 2016 military coup. Western allies and rights group decry what they say is increasing authoritarianism and a push toward one-man rule. Investors have been worried by what they fear is Erdogan's tightening grip on monetary policy.

"Albayrak becoming the finance minister is not a good sign especially because of his close relationship with President Erdogan. It is a sign that Erdogan will control economic policy even more," said Guillaume Tresca, a senior emerging markets strategist at Credit Agricole. "The independence of the central bank could be undermined." A self-described "enemy of interest rates", Erdogan wants to see lower borrowing costs to spur growth. Investors, who have warned that the credit-fueled economy is overheating, want to see decisive interest rate increases to tame

double-digit inflation. Under the new system, the post of prime minister has been scrapped and the president selects his own cabinet, regulates ministries and can remove civil servants - all without parliamentary approval. Likewise, the departure of market-friendly ministers such as Mehmet Simsek, the well regarded former deputy prime minister, and Naci Agbal, previously the finance minister, has also undermined confidence. "Nothing can be regarded as positive on this one," said Edwin Gutierrez, the head of emerging markets sovereign debt at Aberdeen Standard Investments. "Obviously it is going to be a step down in capacity compared to Simsek."

Transforming Turkey

Erdogan, the most popular and divisive leader in recent Turkish history, has now formally become the most powerful leader since Mustafa Kemal Ataturk founded the republic from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. Just as Ataturk transformed an impoverished nation at the eastern edge of Europe into a secular, Western-facing republic, Erdogan has fought to bring Islamic values back into public life and lift millions of pious Turks - long ostracized by the secular elite - out of poverty.

"We are leaving behind the system that has in the past cost our country a heavy price in political and economic chaos," Erdogan said in an address late on Monday. In the aftermath of the 2016 coup, Turkey, a member of the NATO military alliance and still nominally a candidate to join the European Union, has detained some 160,000 people, jailed

Appointment helps sends lira sharply lower



ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his wife Emine Erdogan greet people as they arrive at the Presidential Complex in Ankara. — AFP

journalists and shut down dozens of media outlets. The government says its measures are necessary given the security situation.

In one of three presidential decrees issued in the government's Official Gazette yesterday, it was announced that the president would appoint the central bank govern-

nor, deputies and monetary policy committee members for a 4-year period. It was also announced in the Official Gazette that Erdogan had appointed ground forces commander General Yasar Guler as the new chief of the general staff, replacing General Hulusi Akar, who was appointed defense minister in the new government. — Reuters

India court reviews colonial-era ban on homosexuality

NEW DELHI: India's top court began reviewing yesterday petitions against a colonial-era ban on homosexuality, in the latest chapter of a legal tussle between social and religious conservatives and more liberal Indians. Section 377 of the penal code, a relic from 1860s British legislation, bans gay acts as "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" and allows for jail terms of up to life, although prosecutions are rare.

In 2009 the Delhi High Court effectively decriminalized gay sex, saying a ban violated fundamental rights, but the Supreme Court reinstated it in 2013 after religious groups

successfully appealed. The Supreme Court said the High Court had overstepped its authority and that the responsibility for changing the law rested with lawmakers not the courts. Efforts to introduce legislation however came to nothing.

In January this year however, the Supreme Court agreed to hear a challenge by a clutch of high-profile Indians who said the law created an atmosphere of fear and intimidation in the world's largest democracy. A ruling was not expected imminently, with Tripti Tandon, a lawyer for one of the petitioners in the case, saying the hearing would last "two weeks if not more".

Her client, Aris Jafer, was arrested and sent to prison for 50 days in 2001. Manvendra Singh Gohil, an openly gay Indian prince who is an ambassador for the AIDS Healthcare Foundation charity, said yesterday he hoped the "draconian" law would be changed. "The law doesn't affect only the gay community," he said. "In fact it violates the fundamental right of every Indian." "(If) this law continues it would mean we are still slaves of the British." The gay community was emboldened last year when the

Supreme Court referred explicitly to the issue in a landmark ruling upholding the right to privacy.

Gay sex has long been taboo in conservative India, particularly in rural areas where nearly 70 percent of people live, with homophobia widespread. Some still regard homosexuality as a mental illness. Hindu right-wing groups supportive of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have been especially vocal, calling gay relationships a disease and a Western cultural import.

Last month, a lesbian couple committed suicide by jumping into a river in the western state of Gujarat, in just the latest tragedy as gay men and women struggle to conform to societal norms. According to official data, 2,187 cases under Section 377 were registered in 2016 under unnatural offences. Seven people were convicted and 16 acquitted. Globally 72 countries criminalize same-sex relationships, according to a 2017 report by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association. — AFP

Iraq's Mosul still in ruins

MOSUL: A year after pro-government forces recaptured Mosul from the Islamic State group, much of Iraq's second city lies in ruins and many of its residents see little reason to celebrate. "We were liberated but what have we come back to? Our homes have been destroyed," said mother of seven Umm Mohammed.

On July 10, 2017, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi declared victory in the battle for the city after a nearly nine-month offensive against the jihadists. The fiercest fighting took place around western Mosul's Old City, where Umm Mohammed's home near the Great Mosque of Al-Nuri has been reduced to rubble. The mosque, once a famous landmark with its leaning minaret, is where the jihadists' elusive chief, "caliph" Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, made his only public appearance.

Jihadists used explosives to blow up the famed 12th century mosque as the army closed in on them last summer. Like many mosques, houses, schools and other buildings across Mosul, all that is left of it is a pile of rubble. Although life has gone back to normal in some parts of eastern

Mosul, the massive clean-up of the western part of the city only began a few weeks ago. In a report released this week, the Norwegian Refugee Council bemoaned conditions in the city. "More than 380,000 people are still displaced in and around Mosul as the city lies in ruins with a staggering eight million tons of debris," it said.

'Abject misery'

No official festivities were planned yesterday to mark the first anniversary of Mosul's liberation from the brutal three-year rule of IS, which had used the northern city as the capital of its "caliphate" straddling the border with neighboring Syria. Residents said they had little to celebrate. "The huge destruction has emptied our joy of any meaning," said Abu Ghassoon, a 44-year-old unemployed man who lives in east Mosul after his home in the west was destroyed.

Ghadir Ibrahim Fattah, 35, agreed. "We had expected reconstruction to begin immediately after (the jihadists were ousted) but nothing happened, and this has demoralized the people," he said. Residents accused the central government of dragging its feet, while the NRC has said the international community "is not doing enough". The Norwegian aid group estimates that \$874 million (750 million euros) is needed to repair basic infrastructure in Mosul. "What was hailed by

the Iraqi authorities and the international community as a victory a year ago has not translated to relief from abject misery for many Iraqis from Mosul," said its Iraq Country Director Wolfgang Gressmann. Ghanem Hamid, a provincial official, told AFP the "central government has neglected the province" of Nineveh, of which Mosul is the capital. "They have not offered us anything worth mentioning," he said. He noted that two major international conferences on rebuilding Iraq were held before and after Mosul was retaken-one in Paris and the other in Kuwait but said donors' pledges of massive funds had not materialized. "It's only ink on paper," he said.

Security fears

But destruction is not the only hardship facing the people of Mosul. Every Friday for the past year, women dressed in black have gathered in the city's Al-Minassa Square, holding up pictures of missing husbands and sons as they seek information on their fates. Some believe their loved ones were taken by the jihadists, while others think Iraqi security forces arrested them on suspicion of collaboration with IS. Like the mothers of Argentina's Plaza de Mayo who staged similar protests to seek information on their children who vanished during the 1976-1983 military junta, the women of Mosul have continued to demand answers. — AFP

'Kennels': Venezuela's dangerous answer to transport chaos

CARACAS: Packed inside a barred pick-up truck that looks like a mobile cage, passengers are risking their lives in Venezuela's perilous solution to a public transport crisis. Far from banning the "kennels", as they are known, due to a spate of fatal accidents, governors and mayors are even launching their own fleets, free of charge. In the Libertador municipality hometown of President Nicolas Maduro, himself a former bus driver, the words "Loving Caracas" can be read on the transport trucks. But that belies the reality of a situation in which 55 people have died since April using improvised transport methods such as the "kennels". In May, 16 people died in Merida in one accident.

'Livestock cage'

Danger aside, the trucks are uncomfortable to ride in. "They're as ugly as can be. It's like riding in a livestock cage, you get bumped here, bumped there," Jose Miguel, a 20-year-old bricklayer from the Caracas suburb of Los Valles del Tuy, told AFP. "It's a joke!" he added. "Damn it, if you're going to provide a bus service, how can you use a kennel!" The government, though, blames the crisis on labor unions and has accused them of sabotage. Public transport in Venezuela is provided by private companies that have a permit to carry passengers. But 90 percent of the public transport fleet has been paralyzed by hyperinflation. Providers simply cannot earn enough to pay for spare parts, so they cease to run their buses. A bus with a capacity of 30 people can generate only five million bolivars (\$1.5) a day but, for example, a spare tyre on the black market costs a billion bolivars (\$300).

'Scourged us all'

"Hyperinflation has scourged us all. Of 12,000 buses, only 10 percent remain," Oscar Gutierrez, a bus driver and union leader in Miranda state said. The same problem triggered the collapse of the Caracas metro system which had become effectively free as the absurd price of tickets couldn't cover operational costs. According to Gutierrez, bus drivers have resorted to remarkable measures to try to eke out a living, avoiding work during the hottest hours in order to extend the life of their tires.

Venezuela's buses are the oldest in the region, but not because they don't have newer ones. "The government imported newer ones in 2015 but already there's a cemetery for those buses. That same government couldn't maintain them," said Gutierrez. The outlook is bleak. The International Monetary Fund has projected inflation in Venezuela will reach 13,800 percent this year, with the country already feeling the backlash through food and medicine shortages. The lack of buses in operation meant private truck owners started carting around passengers before Maduro's government decided to roll out their own fleet free of charge. — AFP

News in brief

12 killed in suicide attack

JALALABAD: A suicide attack in Afghanistan yesterday killed at least 12 people and ignited a nearby petrol station, officials said, with witnesses describing screaming victims "swallowed" by flames in the latest deadly violence to hit the country. The bomber was targeting Afghan security forces when he blew himself up in the eastern city of Jalalabad, officials said. Ten civilians were among the dead and at least five people were wounded in the blast, the provincial governor's spokesman Attaullah Khogyani told AFP. "I saw three people who had caught fire and were screaming," Ibrahim, who was sitting inside his shop at the time of the attack, told AFP. "As I ran to help them, the fire swallowed them. I couldn't help them and I ran to save myself." — AFP

Rebels kill 27 fighters

BEIRUT: Rebels and Islamist forces killed more than two dozen pro-government fighters in a joint attack in a north-western stronghold of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's regime, a monitor said yesterday. In retaliation, the government and its ally Russia pounded rebel-held areas in the coastal province of Latakia and neighboring Idlib on Tuesday, killing four civilians, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. It was the bloodiest opposition assault on the area in three years, according to the Britain-based monitor, which relies on a network of sources inside the country. The surprise offensive late Monday targeted a pair of villages and observation points in Latakia, near the Turkish border. "At least 27 regime forces and allied fighters, including eight officers, were killed in fierce clashes and shelling in the village of Al-Ateira," said Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman. — AFP

Heatwave kills 70

MONTREAL: A heatwave in Quebec in eastern Canada has now been blamed for 70 deaths, officials said Monday. Thirty-four of the fatalities were recorded in Montreal, the provincial health ministry told AFP. Previously, the toll was 54 dead. The heatwave has hit eastern Canada since early July but only Quebec has recorded a rise in deaths linked to the scorching temperatures. In 2010 around 100 people in the Montreal area died because of stifling heat. — AFP

Alliance against Buhari

LAGOS: Nigeria's ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) party yesterday dismissed several challenges to President Muhammadu Buhari after a new opposition alliance formed to try to prevent him from being re-elected to a second term next year. More than 30 parties, including the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), on Monday announced they were teaming up against Buhari for next February's vote. That followed the creation last week of a splinter group within the APC of disaffected members who criticized Buhari's three years in power as "a monumental disaster". But APC spokesman Bolaji Abdullahi said both developments would have no effect. "We are confident that no level of gang-up can make our government under President Buhari waiver in its promises to Nigerians to rid our country of corruption and improve the quality of lives for our people," he said in a statement. — AFP

Jehovah's Witnesses case

BRUSSELS: Jehovah's Witnesses must obtain consent from people before they take down their personal details during door-to-door preaching in order to comply with EU data privacy rules, Europe's top court ruled yesterday. The case arose after Finland in 2013 banned Jehovah's Witnesses from collecting personal data during door-to-door visits. The US-based Christian denomination, which says it has more than 8 million followers worldwide, challenged the decision, saying that its preaching should be considered a personal religious activity and as such the notes taken down during such visits are also personal. A Finnish court subsequently asked the Luxembourg-based Court of the Justice of the European Union (ECJ) for advice, which said on Tuesday that such religious activity is not covered by exemptions granted to personal activity. — Reuters



MOSUL: Photo shows a view of the base of the destroyed 'Al-Hadba' leaning minaret, with the dome of the destroyed Al-

International

Japan rescuers go house to house as flood toll hits 156

Japan's worst weather-related disaster for decades

KURASHIKI: Hopes of finding survivors were fading yesterday as rescue workers carried out house-to-house searches after days of deadly floods and landslides that have claimed 156 lives in Japan's worst weather-related disaster for decades. The record downpours that began last week have stopped and receding flood waters have laid bare the destruction that has cut a swathe through the west of the country.

In the city of Kurashiki, the flooding engulfed entire districts at one point, forcing some people to their rooftops to wait for rescue. Rescue workers were going door-to-door, looking for survivors-or victims of the disaster. "It's what we call a grid operation, where we are checking every single house to see if there are people still trapped inside them," an official with the local Okayama prefecture government told AFP.

"We know it's a race against time, we are trying as hard as we can," Hideto Yamanaka was leading a team of around 60 firefighters dispatched from outside the prefecture searching homes. "I'm afraid elderly people who were living alone may have failed to escape," said Yamanaka, 53. "Physically weak people may have been late in getting out when it suddenly started raining hard, swamping the area," he said. As night fell, rescuers continued searches, "but we still don't know if we will carry out the operation around the clock," said Akiko Harada, a spokeswoman at the disaster management section of the city of Hiroshima, where 14 people were still unaccounted for.

In the Mabi district of Kurashiki, the water left behind a fine yellow silt that has transformed the area into moonscape. Cars driving through kicked up clouds of dust. People walking around wore medical masks or covered their mouths with small towels to protect them-

selves against the particulates. Stores were still closed, and inside one barber's shop the red sofas, customer chairs, and standing hair dryers were all covered with the same silt. Fumiko Inokuchi, 61, was inside her home, sorting through the damage caused by floods that submerged the entire first floor.

She escaped the house on Saturday, crossing the street to take shelter in a three-storey care home for the elderly, from where she watched in horror as the waters rose. "I saw my house sink underwater and I couldn't do anything at all, there was just nothing I could do. I felt helpless," she said, retrieving a photo of her children playing baseball. "I got married here, and we built this house two years afterwards. We raised our three small sons to adulthood here, there are so many memories," she said, her eyes welling with tears.

New dangers from heat

It is Japan's deadliest weather-related disaster in more than three decades, and has sparked national grief. On Monday, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe cancelled a four-stop foreign trip as the death toll rose, and he will visit Okayama on Wednesday. Top government spokesman Yoshihide Suga said yesterday that at least 156 people had been killed. Media reports said dozens more were missing and the toll was expected to rise further.

Around 75,000 police, firemen and troops have been deployed in the search and rescue operation across parts of central and western Japan, Suga said, warning that hot weather posed new risks. Thousands of people remain in shelters, and local authorities in some areas were offering drinking water and bathing services for those without their own supply. "It will be over 35 Celsius in some areas... Please be careful about heat-



MABI: People inspect their damaged homes in a flood hit area in Mabi, Okayama prefecture. —AFP

stroke if you're doing reconstruction outdoors, and continue to be vigilant about landslides," Suga said. The government said it would tap around \$20 million in reserve funds to provide aid to those affected by the disaster.

And even with the rains over, the risk of flooding remained, with the town of Fuchu in Hiroshima issuing a new evacuation order as a local river burst its banks. "Driftwood and dirt has piled up... and now the water

has started overflowing from the river," a spokesman for the local fire department told AFP. "We are on high alert," he added. In Ehime prefecture, authorities said they were struggling to get emergency food and water to some cut-off areas. "We are sending them by boat and air routes," said Yoshinobu Katsuura, a spokesman for the prefecture's disaster management department. "It will take a lot of time to see devastated areas recover." —AFP

News in brief

Alarm over Sahel hunger

NIAMEY: Eight West African states have called for emergency aid for four countries in the Sahel facing food shortages as a result of jihadist violence. Agriculture ministers from the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), at a meeting in the Nigerien capital of Niamey on Monday, said around 3.5 million people in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Senegal were suffering from "food insecurity." They called for "immediate, unconditional food assistance" for the June-August period, the runup to harvest time, when grain stores are at their lowest level. UEMOA comprises Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. The Sahel, one of the world's poorest and most fragile regions, is being battered by attacks by jihadists, including cross-border incursions by Nigeria's Boko Haram movement. —AFP

Taiwan braces for Maria

TAIPEI: Taiwan braced for super typhoon Maria yesterday, as airlines cancelled flights and the weather bureau warned against landslides and flash floods on the heavily industrialized island. Maria was expected to make landfall today, hitting Taiwan's northern region the hardest, as it moves in a west-northwesterly direction at 30 kph, from its location 490 km east of Yilan County, weather officials said. Troops were deployed in some areas, with heavy rain and winds expected into today. Fishermen in the northern city of Keelung tied up boats as they braced for the storm. The government ordered schools and businesses to close early, although it had not yet decided whether to close financial markets, companies and schools. China Airlines and Eva Airways, Taiwan's two largest carriers, cancelled scores of flights and warned that more could be delayed because of the typhoon. —Reuters

Trump hails Johnson

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump hailed Britain's Boris Johnson as a friend of his yesterday after he quit Theresa May's government and said he may speak to the former foreign secretary in the coming days. "Boris Johnson is a friend of mine, he's been very, very nice to me," Trump told reporters before heading to Brussels for a summit of NATO allies. "Very supportive. I maybe will speak to him when I get over there." "I like Boris Johnson. I have always liked him," he said, adding he had not spoken with Prime Minister May since Johnson quit. Johnson's resignation on Monday came only hours after Brexit minister David Davis also quit May's government in protest at her plan for leaving the European Union. The news has sparked speculation of a potential leadership challenge, and the threat of another general election. —AFP

Monster crocodile caught

SYDNEY: An elusive monster saltwater crocodile weighing 600 kilograms has finally been caught after an eight-year hunt in Australia, officials said yesterday. The 4.7-metre beast was found in a trap downstream from the northern outback town of Katherine after first being spotted in 2010. Authorities had tried in vain for years to bag the croc, which is estimated to be 60 years old. "We've called it a lot of things over the years because it's been so hard to catch," senior wildlife officer John Burke told broadcaster ABC. "It is a bit of a thrill, but you've also got to admire the size of the animal and how old it is. You've got to have a bit of respect for it." The animal was taken to a crocodile farm to keep it separate from the local human population, said Northern Territory wildlife operations chief Tracey Duldig. —AFP

Families speak after 20 years as Ethiopia restores phone calls to Eritrea

ADDIS ABABA: Yesterday morning, Ethiopian mechanic Mohammed Osman placed a phone call he had dreamt of making for 20 years. He called his mother Kedija, who was expelled from Ethiopia to Eritrea in 1998 after the Horn of Africa neighbors went to war over their border. Kedija, Kedija's mother and more than 70,000 Ethiopian citizens of Eritrean origin were wrenched from their families, put on buses and trucks bound for Eritrea - and given travel papers marked "Expelled-Never to Return".

End of war

A peace deal finally forged in the past two days brought relations out of the deep freeze, and prompted the phone lines across the border to be reconnected. When Mohammed last heard his mother's voice, he was 13. He and his father had not heard from her since. "I couldn't recognize her at first but for her laughter. It was surreal," he said. "It was bittersweet." Kedija told him she was doing fine in Eritrea's capital Asmara, but that his grandmother had died.

The historic reconciliation could transform politics and security in the

volatile Horn region, which hundreds of thousands of young people have fled in recent years in search of safety and opportunities in Europe. On Monday, the leaders of both countries announced they were ending the costly "state of war" that has reigned since fighting stopped in 2000. Diplomatic relations were never restored because the sides could not agree how to implement a peace deal. After meeting and embracing in Asmara on Sunday, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki told their peoples they were choosing love and forgiveness over hatred and violence.

Fleeing conscription

Yesterday morning, people in Addis Ababa were frantically trying to phone their relatives in Eritrea. "My parents have been separated ever since. As a family, we are planning to travel to Eritrea very soon and reconnect for the first time in 20 years," said Mohammed. His mother told him that as soon as she heard that phone connections were being restored, she tried to phone a shop in the neighborhood of Addis Ababa where the family used to live. "She hadn't forgotten the number," he said. But the call didn't get through. Instead, after news of the peace deal broke, distant relatives in Saudi Arabia called him to pass on his mother's number.

Sirak Aseghid, 23, who fled to



ADDIS ABABA: In this file photo Eritrea's Foreign Minister Osman Saleh Mohammed, right, walks with Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, second left, and Ethiopia's foreign minister Workeneh Gebeyehu, left, as an Eritrean delegation for peace talks with Ethiopia arrives at the international airport in Addis Ababa. —AFP

Ethiopia in 2016 after serving in Eritrea's army for two years, spoke to his elderly parents late on Monday. "Now they now know I am fine," he said. "You can imagine the distress it causes families. Once you cross the border, the possibility of reconnecting with your family diminishes. You don't know where you're going to end up."

Ever since he fled the conscript army-like many young Eritrean men who cannot face the prospect of indefinite, low-paid service-he has thought about

attempting the dangerous trek across the Sahara in the hope of finding a boat to cross the Mediterranean. But the prospect of peace has given him hope that Eritrea's young men will be allowed to return to civilian life. "I want to return as soon as possible," he said. "But that will depend on finding employment as well." At least travel between the two countries should soon be much easier - Ethiopian Airlines said it would start a regular service between Addis Ababa and Asmara next week. —Reuters

May clings to power amid Brexit turmoil

LONDON: British Prime Minister Theresa May chaired a meeting of her new-look cabinet yesterday as she clings to power following the resignation of her foreign and Brexit ministers in protest at her strategy for leaving the European Union. May has faced a backlash over the plan from Brexit hardliners in her Conservative Party who say it gives too many concessions to the EU, but she has support from moderates and there has been no challenge to her leadership.

Former foreign minister Boris Johnson, who wrote in his resignation letter that the Brexit "dream is dying" and that Britain was headed for the "status of colony" of the EU under May's leadership, is seen as a potential challenger. Johnson's dramatic resignation on Monday just hours after Brexit minister David Davis quit late on Sunday plunged the value of the pound on currency markets.

Rumours have swirled over possible further resignations but experts said May appeared to have weathered the crisis for now. "My impression is that this is probably as far as it goes. I can't see more ministers resigning," Simon Usherwood, politics lecturer at the University of Surrey said. The gaffe-

prone Johnson was quickly replaced by 51-year-old former health minister Jeremy Hunt, who unlike Johnson supported staying in the European Union in the 2016 referendum.

Dominic Raab, a Brexit supporter and former housing minister, was appointed to replace Davis only days before negotiations in Brussels are due to resume next week. Hunt said it was a moment to show that Britain remained a "strong, confident voice in the world". He said he would "stand four square behind the prime minister so that we can get through an agreement with the European Union based on what was agreed by the cabinet last week at Chequers". The plan agreed at May's country retreat at Chequers would involve Britain pursuing a "UK-EU free trade area" for goods that would involve regulatory alignment with the EU.

Brexit 'at risk'?

British and EU officials are hoping to strike a deal on the terms of Britain's withdrawal and agree to a plan for future trade ties in time for an EU summit in October. "With just weeks left to conclude negotiations on leaving the EU, this is a critical moment for the country," the Financial Times wrote in an editorial. "This confrontation between Brexiters and reality was long overdue," it said, adding that May "should have faced down the hardliners before negotiations formally began". It said May now faces "the spectre of a leadership challenge," but it was "possible that after a period of



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May leads a plenary session during the Western Balkans Summit 2018 at Lancaster House in London. —AFP

resignations and political blood-letting, the Conservative Party will fall behind the prime minister".

Times columnist Rachel Sylvester said May's authority "is utterly destroyed at the very moment she needs the credibility to assert herself in the negotiations with the EU". May's Conservative opponents could trigger a confidence vote against her if at least 48 MPs support it, but to actually force her from office 159 MPs would have to vote against her-a figure hardliners may not be able to reach. May has said she will fight off any attempt to unseat her.

Much will depend on European reactions to May's plan and she is due to meet with German Chancellor Angela Merkel later on at the Western Balkans Summit in London. The Guardian newspaper quoted an unnamed Conservative MP saying the resignations would continue in protest against her plan to keep strong economic ties with the EU-dubbed the Chequers plan after her country retreat where it was agreed last week. "They'll keep going, one by one, until she either junks Chequers or goes," the MP was quoted as saying. —AFP

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Trump's trade war splits county into winners and losers

People don't talk about trade tariffs in this stretch of the Mississippi River basin, where grains and metals have paid the bills for generations. They skirt the subject at church fundraisers and sidestep it at Jerry's Cafe and Quick Stop, where farmers and aluminum workers gossip about everything else. Here, the winners and losers in US President Donald Trump's trade war live side-by-side.

The Republican president's tariffs on imported metals were instrumental in reviving an aluminum plant that most locals had written off for dead. But in the fields surrounding the plant and across the county, farmers anxious over trade retaliations against US crop exports are delaying equipment purchases, renting their land to hunters and pre-selling crops before harvest - locking in today's prices for fear they will fall. "People don't want to talk about trade," said Justin Rone, a farmer with deep family roots in soybeans and cotton. "It's safer to talk about how best to grow your crop, keep your head down and pray."

Farmers' fears were realized Friday as the United States and China levied dueling tariffs on \$34 billion worth of each country's goods. Many US agricultural exports, including soybeans, now face 25 percent duties. Neil Priggel knows both sides of the trade war's impact on his community. He worked at the Noranda Aluminum smelter before it went belly-up in 2016 and also runs his family's 4,000-acre farm along with two brothers.

As Trump announced steel and aluminum tariffs in March, Priggel stared at the TV news and thought: We're saved. We'll get our jobs back. His very next thought: We've got to protect the farm. Priggel and other farmers here, where about 70 percent of voters supported Trump, know their crops are obvious targets for countries striking back against US tariffs. They also know the tax on metal imports helped lure new owners to reopen the plant that has long financed their neighbors' mortgages, truck payments and groceries.

Kathee Brown worked at Noranda for three decades. She returned in March a one-person human resources division for what's now called Magnitude 7 Metals. Her phone rings constantly. Is it true the plant is coming back? Did you get my application? At her dusty office desk, its drawers still full of old invoices, she checks her voicemail - full, again. Many callers are former plant workers; sometimes they break into tears when she calls back. The plant's new owners plan to hire 465 people, for now. More than double that number have applied.

Saints preserve us

Getting the smelter back was a long shot, locals say, just like getting a high-paying factory to this rural corner of Missouri in the first place. When it was built in 1969, they named its site for the patron saint of lost causes: the St Jude Industrial Park. Workers rode out years of aluminum price drops, labor strikes, recessions and fights with electricity suppliers. The company would cut shifts, lay off workers, then hire them back, workers say.

But the plant closed in early 2016 after a series of crippling blows: global aluminum prices plunged; a New York private equity fund heaped on \$1 billion in debt in a leveraged buyout; an explosion disabled the plant's cast house; a power-outage shut two production lines. About 1,000 people had to go find jobs, often at much lower pay, said Mark Baker, a farmer and presiding commissioner for New Madrid County. "People lost homes," said Dick Bodi, mayor of New Madrid, Missouri. "People got divorced."

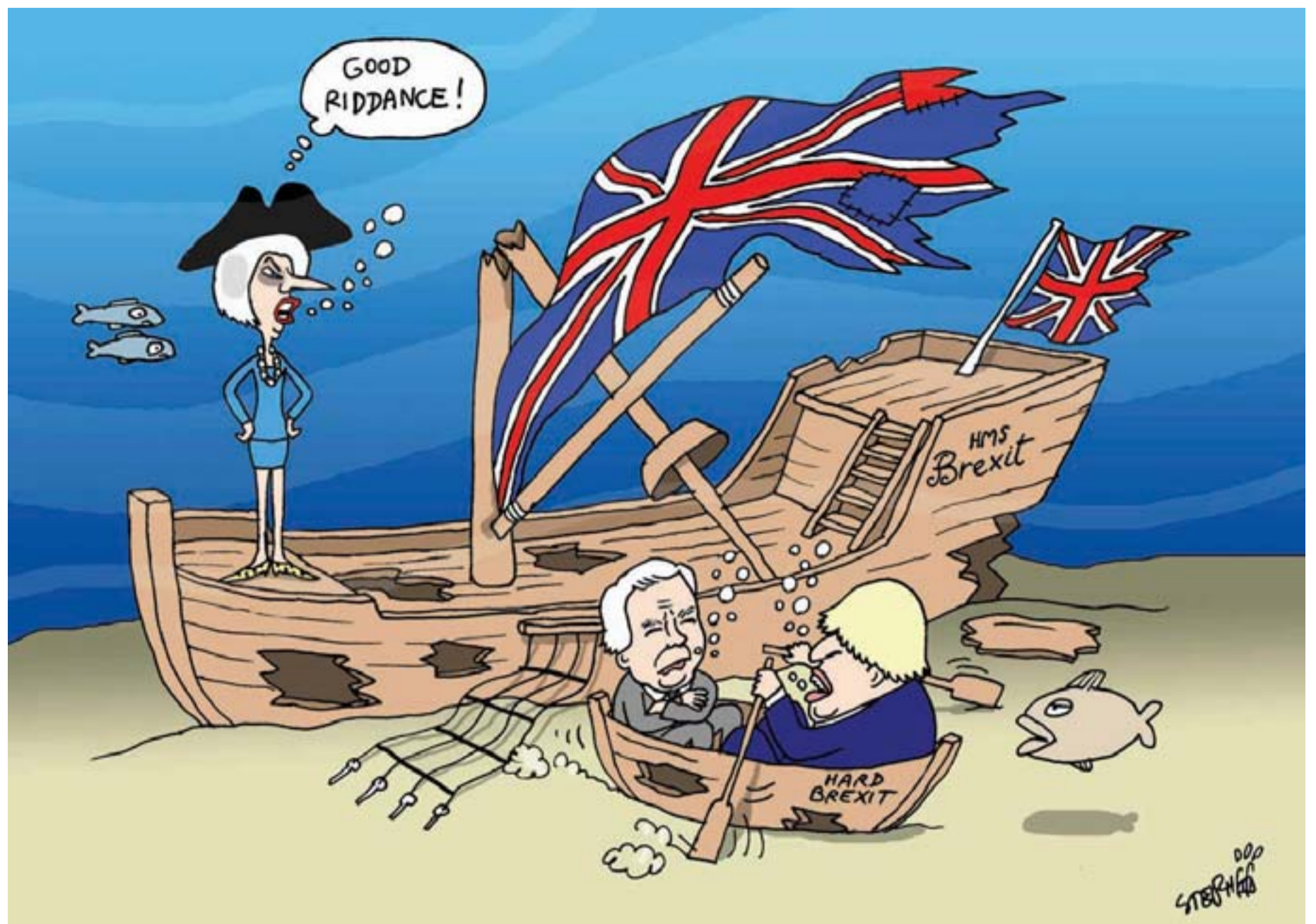
Local police and ambulance budgets were cut. The county went into the red for two years, Baker said. Noranda never made a \$3.1 million tax payment to the New Madrid school district, forcing job cuts and halting school repairs, said Sam Duncan, county superintendent of schools. The district saw a 10 percent drop in school enrollments as families left the area, Duncan said. But most stayed, often turning to the region's other dominant for work. "The only people hiring were the farmers," said Dalton Bezell, 31, who worked for Noranda. By late summer, Noranda's staff had shrunk to nine people, making a fraction of their previous salaries. Their job: Secure the plant and try to figure out a way to revive it.

A bet on trump tariffs

Steve Rusche, now chief operating officer of Magnitude 7 Metals, was among the nine. He watched as prospective buyers toured the plant - not to restart it, but to chop it up and sell it for scrap. One was different: Magnitude 7 Metals LLC, founded by former Glencore Plc aluminum trader Matt Lucke, who wanted to operate the plant if it could work financially, Rusche said.

Lucke did not respond to requests for comment. The Republican-controlled state legislature helped by passing a controversial law making it easier for manufacturers to hire non-unionized workers, a bill plant representatives supported. Some of Noranda's remaining crew of nine helped to cut electricity deals and lock in raw material prices for the new company. "The pivot point was when things started to come out of Washington about the metal tariffs," Rusche said.

Last June, Magnitude 7 Metals Chief Executive Officer Bob Prusak testified before the Commerce Department at a public hearing about a department investigation into aluminum imports. — Reuters



Melbourne moves into community-led housing

In an ideal world, Alex Fearnside would cycle home from work, park his bike in the basement of his apartment complex in Melbourne city center, then jog upstairs through a beautiful courtyard to his flat, stopping only for a quick chat with other residents in the shared dining area. Later, Fearnside and his wife would head down to the communal kitchen to eat a meal cooked by their neighbors.

Fearnside's ten-year-old dream for life in the Australian city is nearing reality as it awaits planning approval. It is shared by 50 other Melbourne residents who belong to Urban Coup, a collective that wants to turn a disused button factory in an old industrial area into a co-housing community by 2020. "What is driving us is we want to know our neighbours," said the 38-year-old environmental scientist. "We want to know that as we're growing old, we have people around us who have similar values to who we are and what we bring."

Urban Coup is one of five innovative housing initiatives that put community at their heart. The projects are supported with expertise and networks mobilized by Resilient Melbourne, part of 100 Resilient Cities, a network backed by The Rockefeller Foundation to help cities deal with modern-day pressures. This year, more than half of Asia-Pacific's population will be urban, and that figure will increase to two-thirds by 2050, the United Nations estimates.

But as the region's cities continue to expand, services and infrastructure are struggling to keep pace with rising populations and economic growth, while the effects of climate change have created additional challenges. The Melbourne projects aim to help find solutions to the city's expanding urban sprawl, worsening traffic congestion and growing social isolation - all of which can contribute to problems like alcoholism and domestic violence.

And by building stronger community bonds, Melbourne should be better placed to recover from potential shocks and stresses, such as rising temperatures and droughts, infrastructure failures and potential pandemics, the schemes' proponents say. "Many of the people who started Urban Coup remember growing up on streets where they knew everybody on that street," said Fearnside. "We wanted a building that would enable us to know our neighbors and allow us to support each other."

Urban sprawl

In the past decade, Melbourne has topped various polls as the world's most liveable city, attracting new residents to Australia's second-biggest city. Just under 5 million people live there, and the population is expected to double over the next 30 years, putting increased strain on infrastructure and housing. As more estates have been built on greenfield sites outside the center, the rise in urban sprawl has brought problems. Housing developments have out-paced infrastructure, leading to dormitory suburbs, whose residents commute daily but enjoy few services, amenities and transport links.

That causes traffic congestion and longer commute times, as well as a lack of interaction between neighbors,

experts say. "We live in a really beautiful part of Melbourne but we don't really know our neighbours," said Fearnside, who currently lives with his wife in a townhouse 5 km north of the central business district. In Melbourne's central areas, high-rise blocks have become more common in recent years. But as in many other Australian cities, first-time buyers and families have struggled to afford steeper prices stoked by overseas property investors.

And much new construction has been driven by developers, which tend to put profit before the provision of leisure or communal facilities. On average, Melbourne property prices have doubled over the last decade, said Clinton Baxter, state director at Savills property agency in the city, and this trend is set to continue. Central government efforts to help first-time buyers include a grant for deposits and stamp duty concessions, while state governments have sought to open up more land and fast-track approval processes for developments.

Despite this, the supply of new and affordable housing in Melbourne has struggled to keep up with demand. It is not uncommon to see would-be buyers camping out overnight ahead of a land sale to be front of the queue for their own building plot. "The state government has struggled to keep up with the infrastructure requirements for such a rapidly growing city," Baxter said.

Living experiment

The five projects supported by Resilient Melbourne will bring together developers, city and state government agencies, service providers and potential buyers and renters. Each project is crafted around different community-focused models - some based on renewal of the inner-city and others starting from scratch on greenfield sites.

The projects will also be part of an academic study. "We want this to be a genuine living experiment so that we can understand in deep ways what works and what doesn't work - and record it so the successes can be replicated in Melbourne but also internationally," said Toby Kent, the city's chief resilience officer.

The projects backed by Resilient Melbourne include a greenfield site for about 5,000 homes led by developer Mirvac. It is working with local authorities to incorporate community aspects from an early stage. Besides at least one new school, there will be a town center with shops and a supermarket, and a hub to house programs and events run by the council or residents, with a community-managed cafe and playground, said Anne Jolic, a director at Mirvac. "Often people who move to some of these ... new housing (developments) will feel very isolated," she said.

Melbourne developer Assemble, meanwhile, plans to turn an old CD and DVD factory near the city center into 73 flats. The property will include communal spaces like a cafe, a co-working space, crèche and grocery store, and is consulting with potential residents and existing neighbors on the design. When the final plans are drawn up, residents will pay a refundable 1 percent deposit to secure a place, said Kris Daff, managing director of Assemble.

Once built, they will move in and start a five-year lease with an option to buy at a pre-agreed price, or exit the lease and leave at any time. Services and events on offer will include dry cleaning, apartment cleaning, dog walking, community dinners, walking groups and film nights in a communal room. "There is a huge amount of research that shows that when acute shocks have struck in cities, communities where there are existing connections are better able to bounce back," said Kent, Melbourne's resilience chief. — Reuters



Members of Urban Coup tour the site of their planned co-housing project in Melbourne. — Reuters

Lula soap opera making mockery of legal system

Former Brazil President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's on-off prison release following a corruption conviction risks undermining the country's legal system, a legal expert told AFP. Brazil's political scene was thrown into tumultuous uncertainty on Sunday when it was initially announced that a judge had ordered Lula - serving a 12-year sentence for accepting a bribe - be released from prison, only for a more senior judge to later overturn that decision.

As it turned out, Lula's Workers Party (PT) had contested his imprisonment at an appeals court in Porto Alegre where judge Rogerio Favreto was on call. Favreto, who Brazilian press were quick to point out was a PT member for almost 20 years and several times worked as a consultant for Lula's government, duly ordered the former president's release. But Ivar Hartmann, a law professor at Rio de Janeiro's Getulio Vargas Foundation, blasted the PT for making a mockery of Brazil's legal system.

"The Brazilian people should not pay the price of a demoralized justice system because of the PT's political

strategy," he told AFP. That's a very different message to that pushed by the PT after the latest setback in their bid to force Lula's name onto ballots in October's presidential election.

'Shamefulness'

Unless he gets released from prison he will be unable to stand in the election. "Such shamefulness from the Brazilian judicial system! Anything goes to undermine Lula and, by consequence, democracy and the Brazilian people," said PT president Gleisi Hoffmann on Twitter. Hartmann, though, argued that the PT's strategy of denouncing the persecution of Lula won't win over voters. "They're preaching to the choir. I don't think this strategy will have convinced those who are undecided," said Hartmann.

The latest episode in the Lula corruption soap opera came two days after the beloved national football team was unceremoniously knocked out of the World Cup by Belgium. After a month of obsessing over star striker Neymar and the quest to bring home a sixth World Cup crown in Russia, Brazilians were quickly brought back to the domestic reality of political chaos. A group of PT deputies timed their latest habeas corpus application to perfection, knowing full well the terrain was favorable with Favreto on weekend duty.

Two judges came out in opposition to Favreto, claiming he had overstepped his authority, and after a brief judicial arm-wrestle, president of the appeals court Carlos Eduardo Thompson Flores ended the drama and decided

the ex-president would stay in jail. Lula, president from 2003-2010, has been locked up for three months now, all the while protesting his innocence and decrying a political conspiracy. He remains steadfast in his determination to run for a third term of office, even though the courts are likely to invalidate his bid.

'Worse than corruption'

While Lula did not secure his release from prison, some believe this PT strategy will bear fruit, whichever candidate they eventually put forward. Lula currently leads the polls ahead of far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro and green nominee Mariana Silva. And even if Lula is disqualified, analysts Eurasia Group believe "the PT is well positioned to go to a second-round runoff, probably against Jair Bolsonaro." "In an election with many unhappy voters and low turnout, the candidates with a more mobilized base have better chances of standing out."

Should there not be an outright winner on October 7, a second round between the top two candidates will be held on October 28. But while Lula's supporters lambast the politicization of the judicial system, so too do his opponents. "In Brazil, ideology is worse than corruption," said Bolsonaro in a video published on social media, referring to the leftist Favreto's original decision to liberate Lula. For her part, Silva, a former environment minister in Lula's government before going her own way, said Favreto's order had "provoked political turbulence that brings into question the authority" of the courts. — AFP

Business

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In this Feb 15, 2016 file photo, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) loads 4 million barrels of oil to companies from France, Spain and Russia on after the end of the EU sanctions imposed on Iran in 2012.

Iran vows to sell as much oil as it can

Could Saudi replace all barrels lost from Iran?

LONDON: Iran's vice president acknowledged yesterday that US sanctions would hurt the economy, but promised to "sell as much oil as we can" and protect banking. Eshaq Jahangiri said Washington was trying to stop Iran's petrochemical, steel and copper exports. "America seeks to reduce Iran's oil sales, our vital source of income, to zero," he said, according to Fars news agency.

"It would be a mistake to think the US economic war against Iran will have no impact," Jahangiri added. President Donald Trump said in May he would pull the United States out of an international accord under which Tehran had agreed to limit its nuclear development in exchange for sanctions relief. Trump said he would reintroduce sanctions and Washington later told countries they must stop buying Iran's oil from Nov. 4 or face financial consequences.

Yesterday, the US ambassador to Germany also called on Berlin to block an Iranian bid to withdraw large sums of cash from bank accounts in Germany. Jahangiri said Iran's foreign ministry and the central bank have taken measures to facilitate Iran's banking operations despite the US sanctions. He did not elaborate. European powers which still support the nuclear deal say they will do more to encourage their businesses to remain engaged with Iran - though a number of firms have already said they plan to pull out. Foreign ministers from the five remaining signatory countries to the nuclear deal - Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia - offered a package of economic measures to Iran on Friday but Tehran said they did not go far enough. "We think the Europeans will act in a way to meet the Iranian demands, but we should wait and see," Jahangiri said. He added that the US pressure on Iran came as the United States launched an "economic war with China and even its allies", referring to trade tensions between Washington and many of its main trading partners. He also accused Washington of trying to use the economic pressure to provoke street protests in Iran.

A wave of anti-government demonstrations against economic hardship and alleged corruption engulfed cities across the country in late December and early January.

Saudi steps in

The United States wants to eliminate all Iran's crude oil

exports from November, and is relying on Saudi Arabia and other OPEC and non-OPEC members to fill the gap in supplies. "Our goal is to increase pressure on the Iranian regime by reducing to zero its revenue from crude oil sales," a senior State Department official told a news briefing this month. "We are working to minimize disruptions to the global market, but we are confident that there is sufficient global spare oil production capacity," Brian Hook, the director of policy planning, said on July 2.

"We are not looking to grant licenses or waivers broadly on the re-imposition of sanctions, because we believe pressure is critical to achieve our national security objectives." But if the United States succeeds in reducing Iran's crude exports close to zero from November, in line with its stated policy, Saudi Arabia would have to raise its production to unprecedented levels to cover the loss. And it would leave the global market tighter than at any time since the oil shocks of 1973/74 and 1979/80, with resulting upward pressure on prices.

Zero exports

The administration has not been clear about whether sanctions will apply just to crude or will include condensates ("Briefing with an Iran diplomacy update", State Department, July 2). But assuming sanctions apply only to crude, the global market would still need to replace more than 2 million barrels per day (bpd) of Iranian exports from the start of November. According to the latest information from the Joint Organizations Data Initiative (JODI), Iran exported between 2.1 million and 2.2 million bpd of crude between January and April.

The question is where will the replacement barrels come from? The International Energy Agency estimates OPEC members held 3.4 million bpd of spare capacity at the end of May, while their non-OPEC allies had no more than 330,000 bpd ("Oil Market Report", IEA, June 2018).

Saudi Arabia accounted for almost two-thirds of the reported OPEC spare capacity (2.02 million bpd), with smaller volumes held by Iraq (330,000 bpd), United Arab Emirates (330,000 bpd) and Kuwait (220,000 bpd). Russia accounted for most of the non-OPEC spare capacity (roughly 250,000 bpd) with little or no available spare capacity in the other non-OPEC allies.

Other agencies and market analysts put the spare capacity figures for OPEC and non-OPEC members significantly lower than the IEA, which implies the market is even tighter. But using the IEA's figures, it is clear Saudi Arabia would have to replace most of the Iranian barrels lost as a result of sanctions. The kingdom would need to increase production and exports by at least 1 million bpd to cover the total loss of Iranian barrels. The required increase would be even higher if other OPEC and non-OPEC countries struggle to raise their output or more production is lost as a result of problems in Venezuela and Libya.

**US seeks to wipe out all Iran oil exports from Nov****Spare capacity**

In theory, there is sufficient spare capacity in Saudi Arabia and other countries, but it would leave the global market with less than 1 million bpd of capacity left to meet all other contingencies. In practice, some analysts think the market could be much tighter, with sanctions essentially using up all the spare capacity worldwide.

The IEA estimates Saudi Arabia could raise production to just over 12 million bpd and sustain it at that level for an extended period. Saudi Arabia has already used some of its spare capacity to increase production by 458,000 bpd, from 10.03 million bpd in May to 10.49 million bpd in June. The figures were contained in a communication from the kingdom to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries ("Saudi Arabia raised oil output by around 500,000 bpd in June", Reuters, July 5).

But according to the US Energy Information Administration, the kingdom has not produced more than

10.42 million bpd on an annual basis (2016) or 10.63 million bpd in a single month (July 2016) in the last 20 years. Saudi Arabia has reported roughly similar production numbers to JODI, with output peaking at 10.72 million bpd in November 2016. It is possible the kingdom could lift production by another 1.3 million-1.4 million bpd beyond anything it has ever produced before but at the moment there is no way of knowing for certain.

Pumping flat out

Some observers question whether such high rates of production could be implemented quickly and sustained for any length of time. Maximum production would require opening the chokes on existing wells and bringing previously shut-in wells back into service. Boosting production this way might risk a decline in oilfield pressure that could result in long-term damage to the reservoirs. Some spare capacity might require drilling new wells within existing fields, in which case it is not strictly speaking spare capacity at all.

And it is not clear whether the pipelines, processing plants and export terminals have enough capacity to handle 12 million bpd because such high flow rates have never been tested. Saudi Arabia could boost volumes supplied to the market by releasing some of its domestic crude stocks as well as raising field production, but stock releases would only ever be a short-term measure. Domestic crude stocks have already fallen by 95 million barrels since their peak in October 2015, according to government data submitted to the JODI.

Domestic stocks had been drawn down to 234 million barrels at the end of April, the lowest level since November 2011. Most of the remaining inventories are required for operational reasons, including as feedstock for the country's growing refinery capacity, as well as ensuring smooth flow of oil from the fields onto tankers. If Saudi Arabia needs to replace Iranian barrels, most of the increase will have to come from more pumping rather than stock releases, and it would require producing more oil than Saudi Arabia has ever pumped before. Stringent sanctions on Iran will take both Saudi Arabia and the oil market into the unknown. — Reuters

Hundreds of Norway oil workers go out on strike, Shell shuts one field

OSLO: Hundreds of workers on Norwegian offshore oil and gas rigs went on strike yesterday after rejecting a proposed wage deal, leading to the shutdown of one Shell-operated field and helping send Brent crude prices higher. One union said hundreds more workers would join the strike on Sunday if an agreement over union demands for a wage increase and pension rights was not reached. Royal Dutch Shell said that due to the strike it was temporarily closing production at its Knarr field, which has a daily output of 23,900 barrels of mostly oil, but also natural gas liquids and natural gas.

Norway is Western Europe's biggest oil producer and the disruption added to rising global oil supply outages and helped push Brent crude prices up 1.2 percent to \$79.03 per barrel, following a 1.2 percent climb on Monday amid concerns about global supplies. The output of Norway's biggest oil producer Equinor, formerly known as Statoil, was not affected by the strike so far, the company said, even though it was shutting down drilling opera-

tions at its Snorre B platform. Shortly after a midnight deadline passed, a state-appointed mediator said talks between two trade unions, Safe and YS, and the Shipowners' Association, representing the rig employers, had failed to reach a deal. "The parties were so far apart from each other there was no point presenting a proposal that could be recommended to both sides," mediator Carl Petter Martinsen said in a statement.

Wages, pension rights

The Safe union wants pension rights to be the same for everyone regardless of whether an employee is new to a company or has many years of experience. It also wants wages for drilling workers to match those of workers for oil companies, which are higher. The Norwegian Shipowners' Association said Safe was asking for a 50,000 Norwegian crown (\$6,224) salary increase for unskilled workers, equivalent to about 8 percent of the current wage levels.

The leader of the Safe union said she did not

recognize the figures presented by the Shipowners' Association. Around 670 workers would walk out from yesterday, with an additional 901 employees joining them from midnight on Sunday if the dispute is not resolved, Safe said in letters to the Shipowners' Association yesterday.

In total, up to 2,250 workers could join the action, it said. Norway's oil sector directly employed 50,700 workers in 2017, of which 26,700 worked in production and 23,500 in related services, according to Statistics Norway. It was the biggest strike affecting the sector since a 16-day industrial action in 2012 cut the country's output of crude by about 13 percent and its natural gas production by about 4 percent. Talks between the two striking Norwegian unions and rig employers will not resume for a few days, the leader of Safe, Hilde-Marit Rysst, told Reuters. "We have no contact with the employers yet. It will take some days at least before we hear from them ... If they want to contact us they will probably reach out to us before the bigger strike on Sunday," Rysst said.

The Shipowners' Association, representing the employers, said it was keen to resolve the situation.

"We have no scheduled contacts as of now but we have every will to seek a solution," Jakob Korsgaard, lead negotiator for the Shipowners' Association, told Reuters. — Reuters

Turkish lira hit by cabinet concerns

LONDON/ISTANBUL: The Turkish lira surrendered early gains yesterday as investors worried about the make-up of newly empowered President Tayyip Erdogan's cabinet, in which his son-in-law will serve as treasury and finance minister. The new cabinet excludes former deputy prime minister Mehmet Simsek, considered the most market-friendly minister in the previous government. The lira, which has lost nearly a fifth of its value against the dollar this year, stood at 4.7272 at 1105 GMT, having weakened as far as 4.75 overnight. It had closed at 4.5745 on Friday.

The appointment of Berat Albayrak, a former energy minister, to run the economy underscores worries among investors about Erdogan's drive for greater control over monetary policy. It "has heightened concern that the new government will not take the appropriate policy action required to address an overheating economy and structural

problems," said Derek Halpenny, European Head of Global Markets Research at MUFG. The yield on Turkey's benchmark 10-year bond rose to 17.84 percent from 17.35 percent at Monday's close, while the two-year bond yield rose 46 percentage points to over 20.23 percent. Turkey's dollar bonds also fell and their average yields surged. The market will be keeping a close eye on the new minister's comments and signals regarding Turkey's persistent double-digit inflation and wide current account deficit.

"Albayrak will have to move very quickly to reassure financial markets-and will need to send a signal that he will listen," BlueBay Asset Management strategist Timothy Ash wrote on Twitter. "The economy faces a challenging time and this is a time for orthodoxy." A decree yesterday said Turkey's new executive presidency will now appoint the central bank governor and monetary policy committee members. It also trimmed the terms they will serve to four years from five, further heightening long-running concerns about the independence of the central bank. Istanbul's main BIST 100 share index fell more than 2 percent to 97,147.00 points. — Reuters

Business

Airbus chief Enders urges EU support for UK's Brexit offer

Airplane maker broadens its battle with Boeing to small passenger jets

LONDON: After warning that Britain had "no clue" over its Brexit plans, Airbus's boss has welcomed new proposals for the divorce and urged the EU to give them a fair hearing.

The pan-European aviation giant employs nearly 15,000 people in Britain for the production of aircraft wings, and had warned its investment was at risk from a disorderly exit. But after a day of high political drama in London, Airbus chief executive Tom Enders late Monday welcomed the compromise plan outlined by Prime Minister Theresa May, which seeks to maintain Britain's close trading ties with the European Union. May's government appears now to be "going in the right direction", Enders told the German Chamber of Commerce in London, according to a tweet by Airbus.

"We are not shy to request that Brussels & our other home countries are similarly pragmatic & fair," he said.

On Friday, during a company presentation in London, Enders had repeated the company's stark concerns about what might happen if Britain should exit the EU without a deal.

"They seem to have no clue, or at least no consensus," he said, urging May to keep Britain in the EU's customs union. The government's plan outlined later Friday does not go that far but would follow EU rules for trade in goods, raising hopes that long-stalled talks with the bloc can progress, to the benefit of Airbus and other major exporters that are deeply

concerned about the impact on their operations in Britain.

Airbus warned last month that the country crashing out of the bloc without a deal next March would be "catastrophic" and force it to consider its investments.

Prime Minister May on Monday had to face down a political backlash against her Brexit strategy as both her Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and Brexit minister David Davis resigned in protest. Airbus meanwhile, unveiled a new identity for the 110-130-seat CSeries passenger plane yesterday as it prepares to broaden its battle with Boeing to small passenger jets. The European firm said it was rebranding the plane as the A220, slotting it just under its longstanding A300 portfolio which stretches from the 124-seat A319 to the 544-seat A380.

Airbus renames Canadian jet as the A220



Airbus expects to sell a "double-digit" number of the jets this year and sees demand for at least 3,000 of them over 20 years, said CSeries sales chief David Dufrenois.

The makeover seals the European takeover of one of Canada's most visible industrial projects and ends Bombardier's efforts to go it alone in the mainline jet market against larger rivals. Airbus officials stressed it would be positive for jobs in Quebec where the light-weight jet is built. The 110-seat and 130-seat models, previously known as CS100 and CS300, will be known as A220-100 and A220-300 respectively.

A deal for Airbus to take majority control of the loss-making Montreal-based aircraft program with Bombardier and Quebec as minority partners officially closed on July 1. The move also sets the stage for a broader confrontation with Boeing, which last week announced a tentative deal to take over the commer-



COLOMIERS: The new Airbus A220-300 files for the first time yesterday at the Airbus delivery center, in Colomiers, southwestern France. — AFP

cial unit of Bombardier's competitor Embraer.

The change of identity came in a slick branding ceremony as the Canadian-developed passenger jet

performed a flypast in searing heat over Airbus's Toulouse facilities, with executives papering over past differences over prospects for the jet. — Agencies

Singapore's Temasek reports record \$235bn portfolio

SINGAPORE: Singapore investment giant Temasek Holdings said yesterday the value of its global portfolio reached a record high last year but will temper investments this year owing to brewing trade and geopolitical tensions. Net global holdings expanded to Sg\$308 billion (\$235 billion) in the financial year ended March 31, up 12 percent from the year before in local currency terms, the company said in its annual report.

Temasek, one of the city-state's two main investment vehicles, said it invested Sg\$29 billion over the past year and divested Sg\$16 billion. "This record net portfolio value... was up Sg\$33 billion from last year, bolstered by good global economic momentum and buoyant equity markets," chairman Lim Boon Heng said in the firm's annual report.

He added however that "we are tempering our investment pace in the year ahead", citing downside risks including "rising trade and geopolitical tensions, plus monetary and financial stresses in some key economies". The United States and China have slapped tit-for-tat tariffs worth tens of billions of dollars on each other's goods in an escalation of trade tensions analysts fear could boil over into a full-blown



trade war that could spread globally. Temasek head of strategy Michael Buchanan told reporters at a news briefing the company does not envision such a scenario but it still worries about the tensions spreading.

"We don't expect a full-blown trade war with punitive tariffs on a wide range of goods and (involving) a wide range of countries," he said. "We do think however that there will be continued tensions... Obviously we are worried that this could escalate. One thing in particular we are watching is whether the tensions go beyond just the US and China and then move to other countries," he added.

The United States accounted for the largest

share of Temasek's new investments last year, followed by China and Europe. Since 2011, the company has increased its investment focus on technology, life sciences, agribusiness, non-bank financial services and consumer sectors.

Investments in these sectors total around Sg\$80 billion, nine times more than in 2011. It also accounts for 26 percent of the firm's total portfolio. Temasek invested mainly in Singapore companies in its early years but has evolved into a global player.

It owns shares in many of Singapore's top companies including DBS Bank and Singapore Airlines but its other investments span the globe. — AFP

Ethiopian Airlines to operate daily flights to Eritrea

ADDIS ABABA: The first passenger flight between Ethiopia and Eritrea since the start of a 20-year conflict will take place next Wednesday, Ethiopian Airlines said in a statement.

The African aviation giant said yesterday it would initially operate a once-a-day return flight between Addis Ababa and Asmara but planned "very quickly" to operate multiple flights daily as well as cargo flights. "With the opening of a new chapter of peace and friendship between the two sisterly countries, we look forward to starting flights to Asmara with the B787," said chief executive officer Tewolde GebreMariam.

"The resumption of air links will play a critical role in boosting the overall political, economic, trade and people-to-people ties between the two sisterly countries."

An initial statement said the first flights between the two countries would take place on Tuesday July 17, but this was later pushed back to Wednesday July 18.

After decades of acrimony that followed a 1998-2000 border war that killed 80,000 people, Ethiopia and Eritrea on Monday declared the official end of the conflict in a dizzying rap-

prochement. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed paid a historic visit this week to his country's bitter foe in Eritrea, President Isaias Afwerki, after taking the shock decision last month to finally abide by a United Nations ruling demarcating the border between their nations.

The two nations have restored telephone communications for the first time in two decades and pledged to re-open embassies, while landlocked Ethiopia is to be allowed to use Eritrea's ports.

The opening of ties could be an economic boon to the two nations, both poor but on very different paths. Ethiopia, with a population of 100 million, is forecast by the International Monetary Fund to be Africa's fastest-growing economy in 2018 with growth of 8.5 percent. However it is struggling with mounting debt and foreign exchange shortages.

Abiy has announced a slew of reforms since his ascension to power, including the partial liberalization of the economy. Eritrea is one of the world's most isolated countries, where a policy of indefinite forced military conscription has seen hundreds of thousands flee the country to Europe. — AFP

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Business

China producer inflation jumps to 6-mth high; tariff impact limited

Higher oil, commodity prices push up factory-gate prices

BEIJING: China's producer inflation accelerated to a six-month high in June, lifted by strong commodity prices and threatening to put more pressure on the country's exporters as a trade war escalates between Washington and Beijing. Annual consumer inflation also edged up as food prices rose at a faster pace, official data showed yesterday. But retail price pressures remain modest, allowing the central bank to remain more focused on ways to support the slowing economy.

The United States and China slapped tariffs on \$34 billion worth of each other's goods last week, fuelling fears of a prolonged battle that would hurt global investment and growth, damage US farm exports and potentially drive up food prices in China.

The producer price index (PPI) — a gauge of industrial profitability — rose by a stronger-than-expected 4.7 percent in June from a year earlier, compared with a 4.1 percent increase in May, according to the National

Bureau of Statistics (NBS). China's producer inflation has now picked up for three months in a row after easing in late 2017, though month-on-month growth dipped to 0.3 percent in June.

Growth and debt remain PBOC's main concerns



Analysts polled by Reuters had expected June producer inflation would pick up to 4.5 percent, buoyed by a recent recovery in global commodity prices. June's price gains were driven by increases in oil and gas production, coal mining, metals and chemicals processing and manufacturing sectors. With oil prices up, China on Monday raised retail gasoline prices by the most since December 2016. The higher prices have helped fuel a jump in earnings, with profits at China's industrial firms growing at a sizzling pace in May, but some analysts say the latest gains would have less of an impact on profits.

"Unlike the broad based pick-up in PPI last year, the recent rebound has been more narrowly driven by oil prices and so is less supportive of corporate profits," Julian Evans-Pritchard, Senior China Economist at Capital

Economics, wrote in a note.

The jump in prices of resources such as oil and steel has benefited producers but raised input costs for manufacturers like exporters which are further along supply chains. Business surveys show Chinese manufacturers are already reporting softer export orders as the trade row deepens.

Tariff impact

There are few signs in official data that tariff jitters are percolating through to most Chinese consumers just yet. The consumer price index (CPI) rose 1.9 percent in June from a year earlier, in line with expectations for a slight pick-up from May's gain of 1.8 percent. On a month-on-month basis, the CPI fell 0.1 percent. The core consumer price index, which strips out volatile food and energy prices, was unchanged at 1.9 percent in June. The food price index rose 0.3 percent from a year earlier, after ticking up 0.1 percent in May. Non-food prices rose 2.2 percent, compared with 2.2 percent growth a month earlier.

Still, investors are closely watching for signs of any upward price pressure from American retail goods hit by higher Chinese duties, ranging from pet food to mixed nuts and whiskey.

German automaker BMW said on Friday that it will have to raise prices on US-made models that are imported by China. Tesla has raised prices on its Model X and S models sold in China by more than \$20,000, automotive news website Electrek reported on Monday.

But analysts believe retail price rises will likely be limited, capped by higher borrowing costs and waning domestic demand. "We believe the government is likely to introduce special measures such as returning the charged 25 percent tariffs on some agricultural products to importers," economists at Nomura said in a note.

China has set an inflation goal of 3 percent for 2018, the same as last year. Some analysts think a shift in monetary policy towards loosening is already underway. The central bank pumped more cash into the economy by cutting reserve requirements for banks this month, and regulators have told lenders to lower borrowing costs for smaller companies.

"We still think that a broader easing of price pressures on the back of slower domestic activity will help keep inflation subdued, giving the People's Bank ample room to further loosen monetary policy in the coming months," wrote Evans-Pritchard. — Reuters

Sterling hit by British political unrest

LONDON: The British pound remained under pressure yesterday, one day after Brexit divisions sparked the shock resignations of two ministers including foreign secretary Boris Johnson. Late morning deals, the pound dipped to \$1.3240 but managed to rise slightly against the euro.

The pound was buffeted as traders also digested mixed UK economic data, which showed solid economic growth overall but poor manufacturing output. Both Johnson and Brexit minister David Davis had quit Monday in a heavy blow to Prime Minister Theresa May's authority—and her plan for leaving the European Union. The news has sparked speculation of a potential leadership challenge, and the threat of another general election.

"Theresa May defiantly stood her ground on Monday," noted Jasper Lawler, analyst at traders London Capital Group. "With threats of a vote of no confidence unfounded, she lives to fight another day as prime minister... (and) the pound managed to pick itself up." In the run-up to the nation's Brexit referendum in June 2016, Johnson was a prominent Leave supporter—but Theresa May had backed the unsuccessful Remain campaign.

In a separate UK development yesterday, the country's Office for National Statistics published for the first time rolling three-month British economic data, which showed growth of 0.2 percent in the quarter to the end of May. Gross domestic product growth expanded 0.3 percent taking into account only May, when activity was bolstered by sunny weather—and Prince Harry's royal wedding to Meghan Markle.

"Given the latest political developments surrounding Brexit, this economic data is really of secondary importance in driving the markets and traders are now keenly watching... (for) any signs of a leadership challenge to May," noted XTB analyst David Cheetham. "Should one occur, and be successful, then there is the potential for further declines in sterling."

Stocks climb

World stock markets mostly rose yesterday, with Europe following most of Asia following another strong lead from New York. Frankfurt firmed higher despite a gloomy ZEW survey showing that German investor confidence had plunged sharply in July.

Shares in UK multinationals profited from sterling's weakness. Sentiment was buoyed also as US economic and corporate optimism provided a welcome distraction from global trade war tensions, dealers said. After weeks of losses across the world, investors moved back in on Friday as the tit-for-tat tariffs between Beijing and Washington had already been factored in and attention shifted to US jobs and corporate results. The US earnings season for April-June kicks off this week. Elsewhere, oil prices rose strongly, partly on expectations of US sanctions on key producer Iran and ongoing political and economic turmoil in Venezuela. — Reuters

German investor mood slumps on trade war fears

FRANKFURT: Confidence among investors in Germany plunged sharply in July, the ZEW economic institute said yesterday, reaching its lowest level since August 2012 over signs that a trade war was far from abating. "Above all, fears of an escalation in the international trade war with the United States" drove the institute's barometer based on a survey of financial players down 8.6 points to reach -24.7, ZEW president Achim Wambach said.

President Donald Trump has hit steel and aluminum imports to the US with tariffs and threatened to do the same to European cars, after the European Union retaliated with border taxes of its own on American goods. Major German firms have also suffered from the White House's trade war with Beijing, the second front in Trump's battle to slash US deficits, as their cars built in America face new tariffs when entering China.

Investors' views of the current situation in both Germany and the 19-nation eurozone worsened, suggesting recent "good news on industrial production, industrial orders and the labor market are more than cancelled out by the expected negative effects on exports" from the trade war, Wambach said.

Investors surveyed by ZEW also saw a bleaker future outlook for the 19-nation eurozone, with that index falling 6.1 points to reach -18.7. ZEW polled 201 financial analysts and investors to compile its monthly index. — AFP



PORT-AU-PRINCE: Haitian people wait to purchase fuel at a gas station in the commune of Petit-Verre in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince, Monday, one of the few gas stations open during the strike to protest the hike in fuel prices. Scenes of anarchy alternate with tentative indications of a return to normalcy in Haiti's capital after two days of deadly looting and arson triggered by a quickly-aborted government attempt to raise fuel prices. — AFP

Switzerland challenges US tariffs at WTO

GENEVA: Switzerland has joined a string of countries launching challenges to Washington's new steel and aluminum tariffs at the World Trade Organization, Bern said yesterday. The Swiss economic affairs ministry said it had formally asked the US for "consultations" over tariffs of 25 percent on steel and 10 percent on aluminum.

Consultations constitute the first step in a full-blown legal challenge before the global trade body. Switzerland, where the organization is based, had on Monday "submitted a request for consultations with the US as part of WTO dispute settlement proceedings," the ministry said in a statement. Several other WTO members, including the European Union, China, India, Mexico, Canada and Russia, are also fighting back against President Donald Trump's controversial trade policies. Marking a departure from a decades-long US-led drive for free trade, Trump has just-

fied the steep tariffs with claims that massive flows of imports to the United States threaten national security.

The tariff spat has escalated into an all-out trade war between the US and China.

According to yesterday's statement, Switzerland exported steel and aluminum products to the United States last year to the tune of around 80 million Swiss francs (\$80.7 million, 68.7 million euros).

"From Switzerland's point of view, the additional duties ... are unjustified," the ministry said, pointing out that Bern had contacted Washington when the tariffs were announced in March to request an exemption.

"The US has not responded to Switzerland's request for an exemption from the tariffs to date," the statement said, adding that the request for WTO consultations had been launched "in order to protect Switzerland's interests." Bern did not mention possible retaliation, but other countries that have launched WTO challenges have warned they would slap tariffs on American products equivalent to the damage the US move was estimated to cause to their industries. Under WTO rules, if 60 days pass without consultations resolving the dispute, Switzerland can ask the body to set up dispute panel, triggering a long and likely costly legal battle. — AFP

India, South Korea aim to more than double trade to \$50bn

NEW DELHI: India and South Korea signed 11 agreements yesterday to expand business ties and more than double mutual trade to \$50 billion by 2030, a day after the premiers of the two countries launched a Samsung mobile phone factory near Delhi. Major South Korean companies including Samsung and Hyundai Motor Co are household names across India, one of the world's fastest growing markets, and visiting South Korean President Moon Jae-in said he hoped that smaller companies from his country could replicate that success.

"Going forward I hope that more Korean companies will invest in India so that the foundation for mutual prosperity can be further expanded," Moon said after meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the third day of his four-day visit.

Bilateral trade between the world's seventh and 11th largest economies rose by nearly a quarter to \$20.8 billion in the 2017/18 fiscal year that ended in March, with \$16.4 billion of that in favour of South Korea. The agreements signed between the countries included accelerating negotiations to upgrade a 'comprehensive economic partnership agreement' signed in 2009, as well as expand cooperation in railways, healthcare, telecommunications and cyber security. They also agreed to explore tripartite partnership for development in third countries, beginning with capacity building programs in Afghanistan. India already has close ties with Afghanistan and is helping to rebuild the war-ravaged country.

Moon and Modi on Monday formally opened a new Samsung factory on the outskirts of Delhi which the company called the world's biggest mobile phone manufacturing plant.

The plant's inauguration comes at a time when Modi, who faces an election next year, is trying to create new jobs for millions of Indians who join the workforce every year. In an apparent endorsement of Modi's electoral prospects, Moon said he would eagerly await the Indian leader's visit to South Korea in 2020. Modi, in turn, credited Moon for South Korea's peace breakthrough with North Korea and offered India's support in taking that forward. — Reuters

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SUMMARY STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION			SUMMARY STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		
	As at 31 Dec 2017 KD	As at 31 Dec 2016 KD		For the year ended 31 Dec 2017 KD	For the year ended 31 Dec 2016 KD
ASSETS					
Cash and bank balances	530,193	121,312	UNDERWRITING INCOME		
Insurance receivables	383,456	407,850	Insurance premium revenue	828,420	238,187
Reinsurance contracts	306,845	471,191	Insurance premium ceded to reinsurers	(7,164)	(193,332)
Prepayments and other receivables	86,088	53,501	Net insurance premium revenue	821,256	44,855
Deferred acquisition costs	837	475	Commission income	999	36,572
Statutory and term deposit	1,344,416	1,310,899		822,255	81,427
Total assets	2,621,834	2,365,228	UNDERWRITING EXPENSES		
HEAD OFFICE ACCOUNT AND LIABILITIES					
Head Office - capital account	841,054	791,259	Claims incurred	(203,267)	39,385
LIABILITIES					
Insurance contracts	1,396,729	1,439,084	Reinsurers' share of claims incurred	(36,709)	13,569
Insurance and other payables	163,304	132,358	Commission expense	(2,493)	(18,947)
Deferred commission income	-	1,167		(242,469)	34,007
Amounts due to a related party	219,875	1,360	Net underwriting income		
Employees end of service benefit	1,872	-	Net underwriting income	579,786	115,434
Total liabilities	1,780,780	1,573,969	Interest Income	30,167	36,144
Total Head Office account and liabilities	2,621,834	2,365,228	Other expenses	(18,637)	(48,495)
Taxation					
			General and administration expenses	(475,344)	(39,210)
			Profit before taxation	115,972	63,873
			Taxation	(69,349)	(122,761)
			Total comprehensive income(loss) for the year	46,623	(58,888)



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A copy of the latest full audited financial statement is available at the Registered Office of the Branch at Al Hamra Tower, 35th floor, Office # 3528, Al Shuhada Street, Sharq, P.O. Box 600 - Safat 13006, Kuwait City, Kuwait

Business

Fintech will be a game-changer for Kuwait banks, says analyst

Markaz holds presentation on 'Kuwait Banking 2018 and beyond'

KUWAIT: Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" has recently held a presentation on "Kuwait Banking 2018 and beyond" in collaboration with Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) at Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The presentation was delivered by M.R. Raghu, Head of Research at Markaz and Managing Director of Marmore MENA Intelligence, a research subsidiary of Markaz providing services of financial research and analysis of economies, markets, and companies in the MENA region.

Raghu talked about the current scenario of Kuwait banking industry and provided insights on the various trends that will determine the industry outlook. According to Raghu, Kuwait banks are at an inflection point. After years of underperformance relative to GCC peers, some green shoots provide positive guidance. Liquidity is abundant, and asset quality improvement is noticeable. The increase in Fed rates will increase the cost of funding through increased rates of interest paid on deposits, however the good share of unremunerated deposits should provide a good cushion. Loan book growth has been tepid in the past (2.8%) and is expected to touch 4% in 2018-19 on the back of non-oil GDP growth and infrastructure investments. However, this loan growth will be enjoyed more by larger banks as they will be the only game in the town for larger borrowers and government projects.

Raghu said that another way of looking at this is default, they will capture the low risk projects and therefore can dictate prices. However, the medium and

smaller banks will play out on the technology side taking advantage of tech savvy youth population. Banks will be limited in terms of risk funding due to pricing band mandated by CBK for short term and long-term.

Another concern is the exposure of Kuwait banks to real estate sector, both direct and indirect (personal loans). While the combined share of lending to real estate sector and personal installment was about 33 percent back in 2008, it now stands at 53 percent.

There will be a rise in the cost of risk of the bank in 2018 because of the adoption of IFRS 9 and the higher amount of restructured and past due but not impaired loans present in their balance sheets. However, the general provisions that Kuwait banks have accumulated over the years will help in a smooth transition to the new accounting standard.

Raghu added, "Kuwait also appears overbanked with a small population size and could benefit from consolidation as many banks lack sufficient scale. The environment for consolidation is stronger now than a decade ago".

Further the seminar highlighted that the slowdown in economic activity in the past three years resulted in a slight increase in non-performing loans (NPLs) in first three quarters of 2017. However beginning fourth quarter of 2017 the NPL ratios will stabilize and subsequently improve in 2018 and beyond. Conventional banking's value chain essentially involves functions such as taking savings, providing loans and facilitating payments. In this value chain, at the most risk of disruption is the payments business model since it is the



KUWAIT: M R Raghu, Head of Research at Markaz and Managing Director of Marmore MENA Intelligence, speaks during the presentation.

least capital intensive and most tech-intensive. While block chain and cryptocurrencies were the main competitors of brick-and-mortar banking, the local banks would cope with the FinTech competition either through collaboration or via cost-reduction measures.

The 2017 has seen an improvement in the overall profitability of the Kuwaiti banks due to increasing amounts of earning-generating assets and slightly higher interest margins. Raghu expect the trend to continue in the near term.

CBK holds draw in 'Your Trip, Your Way' campaign

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) conducted the first draw in its 'Your Trip...Your Way' campaign at its headquarters. The draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) representative. Four persons won travel vouchers in addition to cash.

Speaking on the occasion, CBK's retail banking division general manager, Hameed Ibrahim Salman congratulated the lucky winners and explained that two more draws would be held within the same campaign. He added that eight winners would get travel vouchers worth KD 1,750-2,750 in addition to the fourth and final draw where one lucky winner will win one kilo of gold.

Salam explained that every KD 10 spent to settle purchases inside Kuwait using credit cards, gives customers a chance to enter the monthly and the final draws. While every KD 10 spent to settle purchases outside Kuwait using debit, prepaid or credit cards, gives customers three chances to enter the monthly and the final draws.

Gulf Bank's salary draw winner announced

KUWAIT: Live on the Diwaniyat Al-Yaqout & Al-Ansari radio show, Gulf Bank has unveiled the name of the lucky winner of its second quarterly salary account draw of the year. Abdulsalam Mohammed Abdulhadi Al-Safeeh, a Gulf Bank customer has been awarded a cash prize of KD25,000.

When informed with the cash prize Abdulsalam Mohammed Abdulhadi Al-Safeeh has praised the salary account offer, which is tailored for Kuwaiti customers, and highlighted its unique offers.

Congratulating the winner, Ahmed Al-Ameer, Assistant General Manager for External Communications at Gulf Bank said: "At Gulf Bank we are committed to providing our valued customers with the highest levels of products and services, to fulfil their needs, meet their desires and when possible, help make their dreams come true. On behalf of the Bank's family I would like to congratulate Mr. Al-Safeeh and wish him all the best."

Upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank, new customers get the opportunity to either receive a KD100 cash gift or an interest-free loan. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD500 and be fully eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank. Customers can also enjoy a one year free of



KUWAIT: Gulf Bank team members along with 88.8-host and ministry representative after the announcement of the winner

charge Visa or MasterCard credit card, as well as a chance to apply for loan up to KD 70,000, or a consumer loan up to KD 15,000.

Existing and new customers who transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank are automatically enrolled in the quarterly draws and have the chance to win valuable cash prizes, including three quarterly prizes of KD

25,000, in addition to Kuwait's largest salary prize of KD 250,000 in the last draw.

The Gulf Bank's third quarterly salary account draw date is scheduled on 8th October 2018 for the prize of KD 25,000, while the final salary's draw for the largest prize of KD 250,000, will be held on 7th February 2019.

Samsung introduces Sunrise Gold, Coral Blue editions for Galaxy S9 and S9+

KUWAIT: Samsung Gulf Electronics has officially launched two new color editions of the Galaxy S9 and S9+, Sunrise Gold and Coral Blue, in Kuwait. The new color editions were added to meet the needs of discerning consumers who want devices that express their style and personality.

The Sunrise Gold edition for Galaxy S9+ is Samsung's first device to feature a satin gloss finish which wraps the smartphone in a tranquil glow and glimmer. The new Sunrise Gold was envisioned to capture the beauty of the moment when the sunlight reaches its zenith, creating a feeling of both vibrancy and calm. This sophisticated finish was developed to appeal to all users by bringing a stylistic touch of high fashion and urban interior design to a user's mobile device. Similarly, the new Coral Blue edition for Galaxy S9 and S9+ was created to fit the design elements that include the materials and finishes of the device. The color was inspired by the quietness of water projected in the glass by the soft light at dawn, to provide a sense of calm and tranquility often associated with nature.

"The way that customers interact with their smartphones continues to evolve and impact their self-expression, and color choice has become a very important component of that personalization. The introduction of these two exciting and vibrant colors to the Galaxy S9 and S9+ in the region further empowers customers to connect to others and express themselves in a way that's unique and personal to them," said Tarek Sabbagh,

Head of IT and Mobile (IM) Division, Samsung Gulf Electronics. "The response to the Galaxy S9 and S9+ has been overwhelmingly positive, and we remain committed to listening to our customers and continuing to deliver meaningful innovation based on our legacy in design and heritage in technology."

The Galaxy S9 and S9+ introduce an array of innovative features to the Galaxy series, unveiling exciting new ways for users to capture and share special moments, express themselves, and interact with the world around them.

The devices' redesigned camera features a Dual Aperture lens that adapts to the environment similar to the way the iris of a human eye expands and contracts, Samsung's Dual Aperture automatically lets in more light when it's dark and less light when it's too bright, taking photos that are crisp and clear; an innovative Super Slow-mo video function, which allows users to capture everyday epic moments in detail at 960 frames per second; and new, customizable AR Emojis with beloved Disney characters along with 36 new expressive stickers. Other enhancements include immersive, AKG-tuned stereo speakers, which complement the refined Infinity Display, and deeper integration with Samsung's intelligence platform, Bixby.

The coral blue color is available for both Galaxy S9 and Galaxy S9+, whereas the Sunrise Gold is only available for the Galaxy S9+. The latest editions can be purchased at the Samsung Brand store in Avenues Mall, Kuwait.



'Surf and drive' with flydubai this summer



KUWAIT: This summer, flydubai has launched a special "Surf and drive" offer for its passengers to enjoy unlimited connectivity for only \$08 per flight, and have the chance to win one of two new Toyota Rush SUVs.

The promotion is available on all flydubai WiFi enabled aircraft until 30 September 2018. To enter the draw, simply purchase a WiFi package on board a flydubai flight and provide your details to be automatically enrolled.

Commenting on the offer, Daniel Kerrison, Vice President Inflight Product at flydubai, said: "At flydubai we are committed to offering passengers innovative product choices such as onboard connectivity which meets the travel needs of our customers. Summer is a popular time of year for travel and with our WiFi offering, our passengers can keep in touch with their family and friends while getting the chance to win a fantastic prize."

This year, flydubai is offering even more exciting destinations to explore this summer including Catania in Italy,

Dubrovnik in Croatia, Krakow in Poland and Thessaloniki in Greece. The airline's popular summer routes to Batumi in Georgia, Qabala in Azerbaijan and Tivat in Montenegro are also on offer to those looking for a unique summer experience, be it on the coast or the countryside.

flydubai provides its customers with a better travel experience by offering greater choice and flexibility. With flydubai's Business Class, passengers can enjoy a more personalized flying experience while Economy Class offers comfortable seating and a convenient way to travel. On flydubai's newest aircraft, the Boeing 737 MAX 8, the efficient and environmentally friendly aircraft features a new cabin offering a flat-bed in Business Class for passengers to sleep comfortably during their flight. Economy Class offers new RECARO seats, which are designed to optimize space and comfort. Flydubai also offers exceptional inflight entertainment with a full HD, 11.6-inch screen, featuring more than 1,000 hours of movies, TV shows, music and games in Arabic, English and Russian.

As trial opens, cancer patient blames Monsanto's Roundup

'Monsanto has gone out of its way to bully scientists and fight researchers'

SAN FRANCISCO: A lawyer for a California groundskeeper dying of cancer took aim at Monsanto Monday as a jury began hearing the lawsuit accusing the chemical giant of ignoring health risks of its top-selling weed killer Roundup. "For the past 40 years, Monsanto has known the primary ingredient in Roundup can produce tumors in lab animals," attorney Brent Wisner told a California state court. A jury is hearing the case brought by Dwayne Johnson, a 46-year-old father of two.

Diagnosed in 2014 with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a cancer that affects white blood cells, Johnson used a Monsanto generic version of Roundup called "Ranger Pro" repeatedly in his job at a school in Benicia, California, after being promoted to groundskeeper in 2012. In his opening statement, Wisner said Monsanto opted against warning consumers of the risks and that instead "they have fought science" by playing down the suspected link between the chemical herbicide and cancer.

"Monsanto has gone out of its way to bully scientists and fight researchers," he told the jury. The case in California Superior Court is the first trial in which Roundup is said to have caused cancer, a claim repeatedly denied by the chemical company. If Monsanto loses, the case could open the door to hundreds of additional lawsuits against the company recently acquired by German-based pharmaceutical and chemical group Bayer.

Johnson had little warning about the risks of Roundup, his lawyer said. "He was told you could drink it, it was completely non-toxic," Wisner said with his client sitting in the San Francisco courtroom. "You will hear testimony from him that he got drenched in it, repeatedly." The lawyer said Johnson, who is between rounds of chemotherapy, "is actually on borrowed time, he is not supposed to be alive today."

A key to Johnson's case will be convincing jurors that Monsanto's pesticide whose main ingredient is glyphosate-is responsible for the illness. Wisner contended glyphosate combined with an ingredient intended to help it spread over leaves in a cancer-causing "synergy." Whether glyphosate causes cancer has been the source of long debate among government regulators, health experts and lawyers.

Monsanto has always denied any link with the disease and says studies have concluded the product is safe. "Mr Johnson's cancer is a terrible disease. We all do and we all should have great sympathy for what he is going through," Monsanto defense attorney George Lombardi said during opening remarks in court. "The scientific evidence is overwhelming that glyphosate-based products do not cause cancer, and did not cause Mr Johnson's cancer." Roundup has been approved the US Environmental Protection Agency under various presidential administrations and through genera-

tions of scientists there, according to Lombardi. Both sides at what is expected to be a month-long trial promised experts would testify to back their positions, and criticized what they saw as flaws in studies relied on by the other side. "Mr Johnson's cancer began years before he took on his job with the school district," Lombardi contended.

Cases 'in the pipeline'

Robert F Kennedy Jr-an environmental lawyer, son of the late US senator, and a member of Johnson's legal team-sat in the front row of the courtroom gallery. "I don't think it's a surprise that Monsanto tried to stop the public from knowing about it, and tried to manipulate the regulatory process," Kennedy told reporters outside court. Kennedy said his law firm has 700 clients "in the pipeline" with Roundup cancer cases. When asked how much money he thought Johnson should get from Monsanto, Kennedy questioned whether \$50 million or \$100 million would even be enough.

Founded in 1901 in St. Louis, Missouri, Monsanto began producing agrochemicals in the 1940s. It was acquired by Bayer for more than \$62 billion in June. Monsanto was one of the companies which produced the defoliant "Agent Orange," which has been linked to cancer and other diseases, for use by US forces in Vietnam. It denies responsibility for how the military used it.



SAN FRANCISCO: Plaintiff Dwayne Johnson (L) reacts while attorney Brent Wisner (out of frame) speaks about his condition during the Monsanto trial. — AFP

Monsanto's flagship herbicide Roundup was launched in 1976. The company soon thereafter began genetically modifying plants, making some resistant to Roundup. In 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer-a World Health Organization body-classified glyphosate as

"probably carcinogenic," and as a result the state of California listed it as carcinogenic. But European food safety and chemicals agencies have so far not followed suit, while a US Department of Health study suggested its toxicity is limited. — AFP

Something phishy: How to identify and avoid phishing scams



By Harish Chib,
Vice President, Middle East & Africa, Sophos

Phishing is one of the most common attack vectors for hackers who exploit end-user behavior as the weakest link in an organization's cyber-defense. For years, criminals have disguised attacks in emails and today we see phishing emails as a primary delivery method for ransomware payloads. Phishing emails have led to massive data exposures, which caused major reputational and financial damage in the private and public sector over the last few years. As cyber-criminals continue to prey on employees through their technology, they are always taking measures to be one step ahead. In an organization all it takes is one employee to take the bait.

Today's phishing attacks are so prevalent and so convincing across organizations. What started off as simply "phishing" has now developed into three branches of attacks: the classics, mass phishing and spear phishing, and the recently emerging trend of Business Email Compromise tactic acting as a subset of spear phishing. Business Email Compromise is associated with employee email accounts being compromised rather than the sender address being spoofed. This makes difficult for end-users to spot attacks. It has been stated that 91% of cyberattacks and their resulting data breaches now begin with a spear phishing email message.

Phishing has evolved in lockstep with the 'Malware-as-a-Service' phenomenon. Phishing emails come in all shapes and sizes, and unfortunately, no single product will fully protect your business from phishing attacks. Phishing is now run as a business and cybercriminals have been using different attack strategies to retrieve information from their target. Some of strategies include phishing services, off-the-shelf phishing kits and Business Email Compromise.

Free phishing kits

An interesting facet of the phishing ecosystem is that there are a large number of actors committing attacks, but only a small number of phishers that are sophisticated enough to write a phishing kit from scratch. Because of this, phishing kits are now widely available for download from dark web forums and marketplaces, and give attackers all the tools they need to create profitable phishing attacks: emails, web page code, images, and more.

Attacks-as-a-service

In fact, attackers don't even need to know how to create malware or send emails anymore. As-a-service and pay-as-you go solutions permeate most online service technologies, and phishing is no different - with a range of services increasing-

ly available to attackers:

- Ransomware-as-a-service allows a user to create an online account and fill out a quick web form, including the starting ransom price and a late payment price for victims. The provider of the service then takes a cut of each ransom paid, with discounts offered if the user is able to translate the malware code into new languages or if the volume of the attack exceeds a certain level

- Phishing-as-a-service allows users to pay for phishing attacks to be sent for them, using global botnets to avoid known dodgy IP ranges. Guarantees are even made to only bill users for delivered email messages, much like any legitimate email marketing service. These services have led to the explosion of phishing attacks highlighted earlier, as any attacker can launch an attack regardless of technical skill.

Stop threats at the door

The best defense against phishing emails is your email gateway. Email protection is your watch guard, blocking 99% of unwanted email at the gateway, including malicious attachments, content, and URLs - long before an end user ever sees them. Web filtering is another must-have as a front-line defense, filtering and blocking infected URLs should your users click an email link. And file sandboxing ensures those nasty malware laden downloads get removed from the threat chain early on.

Protect your weakest link: users

Even with the best upfront filters, attacker methods such as BEC - with no executables or links to detect - may still get through. Appropriate training and education is critical for ensuring that all your employees know how to spot and deal with these types of email messages.

Secure your last line of defense

If your click-happy end users inadvertently unleash potent, powerful malware onto your systems, there's still ample opportunity to stop the damage - and even reverse its effects. Next-generation exploit prevention solutions will identify, analyze, and neutralize the effects of even the most advanced, unseen malware out there, and automatically clean up all trace of infection so you can get on with your day.

Know your business

Make sure your company processes are understood, that you encourage employees to question requests that seem out of character from other employees and senior managers, and perhaps most important of all, ensure you have a two-stage approval process for all significant fund transfer requests. All the defenses in the world aren't going to stop an employee from unknowingly sending large payments to a thief without some proper checks and balances in place.

Phishing is a problem that will not go away. But you can be more cautious and train yourself to look for giveaways that will tell you if you have visited a phishing website. Cybercriminals will continue to take advantage of opportunities as long as they are getting their money. The fight is challenging but it's something we can win.

That makes the samples around "fifteen times older" than the Tyrannosaurus Rex dinosaur species, according to senior Australian National University researcher Jochen Brooks. Earth itself is about 4.5 billion years old and researchers said the latest find shed light on why more sophisticated plant and animal life only came into existence 600 million years ago. Previous research argued that low oxygen levels in the atmosphere held back the evolution of complicated lifeforms, but the discovery of cyanobacteria at such an early date suggests that the organisms crowded out more plentiful food sources such as algae. "Algae, although still microscopic, are a thousand times larger in volume than cyanobacteria, and are a much richer food source," Brooks said.— AFP

Scientists find 'world's oldest' biological colors

SYDNEY: Australian researchers have uncovered the world's oldest biological color in the Sahara desert, in a find they said yesterday helped explain why complex lifeforms only recently emerged on earth. The pink pigments were produced by simple microscopic organisms called cyanobacteria more than 1.1 billion years ago, some 500 million years older than previous color pigment discoveries.

Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi doctors solve mystery of patient's unusual rash

ABU DHABI: A multidisciplinary team of specialists at Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi has successfully treated a patient suffering from a mysterious skin condition after discovering it was linked to celiac disease, an autoimmune disease in which people have a life-long intolerance to gluten.

The patient, a 35-year-old Emirati male, had been suffering from severe chronic blistering of his skin for more than four years before seeking treatment at Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, said Dr. Mohamed Abuzakouk, a Consultant in Allergy & Immunology in the Medical Subspecialties Institute. "This type of rash, called dermatitis herpetiformis, is a disease of people of Northern European descent and is most uncommon in Arab, Asian and African populations," said Dr. Abuzakouk. The skin rash had left the patient with fluid-filled blisters on his scalp, face, and body. There was no family history of



Dr. Abuzakouk

similar lesions, allergies, celiac disease or other diseases of the immune system. A biopsy of the patient's skin confirmed that the rash was dermatitis herpetiformis, said Dr. Abuzakouk, who was involved with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence to develop the UK's national guidelines for celiac disease recognition, assessment and management.

"Genes, foods and other environmental events play a role in the development of celiac disease, an autoimmune disorder in which the immune system 'develops' specific antibodies and cells to attack the gut lining after exposure to gluten, a protein that is commonly found in wheat and other grains including rye and barley, damaging the small intestine," said Dr. Abuzakouk. Many people with celiac disease experience symptoms ranging from severe gastrointestinal problems to iron deficiency,

anemia, fatigue, mouth ulcers and joint and bone pain, while others are symptom free and are unaware they have the disease.

"Even though the patient was not experiencing the classic gastrointestinal symptoms of gluten intolerance, the results of his detailed investigations showed strong evidence of celiac disease. He was put on medication to treat the skin rash and was also advised to follow a strict gluten-free diet as part of the long-term management of his skin condition," said Dr. Abuzakouk.

The patient's symptoms improved significantly shortly after commencing treatment and he is currently symptom free.

Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi's Allergy & Immunology Program was recently recognized as a Center of Reference and Excellence in Urticaria (hives) by GASLEN (Global Allergy and Asthma European Network) and its affiliates including the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI).

The program specializes in the diagnosis and management of a range of allergy-related conditions. The program's multidisciplinary approach complements the patient's treatment and involves a team of allergists and immunologists working with colleagues from other specialties, including gastroenterologists, dietitians, pulmonologists, ear, nose and throat specialists, dermatologists and rheumatologists.

WhatsApp offers tips to spot fake news after India murders

NEW DELHI: WhatsApp took out full-page advertisements in Indian newspapers yesterday offering "easy tips" to identify fact from fiction after a slew of recent murders spurred by hoaxes shared on its platform. The Facebook-owned messaging service has been under immense pressure to curb the spread of misinformation in India after the lynching of more than 20 people accused of child abduction in the last two months.

Most recently a mob surrounded and killed five men in Maharashtra state denounced as child kidnappers, a pernicious rumour blamed for similar murders in at least 11 Indian states. WhatsApp said it was "horrified" by the violence and promised swift action but Indian authorities have accused the social media giant of acting irresponsibly in its largest market.

The slick adverts in leading English and Hindi language newspapers, entitled "together we can fight fake information", listed 10 tips for users seeking to sort truth from rumor. "Do not pay attention to the number of times you receive the message. Just because a message is shared many times, does not make it true," offer one of the tidbits of advice.

Concrete weighs heavily the Mediterranean coast

NICOSIA: Across the Mediterranean, from an illegally-built hotel in a Spanish nature park to a holiday complex encroaching on Lebanon's salt flats, a tourism boom is threatening precious coastal ecosystems. With 46,000 kilometers of coastline spread across 21 countries, the Mediterranean hosts over a quarter of global tourism-but that comes at a cost to the planet. "The current tourism model is highly unsustainable," says Plan Bleu, a UN-affiliated body for environment and development in the Mediterranean.

It estimates that arrivals have surged from 58 million in 1970 to 324 million in 2015, and could rise to 500 million by 2030. The body has warned that future growth will exacerbate "already critical environmental pressures... in coastal and marine ecosystems". The region's population is also growing, surging from 32 mil-



NEW DELHI: This photo illustration shows an Indian newspaper vendor reading a newspaper with a full back page advertisement from WhatsApp intended to counter fake information. — AFP

It also suggested users cross-check information against reputable news sources and not share the messages further if they doubt their authenticity. WhatsApp will soon launch a new feature on its platform in India that will clearly identify whether a message has been forwarded or written by the user.

Indian officials said the company could not "evade accountability and responsibility". WhatsApp has said it can block spam but cannot read the content of messages for privacy reasons, including potentially problematic content spreading in user chats. Rumors on

WhatsApp about child kidnappers saw eight men killed in eastern India last year but the same information has since resurfaced.

Spam messages warning parents about child kidnapping gangs have sprung up in multiple regional languages in India in recent months, sometimes accompanied by gruesome videos of child abuse.

Police in several states have denied the existence of such criminal groups. India is WhatsApp's largest market, with an estimated 200 million users sending a billion encrypted messages each day. — AFP

the beach without paying private resort owners who control the coast. In 2012, a Lebanese government report said about five million square metres of coastline is illegally built on.

Only 20 percent of the coastline is now freely accessible, says Jad Tabet, head of Lebanon's order of engineers. Yet another new tourist complex in the northern Anfeh region has raised fears among environmentalists. Called Natour Resort, it threatens one of the oldest salt flats in the Mediterranean in an archaeologically rich area that also boasts the "cleanest water on the Lebanese coast", says marine biologist Sammy Joe Lycha. A 1986 "coastal law" in France protects around 15,000 kilometers of coastline in France and its overseas territories from urbanisation "despite land pressure", says Environment Minister Nicolas Hulot. Lawmakers recently sought to review the legislation-provoking an outcry that forced them to retreat. But abuses have not stopped. On the island of Corsica, environmental defense association "U Levante" has after 20 years won a court order to demolish a coastal villa built by a wealthy Swiss investor. — AFP

Spain's illegal seaside hotel

Spain's 8,000 kilometer coastline has suffered multiple pressures, starting with a construction boom in the 1970s and another bubble ahead of the global property market crash in 2008. A 21-storey hotel built against beachside hills in a protected nature park in Algarrobo is a symbol of illegal construction in the early 21st century.

Condemned to demolition by the Supreme Court, the 15-year-old hotel "remains standing because multiple lawsuits are underway", including to determine whether owner Azata del Sol should be compensated, Greenpeace Spain's Pilar Marcos told AFP. In Lebanon, it's hard to go to

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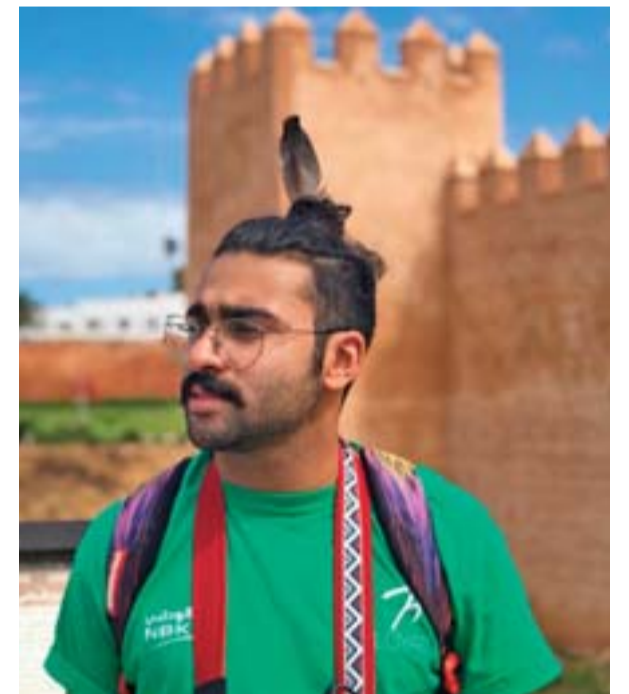
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What's On

LOYAC launches volunteer trip to Morocco sponsored by NBK



Sponsored by NBK, LOYAC recently launched its volunteer trip to Morocco (Atai) in the period of June 30 till July 10 with the aim of exploring Moroccan culture and traditions, mingle with Moroccan families and exchange experiences with Moroccan volunteer youth. Speaking on the occasion, LOYAC's community service department manager, Yusra Al-Essa stressed that the trip aims at developing participants' experiences and skills through cultural exchange. On her part, NBK's PR officer, Farah Bastaki said that the bank is proud of its partnership with and support to LOYAC. She added that the trip lasted for ten days including a historic tour of Rabat and nightly urban adventures exploring the bazaars, and landmarks, the blue city of Chefchaouen and a free day in Casablanca.



Safir Fintas welcomes LOYAC Interns

Fintas Family continued its annual internship program in collaboration with LOYAC Program, which aims at developing promising young local talents. The interns have joined the hotel's team for the third time this year on 7th of July 2018 until 9th of August 2018.

During their time at the hotel, interns will provide valuable support to Safir Hotel & Residences' professional team and work on various client assignments. Team members will have an opportunity to gain valuable

work experience, improve their presentation and communication skills and grow professionally. Shereen Moawad, the hotel's Assistant Human Resources Manager said, "Each year, we look forward to welcoming LOYAC interns into our practice. It is fulfilling to provide Kuwaiti youth with practical hospitality experience while helping our own professionals enhance their mentoring and leadership skills."

Saif Eddin Mohammed, General Manager of the hotel, also noted, "Our ongoing partnership with LOYAC aims at creating a difference across young interns' lives, develop opportunities and help them build a sustainable career. Safir Hotel & Residences Kuwait recognizes the importance of this project and is keen to play a significant role in making it a success. We look forward to seeing this project progresses further."



Exclusive Corporate Summer offers only at the Palms Beach Hotel and Spa

The Palms Beach Hotel and Spa, has launched a series of special offers for corporate guests. The promotions aim to boost guest arrivals during the summer season, typically the busiest travel period for families. The "Corporate Summer Promotion Rate" package allows guests to take advantage of an exclusive summer offer at the Palms Beach Hotel and Spa with deluxe room rates starting from KWD 45 per night + 15% service charge, inclusive of complimentary benefits such

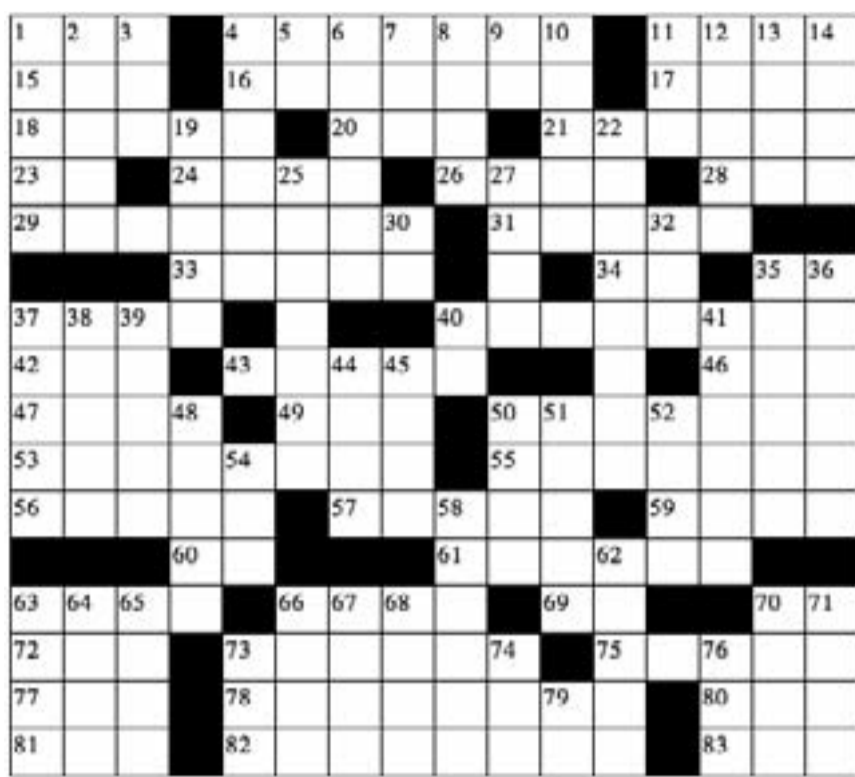
as airport pick-up and drop off, breakfast buffet at Palmerie, KWD 6 supplement/person for lunch or dinner, 40% discount on laundry and complementary fruit amenities and minibar.

Planning to bring managers together, motivate your team, and organize a conference or training event? Take advantage of the "Special corporate meeting" package at the state-of-the-art new Meeting Center offering one coffee break and lunch for only KWD 9 or coffee break

only for KWD 5. Our meeting rooms feature the latest audio and visual conferencing technologies, high-speed broadband and Wi-Fi for easy communication between participants. And lastly, ensure that your refreshment breaks are a unique and original experience! Our chefs are on hand to provide coffee break, lunch or dinner that suits your event. Our Exclusive Corporate Summer offers are valid from 1st of July to 31st of August excluding Eid Al Adha.

Stars

CROSSWORD 1956



ACROSS

- 1. Large African antelope having a head with horns like an ox and a long tufted tail.
4. The floating wreckage of a ship.
11. Slightly open.
15. An electrically charged particle.
16. A small conical pouch projecting from the upper anterior part of each atrium of the heart.
17. Ctenophores lacking tentacles.
18. Indian statesman and leader with Gandhi in the struggle for home rule.
20. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
21. A port city in southwestern Iran.
23. The square of a body of any size of type.
24. (Norse mythology) Goddess of old age who defeated Thor in a wrestling match.
26. English monk and scholar (672-735).
28. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
29. Pearl oysters.
31. (Judaism) A Jewish festival (traditionally 8 days) celebrating the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.
33. Written on a typewriter.
34. A state in midwestern United States.
37. Cancel, annul, or reverse an action or its effect.
42. Neckwear consisting of a long narrow piece of material worn (mostly by men) under a collar and tied in knot at the front.
43. Leafless East Indian vine.
46. A federal agency that supervises carriers that transport goods and people between states.
47. A monocotyledonous genus of the family Iridaceae.
49. An accountant certified by the state.
53. A toothed wheel that engages another toothed mechanism in order to change the speed or direction of transmitted motion.
55. People descended from a common ancestor.
56. A communist state in Indochina on the South China Sea.
57. Tropical American tree producing cacao beans.
59. A Gaelic-speaking Celt in Ireland or Scotland or the Isle of Man.
60. An artificial language for international use that rejects rejects all existing words and is based instead on an abstract analysis of ideas.
61. Verse in the meter used in Greek and Latin poetry consisting of strophes of 4 tetrametric lines.
63. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
69. An associate degree in nursing.
72. An implement used to propel or steer a boat.
75. Lower in esteem.
77. The law enforcement agency in the Justice Department.
78. Succulent carpet-forming plant having small brilliant reddish-pink flowers.
80. Being ten more than one hundred eighty.
81. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
82. A great raja.
83. 30 to 300 gigahertz.

DOWN

- 1. Tropical American tree bearing a small edible fruit with green leathery skin and sweet juicy translucent pulp.
2. The mother-in-law of Ruth whose story is told in the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament.
3. A transuranic element.
4. Characterized by errors.
5. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.

- 6. Alloy of copper and tin and zinc.
7. A local and habitual twitching especially in the face.
8. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
9. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
10. English economist noted for his studies of international trade and finance (born in 1907).
11. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
12. (Old Testament) The fourth son of Jacob who was forebear of one of the tribes of Israel.
13. The sixth month of the civil year.
14. Type genus of the Ranidae.
19. Right-hand page.
22. An enemy who lays siege to your position.
25. French mathematician and astronomer who formulated the nebular hypothesis concerning the origins of the solar system and who developed the theory of probability (1749-1827).
27. A fencing sword similar to a foil but with a heavier blade.
30. A public promotion of some product or service.
32. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
35. Free from fear or doubt.
36. A metrical unit with stressed-unstressed-unstressed syllables.
38. Vice President under Eisenhower and 37th President of the United States.
39. Do something that one considers to be below one's dignity.
40. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
41. Steady recurrent ticking sound as made by a clock.
44. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
45. The arch of bone beneath the eye that forms the prominence of the cheek.
48. A grant made by a law court.
50. A translucent mineral consisting of hydrated silica of variable color.
51. Type genus of the Phocidae.
52. Medium-sized tree having glossy lanceolate leaves.
54. Group insurance that entitles members to services of participating hospitals and clinics and physicians.
58. Conqueror of Gaul and master of Italy (100-44 BC).
62. Squash bugs.
64. Open-heart surgery in which the rib cage is opened and a section of a blood vessel is grafted from the aorta to the coronary artery to bypass the blocked section of the coronary artery and improve the blood supply to the heart.
65. An elaborate song for solo voice.
66. (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
67. The 10th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
68. A narrow elongated opening or fissure between two symmetrical parts.
70. United States writer (born in Poland) who wrote in Yiddish (1880-1957).
71. Combining form.
73. The universal time coordinated time when a transmission is sent from Earth to a spacecraft or other celestial body.
74. Brief episode in which the brain gets insufficient blood supply.
76. An edge tool with a heavy bladed head mounted across a handle.
79. A person who announces and plays popular recorded music.

Yesterday's Solution crossword grid with filled-in letters.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Your marriage or partnership or lack thereof seem to be a major focus for you. You feel the need to be needed and need to be loved. You want someone by your side and someone to share your life with.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This is a time you will need to exercise great patience in your life. You may feel as though you want to shut down emotionally because you feel resistance at every turn.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

If you have ever taken a gadget apart because you were curious of its inner components and what it makes it work, you may well relate to the mood today finds you in.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Today you may find everything just falls into place for you. This is a great day to get those unfinished projects completed.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Your friendships take on great meaning for you at this time. The love and support you can feel from a close friendship is truly a gift.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You may be feeling a desire to surround yourself with all things beautiful. You have a new appreciation for the finer things in life.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may find yourself focusing on that which intrigues you. Seems you find broadening your horizons a priority. You are seeking answers.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Now is a great time to focus on some issues that have been bothering you. You may be having a strong desire to find yourself and make your own way in life.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may feel like taking a chance today. Stepping out of your comfort zone could bring great reward your way. You may feel drawn to surround yourself with those closest to you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This is a great time of reflection for you. There comes a time where we all feel it is necessary to do some soul-searching.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may have an encounter with someone on an emotional level that seems to cause you to shut down. This person truly seems to drain you and stifle your imagination.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Fondness and appreciation for the past and for your roots in life take on greater meaning and importance. Making your home situation pleasant and attractive plays a part in this and the sale or purchase of real estate could bring you much gain.

Wordsearch Puzzle

St. Patrick's Day

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

Wordsearch grid with words hidden in the letters.

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

Yesterday's Solution

Spring-themed wordsearch grid.

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

The hidden sentence is: APRIL SHOWERS BRING MAY FLOWERS

Daily SuDoku

9x9 Sudoku grid with numbers 6, 9, 8, 3, 7, 8, 3, 8, 7, 3, 1, 5, 2, 2, 4, 9, 8, 4, 2, 6, 1, 7, 6, 9, 8, 8, 4, 9, 3, 5, 7.

Yesterday's Solution

9x9 Sudoku grid with numbers 8, 9, 7, 2, 5, 1, 6, 4, 3, 4, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 2, 1, 5, 2, 1, 5, 3, 4, 6, 8, 7, 9, 9, 4, 1, 8, 7, 2, 5, 3, 6, 3, 5, 8, 6, 9, 4, 7, 2, 1, 7, 6, 2, 5, 1, 3, 9, 8, 4, 5, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 1, 9, 7, 1, 7, 4, 9, 2, 5, 3, 6, 8, 6, 8, 9, 1, 3, 7, 4, 5, 2.

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, JULY 11, 2018



This photo shows tourists during a banquet held along the edge of a cliff, at Laojun Mountain in Luoyang in China's central Henan province. The banquet was held on a mountain cliff 2,000-metres (6,500-ft.) above sea level to attract tourists. — AFP

BRAZIL'S NEW JUDO COACH THROWS OLD GENDER BARRIERS TO THE MAT

Judo is about throwing adversaries to the mat, but in becoming the first female head coach of the Brazilian men's national team, Yuko Fujii has taken down one of the biggest obstacles of all in the world of sports. On being named to the position at the end of May, the soft-spoken, 35-year-old black belt made history—and not just in Brazil. Fujii, who is from Japan and was previously an assistant coach with the squad, is now one of the very few women in the world to head any top-level male sports team, let alone judo.

In judo powerhouses such as France, Japan and Russia, men coach not only the male but the female athletes, and certainly in Fujii's homeland the idea of a woman taking over the men would be pretty much unimaginable. "Japan is more traditional and macho than Brazil. The men's team doesn't have a single woman—well just one, the nutritionist," Fujii told AFP at Brazil's national training center in Rio de Janeiro. A similar picture unfolds across much of the rest of the sporting spectrum, where female coaches of elite women are rare and female coaches of men practically non-existent. For example, Brazil briefly had a woman, Emily Lima, coach its female football team but she was fired in 2017 and replaced by a man. The same thing happened in 2015 when Spain sacked its first ever female Davis Cup captain, Gala Leon.

Brazil's new judo coach, though, is receiving a warm welcome. "Sensei Yuko has made quite a difference. With her as our sensei, our technical level has already improved," said Ruan Isquierdo, a giant heavyweight member of the Brazilian team, calling his coach by the Japanese honorific roughly meaning "teacher." At 309 pounds (140 kg), Isquierdo literally towers over the diminutive Fujii, but for all his strength he says he'd take nothing for granted in a judo bout with his sensei. "If I were too slow, she'd throw me, for sure," he laughed. "She has very high skill levels."

Judo, not gender

To Fujii, the gender wars are an abstract issue compared to the immediate goal of winning battles on the judo mat, or tatame. "I don't think, 'I'm a woman and the others are men.' I never thought about this. My focus is always: can I use my strengths to help the team?" she said. This attitude helps explain her surprise selection by the Brazilian Judo Confederation, which had reportedly been looking at an all-Brazilian shortlist, headed by former Olympic medalist Tiago Camilo, to replace the outgoing coach. With the 2020 Tokyo Olympics looming and a disappointing men's performance at the 2016 Rio Games fresh in their memory, Brazil's judo authorities wanted a change in direction. The solution, it turned out, was hiding in plain sight. Fujii had been recruited by Brazil in 2013

after having helped coach Britain's team at the 2012 London Olympics, where Gemma Gibbons won silver and Karina Bryant got bronze.

In Rio, Fujii assisted coaching of both sexes and spent a lot of time with younger athletes, building deep knowledge of the national judo landscape. When Rafaela Silva, who trained especially closely with Fujii, won gold at the Rio Olympics, Fujii's star rose ever higher. Silva credits Fujii

United States, Rebecca Lynn Hammon won fame when she was hired by the San Antonio Spurs basketball team, becoming the first full-time female assistant coach in the NBA. Hammon is now reportedly in the mix for a first head coach job. But with even US college female athletes being routinely coached by men, Hammon cuts a lonely path.

It's the same in tennis. France's Amelie Mauresmo broke new ground by coaching Andy Murray and she has just



Japanese 35-year-old black belt Yuko Fujii, head coach of the Brazilian men's national team, warms up before giving a class in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



Japanese 35-year-old black belt Yuko Fujii (left), head coach of the Brazilian men's national team, gives a class to young students in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP photos

with helping steer her back from a harrowing disqualification in London 2012, followed by racist abuse at home, and a depression. Now Silva, who has become one of Brazil's best known athletes, thinks the men can benefit from the same touch.

"It will help the men's team at a time when it isn't doing very well," Silva said, watching Fujii run a class for half a dozen promising youngsters. "People hope that since she worked with the women's team she can bring the same to the men's team. I think it will make a difference—and the guys will be able to learn a bit from the women."

Pioneer? Let's see

Fujii is still among the exceptions that prove the rule about under-representation of women in coaching. In the

been named to take over the French Davis Cup team. But the biggest stars in the women's game, Venus and Serena Williams, use male coaches. Fujii says the situation is improving in judo, both within the International Judo Federation and on the mat, with more female coaches and athletes getting higher profiles. But when asked if she sees herself as pioneer, she chuckled. She knows that in the end she'll be judged on Brazil's performance at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Her main goal: "For our athletes to do good judo and give everything," she said. "We'll see in the future if I was a pioneer or not!" — AFP

George Clooney injured in scooter accident in Italy

The American actor and director George Clooney was injured in a scooter accident on the Italian island of Sardinia where he is working on a miniseries, Italian media reported yesterday. Clooney, 57, had just left his hotel on a motor scooter when he crashed into a small truck, Italy's Chi magazine said on its Web site.

He was taken to hospital with a possible injury and later discharged from the emergency room with a slight contusion on his knee, state news agency Ansa said. Local police are investigating the accident, Ansa said. Clooney is in Sardinia to film a miniseries based on Joseph Heller's book "Catch 22", the news agency said. Clooney achieved fame for his part in the med-

ical drama ER. He has since won an Oscar for his role in the movie Syriana in 2006 and for co-producing the film Argo in 2012. — Reuters



George Clooney



Black Eyed Peas

announce first European tour for eight years

The Black Eyed Peas are heading out on their first European tour for eight years. The reunited group - will.i.am, Apl.de.ap and Taboo - are back with new single 'Get It' and have announced they are hitting the road for a series of shows later this year as part of their 'Masters of the Sun' tour. The 'Let's Get It Started' hitmakers kick off their concerts at the Eventim Apollo in London on October 27 and finish on November 18 in Dusseldorf, Germany, however, they will be on stage without vocalist Fergie who has decided not to get together again with her bandmates. The accompanying video for 'Get It' highlights social issues affecting America such as police brutality and the controversial immigration reforms being put in place. The track follows

the release of political hit 'Street Livin' - their first single for seven years - in January and 'Ring the Alarm' in May. Tickets for the gigs go on sale on 13 July at 9am at LiveNation.co.uk. The reunion for the 'I Gotta A Feeling' rappers - who are celebrating their 20th anniversary in 2018 - was kick-started back in 2016 when will.i.am reformed with Apl.de.ap and Taboo for a concert at the Royal Albert Hall in London in May 2016, the first time the trio had performed together in five years. At that show, Fergie's vocal spots were filled by will's 'The Voice UK' protegee Lydia Lucy.

Drake to record with Madonna

Drake is set to collaborate with Madonna. The 'Hotline Bling' hitmaker is currently in London following his surprise appearance at Wireless Festival on Sunday and is reportedly planning to join the 59-year-old singer in the recording studio this week, as she's finishing work on her new album in the city. A source told the Daily Star newspaper: "Drake and Madonna are set to make some music together. Madonna is in London putting the finishing touches to her new album and Drake promised to work with her on something." In 2015, the pair caused a stir when they shared a kiss on stage at Coachella. And that same year, Drake wrote a song called 'Madonna', which featured on his mixtape 'If You're Reading This It's Too Late', and the 'Hung Up' singer was a huge fan of the track. She said at the time: "I love your new song about me! It's my favorite! I'm still waiting

for you to pick me up." Earlier this year, Madonna - who was seen at Wireless watching Migos' set over the weekend - revealed she'd been busy recording new music in a London studio. The 'Beautiful Stranger' singer - whose last LP was 2015's 'Rebel Heart' - was spotted leaving the recording space in the British capital in January, and she also posted a photograph of herself singing into a microphone, sharing how thrilled she was to be back at work. She wrote across the photo posted on her Instagram: "Feels so good ... To be working on new music again! (sic)" And last December, the megastar teased that she was to embark on a tour this year, though as yet no dates have been announced.



Tom Petty's guitar to be auctioned

A vintage guitar owned by the late Tom Petty is to go up for auction. The 'Free Fallin' hitmaker - who passed away in October aged 66 - played the 1965 Gibson GS electric instrument while on tour with Bob Dylan in 1986 and now one lucky fan can get their hands on it, along with one of the rocker's top hats, at a sale on July 21. The items are being sold by Tom's friend, Norm Harris, who runs a rare guitar shop and originally sold the item to the musician. Years later, the 'I Won't Back Down' hitmaker handed it back to his pal when he gave him another rare instrument. Heritage Auctions will stage the sale on July 21 and a portion of the proceeds will go to two California charities, The Midnight Mission, which helps the homeless, and the Tazzy Animal Rescue Fund. Tom passed away from an accidental overdose of medication, with his family previously explaining he had a number of ailments that left him in agony, but he refused to stop performing as he didn't want to let his fans down. And the singer's loved ones believed he accidentally took too many pain killers because the agony was "unbearable". They said in a statement posted on his website when his cause of death was revealed in January: "Unfortunately, Tom's body suffered from many serious ailments including emphysema, knee problems and most significantly a fractured hip. Despite this painful injury he insisted on keeping his commitment to his fans and he toured for 53 dates with a fractured hip and, as he did, it worsened to a more serious injury. "On the day he died he was informed his hip had graduated to a full on break and it is our feeling that the pain was simply unbearable and was the cause for his over use of medication."

Jeremy Renner joins the cast of Spawn

Jeremy Renner has joined the cast of 'Spawn'. The 47-year-old actor is to appear alongside fellow Hollywood star Jamie Foxx in the new comic book adaptation, which will mark Todd McFarlane directorial debut. Jamie, 50, was cast as the movie's central character - who is a member of a CIA black ops team - back in May, and he's now been joined by Jeremy, who will play the role of Detective 'Twitch' Williams. Looking forward to the project, Todd told Deadline: "As a first-time director, I wanted to surround myself with the most talent and the most skilled people I can on all fronts. "I was lucky enough to land [producer] Jason Blum and then Jamie Foxx, and I knew the person on screen the most is this police officer, 'Twitch' Williams. We needed as strong a person as possible because he will be the face of the film. "I took my naive Hollywood approach again, and said let's start at the top and work down. Jeremy was at the top. I'm a huge fan of his." Todd felt Jeremy was perfectly suited to the part, having seen him perform similar roles earlier in his career. He shared: "The character doesn't need to be a bodybuilder or GQ handsome. I was looking for somebody who's a person you've met before; I needed someone who can pull off the grief of an average human being. "I've seen Jeremy do that in more than a few of his movies. He was at the top of my list, just like Jamie."



Ella Eyre inspired by transport

Ella Eyre has started taking public transport again to gain musical inspiration. The 24-year-old singer likes using the underground because it forces her to "take in" what's going on around her because she can't get distracted by her phone and it gives her ideas for new songs. She told the Metro newspaper: "When I first started writing, my inspiration came from sitting on the bus or the Tube. I started doing that a lot less. Recently, I've started getting the bus and the Tube again and realized how influential that can be on my writing. "I'm forced to take in my surroundings, not staring at my phone in my car. When you are underground you don't have signal." However, fans of the 'Together' singer could be in for a long wait for a new album from the star, but she insists that doesn't mean she will be "disappearing" or that there won't be any new songs before then. She admitted: "An album is a long way off. We are not in an album market. I don't want to feel pressurized into releasing an album just because it was three years since my last one. "I want to make sure by the next album I have an improvement on the last. My last album took three albums to write. If it takes six years, it will take six years. "In the meantime, there will be lots of music. It's not like I am disappearing." When it comes to her live shows, Ella has no plans in place. She said: "Playing a song live is trying to get people engaged in the first 30 seconds. I use it as a gauge to see if it goes off like I thought it would. "I don't have any set choreography, I just run around like a lunatic. "Sometimes I don't even know what the lyrics are and no one knows anyway, so you just make them up!"

John-Kamen thanks Spielberg for Ant-Man and the Wasp casting

Hannah John-Kamen says Steven Spielberg played a major role in her being cast in 'Ant-Man and the Wasp'. The 28-year-old actress plays the part of Ghost in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, but Hannah admitted she only secured the role after Spielberg - who directed her in the sci-fi adventure 'Ready Player One' - wrote a letter to Peyton Reed. She explained: "It said, 'Dear Peyton, I'm excited you're doing the movie and I just want to put in the good word for Hannah. I worked with



her and she was terrific. Signed, Steven Spielberg." Hannah was predictably thrilled to have received an endorsement from one of Hollywood's most revered directors. She told the Los Angeles Times newspaper: "To have a letter from Steven Spielberg - come on, who says that out loud? It's really wonderful, and it's an honor." Meanwhile, Peyton - who has directed both 'Ant-Man' movies - recently revealed he wants his films to be the "most personal" of the Marvel projects. The 54-year-old director admitted he has "very different storytelling ambitions" when compared to some of the other Marvel movies. He shared: "I really just use myself as the moviegoer, as a litmus test in terms of what they have and haven't seen. [At] Marvel, no one wants to repeat themselves, no one wants to bore an audience." Peyton also revealed that even though the 'Ant-Man' movies are based on comic books, he worked with Spyridon Michalakis - the film's technical consultant and a quantum physicist - to ensure that the science behind the films was accurate. He explained: "We don't want to give the audience a headache - but 20, 30, 50 years from now, we don't want people to say, 'Oh man, that was way off, that has no bearing on reality.'" —Bang Showbiz

Feige says Avengers 4 is already being edited

A 'Avengers 4' is already being edited. The much-anticipated new Marvel movie - which is a sequel to 2018's 'Avengers: Infinity War' - is currently in the early process of being edited down by directors Anthony and Joe Russo, according to studio president Kevin Feige. He shared: "We're just starting the edit. The brothers have worked on their cut, and we've been together in the editing room for a couple weeks now, so it's very early days. "But it's much earlier than usual, right? Usually, we're still filming. "'Captain Marvel' comes out in March, while this one comes out in May and we're already starting. It's fun to get a jump, it's good having already shot the majority of the movie. So we're just getting into our traditional editorial process now." The Marvel movies - which includes the recently released 'Ant-Man and the Wasp' - all work to very tight production and release schedules. But Feige has insisted that in spite of the inevitable headaches, the studio's post-production scheduling process works very well. Speaking to Birth.Movies.Death, he explained: "We try - what's the analogy, that a goldfish will grow to the size of the bowl? 'Ant-Man and the Wasp' had very little post and yet we made a lot of strides in post, and we did a lot of very good maneuvering on it with the limited time we had. "'Avengers 4' has much more time:

'Thor: Ragnarok' had much more time and we did a lot. You always fill the time you have. Either you have a lot of time and it really motivates you to think things through, or you have no time, and it really motivates you to think things through!"



Lifestyle | Gossip



MICKEY ROURKE TO PLAY A WHITE SUPREMACIST IN NIGHT WALK

Mickey Rourke is set to play a Nazi-loving white supremacist in new movie 'Night Walk'. The 65-year-old actor will appear as a member of the Aryan Brotherhood - which is a neo-Nazi movement - alongside Sean Stone, the son of award-winning director Oliver Stone, in the new film, which is set for release in 2019. Rourke was filming scenes for the movie at DC Stages & Sets in Los Angeles over the weekend, according to DailyMail.com, who report the actor was seen sporting a swastika tattoo on his neck during the shoot. In the movie, Rourke's on-screen character

attempts to recruit Stone's character into the neo-Nazi gang after he's wrongfully imprisoned for the murder of his Arab wife. The independent film - which also stars veteran actors Eric Roberts and Richard Tyson - is being written and directed by Aziz Tazi, with scenes being shot in various locations around the world, including Morocco and Los Angeles. Speaking about the project, Stone told DailyMail.com: "It's a story of star-crossed lovers, two people from different cultures, a white guy from the States and a woman from the Middle East and the love story turns into a nightmare when my character is wrongfully

convicted of killing her while travelling to her homeland. "It's got elements of wrongful conviction and my experience in prison as I basically go from hatred to self-discovery, finding faith and spiritual awakening. "Mickey plays the tough guy, an Aryan brother who I encounter on my first day in prison. He intimidates my character and I have to decide whether to join his gang to protect me or join a Muslim gang."

Billy Dee Williams to return as Lando Calrissian in Star Wars: Episode IX

Billy Dee Williams is set to reprise the role of Lando Calrissian in 'Star Wars: Episode IX'. The 81-year-old actor first played the part of the former smuggler in 'The Empire Strikes Back' in 1980 and is now set to return as Lando in the JJ. Abrams-directed sci-fi movie, which is scheduled for release in 2019. Williams recently bowed out of an upcoming sci-fi convention, citing a conflict with a film schedule as his reason, and The Hollywood Reporter has claimed that his belated withdrawal is linked to his return to the 'Star Wars' movies. The actor has not appeared in the role of Lando since 1983's 'Return of the Jedi', but Donald Glover recently played a younger version of the character in the much-maligned 'Solo: A Star Wars Story'. In recent years, Williams has also voiced the part in a number of cartoon series and video games. News of Williams' return comes shortly after director James Mangold defended Rian Johnson amid the backlash against 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi'. The 54-year-old director came out in support of Johnson, after his 2017 'Star Wars' movie divided fans of the money-spinning sci-fi franchise. He wrote on Twitter: "At the point when work writing & directing big franchises has become the emotionally loaded equivalent of writing a new chapter of The Bible (w/ the probable danger of being stoned & called a blasphemer), then a lot of bolder minds r gonna leave these films 2 hacks & corp boards. (sic)" He also called on 'Star Wars' fans to channel their inner-Yoda when they're reacting to a new movie in the series. He wrote: "The fervor of some attacks has an evangelical ferocity. Now, I get it cause for many folk, including me, the SW saga holds tremendous spiritual power, similar to a religious text. But we must remember to try to handle our disappointments the way Yoda might, as opposed to Darth. (sic)".



Samuel L Jackson looks '25 years younger' in Captain Marvel

Samuel L Jackson will look 25 years younger for the duration of 'Captain Marvel'. The 69-year-old actor is one of Hollywood's most recognizable stars, but Marvel boss Kevin Feige has revealed that the veteran performer and his co-star Clark Gregg will both look distinctly different from their real-life selves in the upcoming superhero movie. Speaking to Slashfilm about 'Captain Marvel', Kevin shared: "Sam Jackson is shooting a movie for us right now where he's entirely 25 years younger the whole movie. "And Coulson. So that'll be the first one where it's a character for the whole movie, as opposed to a glimpse at a certain period of time. It's the whole movie." The long-awaited film - which stars Brie Larson as the central character - is set in the 1990s and features alien creatures known as Skrulls, which are able to impersonate anyone. Jackson is set to reprise the role of Nick Fury, and Clark is playing

the part of Phil Coulson, an agent of SHIELD, in the new Marvel film. Meanwhile, Brie recently admitted that playing Captain Marvel has led her to realize she's "much stronger than" she'd previously thought. She said: "A lot of my life recently has felt like it's happening to somebody else. I think part of it is a defense mechanism. It feels better to kind of continue to have my own." Brie also revealed she'd been working out tirelessly to get herself in shape for the coveted role. Of her exercise regime, she explained: "My highest right now is 215lbs in deadlifts [and] 400lb hip thrusts. "Being able to lift weight like that really changed my perspective and understanding of myself."—Bang Showbiz



Laurence Fishburne rules out Superman return



Laurance Fishburne doesn't think he'll be in another Superman movie. The 56-year-old actor portrayed Perry White in both 'Man of Steel' and 'Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice', and though he is "grateful" to have been involved in the franchise, he doesn't imagine he'll be invited back for another movie. However, Laurence isn't too upset as he's "excited" to be playing Bill Foster in 'Ant-Man and the Wasp' instead. He told Den of Geek: "I don't think I'm still on call. I was unfortunately unable to go do some work on what turned out to be the Justice League movie. "I don't know that I need to go back or if they'll have me back or not, but I was grateful to have been a part of it. I loved working with Zack [Snyder]. I think he makes an incredible superhero movie. I'm just excited to be a part of this [the MCU] now." But the actor suggested he doesn't think there's a 'Man of Steel 2' in the works anyway. He said: "I don't. I don't. I haven't heard anything about it. They just fell behind the eight-ball. I really wish they had started 20 years ago. But that's all right, they're where they are." In 'Ant-Man and the Wasp', Foster is a former colleague of Hank Pym's who collaborated on Project Goliath, which used the Pym Particles to enlarge people instead of shrinking them. The movie offered a tease towards Foster's comic book alter ego as superhero and former Avenger Goliath, and Laurence hopes he gets to "suit up" for a movie in the future, but won't be pressuring MCU bosses for a standalone Goliath movie. Asked if he's delved into his character's history, he said: "I have not yet gone back, 'cause I don't want to try and force anything. I want this all to happen organically. If it happens, if I get to suit up, great. If I don't get to suit up, at least I'm in the MCU."

PEYTON REED WANTS ANT-MAN TO BE 'MOST PERSONAL' MARVEL MOVIES

Peyton Reed hopes the 'Ant-Man' movies are the "most personal" of the Marvel films. The 54-year-old director has helmed both films in the franchise, and Peyton has admitted he has "very different storytelling ambitions" when compared to some of the other Marvel movies. He shared: "I really just use myself as the moviegoer, as a litmus test in terms of what they have and haven't seen. [At] Marvel, no one wants to repeat themselves, no one wants to bore an audience." Peyton also revealed that even though the 'Ant-Man' movies are based on comic books, he worked with Spyridon Michalakis - the film's technical consultant and a quantum physicist - to ensure that the science behind the films was accurate. Speaking to TechCrunch, he explained: "We don't want to give the audience a headache - but 20, 30, 50 years from now, we don't want people to say, 'Oh man, that was way off, that has no bearing on reality.'" A number of scenes featured in 'Ant-Man and the Wasp' were shot on the streets of San Francisco. And Peyton admitted that the real-life setting created "its own challenges", especial-



ly as the central character, Scott Lang - who is also known as Ant-Man - has to keep changing size throughout the movie. He said: "Shooting in daylight, exterior San Francisco, you had to believe that Giant Man was really there. "That was probably the biggest overall challenge - we'd done a shrinking movie already, so we played with variable size while trying to keep it photo realistic."



Francina Raisa to star in Life-Size 2

Francina Raisa will star in 'Life-Size 2'. The 29-year-old actress is set to play Grace Manning in the hit movie, following on from the original film, which starred Lindsay Lohan. Tyra Banks announced the news on Instagram: "Now filming: LIFE SIZE 2. It's time y'all! You've waited long enough. I'm so excited to announce who will co-star with Eve 2.0...the magnificently fierce @francinara. See you on @freeform this holiday season! #LifeSize2 #ShineBrightShineFar (sic)" Whilst Lindsay won't feature as the main character, Tyra would love to see the star make a cameo in the movie. She said previously: "I am having conversations with Ms Lohan. Yes, and I want her to come back and I think that she does too. Actually, I know she does. So I really hope that she can be

in it. Crazy, people want this so bad. I had no idea! But Eve is gonna grow up, honey." And Tyra is also excited about showing a new, grown up, Eve. She added: "Five years, four scripts, and finally we decided, Eve needs to grow up. She's been around for a while. She's been alive for a while. She needs to grow up and experience more adult things. So, you're going to see a very different Eve. The idea was: 'Let's do a movie for young adults', so this is going to be an edgy Eve that you see, an edgy 'Life-Size 2'. The script is being written right now so even I don't know 100 percent, but it's definitely going to be like: 'Oh my God Eve does WHAT? Cover your eyes!'"

Mangold defends Johnson over Star Wars: The Last Jedi

James Mangold has defended Rian Johnson amid the backlash against 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi'. The 54-year-old director - who helmed the widely acclaimed 'Logan' - has come out in support of Rian, after his 2017 'Star Wars' movie divided fans of the money-spinning sci-fi franchise. He wrote on Twitter: "At the point when work writing & directing big franchises has become the emotionally loaded equivalent of writing a new chapter of The Bible (w/ the probable danger of being stoned & called a blasphemer), then a lot of bolder minds r gonna leave these films 2 hacks & corp boards. (sic)" Some users of the micro-blogging website subsequently suggested that some "hacks" had already assumed control and that 'The Last Jedi' was the result. James also spoke out in support of Christopher McQuarrie, who recently directed 'Mission: Impossible - Fallout'. He said: "If you feel that is the case, if u feel the film makers are just corporate tools and powerless, then why bitch at us? In the case of @rianjohnson and @chrismcquarrie, i assure you these cats are not "owned". They actually fight your battles behind the scenes. (sic)" James also called on 'Star Wars' fans to channel their inner-Yoda when they're reacting to a new movie in the



Lifestyle | Music & Movies

Passing the baton: Chinese conductors seek global fame

Jing Huan twirls her conductor's baton nervously in the wings while the brass and string sections of China's Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra tune their instruments. Aged 36, Jing is part of a new breed of foreign-trained conductors, as China hopes to gain recognition in the field after winning global fame for its soloists, including piano and string virtuosos. After long relying on Western conductors, a growing number of symphony orchestras around the country are now entrusting the baton to a fresh generation of Chinese music directors. Jing studied at the University of Cincinnati and served as the conducting assistant of the symphony orchestra there before joining the Guangzhou orchestra in southern China.

Last year her orchestra performed on a prestigious Beijing stage as part of a "musical marathon" that saw nine ensembles play one after another to mark the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Music Festival. "In China, in the Central Conservatory of Music, we focus on technique," she told AFP. "So technically, we are very strong... but as a young conductor you don't have many chances to conduct a real orchestra immediately in China, while in America, it's easy to get a lot of experience early on," she said.

According to prominent music critic Xu Yao, there are now some 80 symphony orchestras in China-backed by local governments who see Western music as a matter of prestige-compared to about 30 just eight years ago. "But the shortage of conductors remains: most orchestras are led by Chinese, but one conductor can sometimes be in charge of three orchestras!" said Xu, pointing to the lack

of "small musical groups" that would allow young conductors to gain experience, as is the case in the West.

'Chinese-style Beethoven'

China has come a long way however, said Long Yu, 54, artistic director of the Shanghai and Guangzhou symphony orchestras, and founder of the Beijing Music Festival. "I grew up in Shanghai in the midst of the Cultural Revolution," a period of political turmoil from 1966-1976 during which Western music was banned, the maestro told AFP. Long secretly learned the piano from his grandfather, a renowned composer, and in the 1980s became one of the first Chinese musicians to study abroad as the Communist government started to open up to the rest of the world.

He trained in Berlin before returning to China in the early 1990s, where conducting remained difficult. "It is a very special job. You have to deliver a message on the interpretation of the music to the musicians themselves, so it's quite difficult," he said. Long bristles when he hears about a "Chinese style" of playing classical music. "There is no such thing as a Chinese-style Beethoven!", he said. Conducting in China still carries its special challenges-and rewards, said violinist Jian Wang, who also trained in the United States.

"It's very interesting and challenging at the same time to play in China (because) part of the audience is hearing the pieces for the first time," she said. In addition, most musicians in Chinese orchestras were trained as soloists. Ten years ago, French conductor Emmanuel Calfé came up



This photo shows Chinese conductor Jing Huan conducting an orchestra during a symphonic concert at a theatre in Beijing. — AFP

against the problem when he took the podium with the Guiyang Symphony Orchestra, a private venture in the remote southwestern province of Guizhou. Musicians in their 20s "were technically ready, but not culturally ready, and they had not been trained to participate in a collective endeavor", he told AFP.

He also remembers the "cultural shock" he felt when he found that neon signs would light up to indicate to the audience when to applaud. And while rich businessmen who financed the orchestra were ready to rent a prestigious Steinway piano or a precious Amati violin, they were reluctant to buy quality scores, the French conductor said with a smile.

'It takes time'

Ten years on, classical music is no longer seen in China as an "import product", although the repertoire is often confined to the "very big" composers such as Beethoven, Bach and Brahms, said Calfé. For more modern composers, "some (Chinese) musicians have similar reactions that their Western counterparts had when discovering the scores in the late 19th or early 20th centuries," he said. Long agreed, but said the repertoire is growing gradually as the public becomes more familiar with it. "It is a culture that is still foreign today, and there is still a lot of work to be done."

For him, the real difficulty is that few Chinese conductors have won plaudits abroad. Notable exceptions include Chinese pioneer Tang Muhai, who conducted the Berlin Philharmonic during the 1983-1984 season, then continued a successful career in the US, Portugal, Australia and Finland. There are other examples like China's Zhang Xian, who in 2009 became the first female musical director of a symphony orchestra in Italy, in Milan. "There are incredible talents among conductors from China, Japan, Korea and Singapore, but I don't think Asian conductors are totally accepted yet in the West. It takes time," sighed Long. — AFP

Stan Lee drops \$1bn lawsuit against company he started



In this file photo Comic book writer Stan Lee attends the 'Extraordinary: Stan Lee', A Special Tribute Event hosted by Chris Hardwick at the Saban Theater, in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

Comic book legend Stan Lee has terminated a \$1 billion lawsuit alleging that the entertainment company he co-founded had tricked him into signing away his image rights. The complaint, filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court in May, accused POW! Entertainment CEO Shane Duffy and co-founder Gill Champion of failing to disclose fully to Lee details of the firm's 2017 sale to Camsing International. The entertainment icon contended that they took advantage of him at a time when he was despondent over the death of his wife Joan and suffering from macular degeneration, a condition affecting the eyes.

"The whole thing has been confusing to everyone, including myself and the fans, but I am now happy to be surrounded by those who want the best for me," Lee said in statement circulated among US media. "I am thrilled to put the lawsuit behind me, get back to business with my friends and colleagues at

POW! and launch the next wave of amazing characters and stories!" The announcement comes amid a struggle over Lee's fortune, estimated at more than \$50 million, and concerns about his mental and physical health since Joan's death last year.

The 95-year-old co-creator of many superhero characters, including Black Panther and Spider-Man, alleged that he was duped into signing a fraudulent agreement that gave POW! exclusive rights to his name, identity and likeness. According to the lawsuit, Lee was unable to read the document due to his eye condition, and doesn't remember anyone reading it to him, suggesting that his signature may have been forged, copied or induced.

"In addition, POW! took control of Lee's personal social media accounts, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, thereby impersonating Lee before a combined 15 million followers worldwide," the complaint read. There was no immediate response from POW!

Entertainment to the termination and Lee's representatives were not available, but Duffy said in a statement published by the London-based Guardian newspaper that he was "ecstatic" over the demise of the "ill-founded" suit. "We recently got together with Stan to discuss our path forward and we and Camsing are pleased with his overwhelmingly enthusiastic reaction," he added.

In mid-June a Los Angeles court issued a temporary restraining order against Keya Morgan, a man who had been taking care of Lee and has denied accusations of elder abuse. The order has since been dismissed following confusion in court over who was supposed to be representing the comic book icon. In April it emerged that Lee was being sued by massage therapist Maria Carballo for sexual assault and battery, which he has denied. — AFP

S Korea approves rare screening of N Korea films

South Korea approved a rare screening of North Korean movies at a local film festival yesterday, as a diplomatic thaw gains pace following two landmark summits between their leaders. The two countries technically remain in conflict after the 1950-53 Korean War ended without a peace treaty, and all cross-border civilian contact-including trips, letters, or emails-are banned unless endorsed by both governments. But officials have allowed three North Korean feature films and six short movies to be screened at the annual Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival on Seoul's outskirts from July 12, organizers said.

The North's films include the 2016 drama hit "The Story of Our Home", about three orphaned siblings trying to stay together, and "Comrade Kim Goes Flying", a 2012 romantic comedy about a miner pursuing her dream to become an acrobat. The latter-a joint production between Britain, Belgium and the North-was earlier screened at the Toronto International Film Festival and the South's Busan International Film Festival to positive reviews. Organizers have also sought to invite several North Korean moviemakers but are waiting for official approval. Public display of the North's culture or bringing North

Korean figures to the South requires authorization from several state bodies, including Seoul's unification ministry and spy agency.

Even possession of publications or other materials produced in the North can be a criminal offence under the South's anti-communist National Security Law. But cross-border relations have warmed after South Korean President Moon Jae-in-who has championed dialogue with the isolated North since taking office last year-held a landmark summit with the North's leader Kim Jong Un in April. At Seoul's invitation, Pyongyang sent athletes and senior officials to the South's Winter Games in February and South Korean basketball players visited Pyongyang last week. The impoverished North has a vibrant movie industry, though most of its productions are propaganda films extolling the ruling Kim family and its regime. Kim's late father and predecessor Kim Jong Il was an avid movie fan who even ordered a 1978 kidnapping of a famed South Korean actress and a film director. The pair escaped in 1986 after making several movies in the North. — AFP

'Ant-Man and Wasp' builds buzz at the box office

Marvel's "Ant-Man and the Wasp" swatted away the competition over the weekend to log \$75.8 million in domestic ticket sales, box office data showed on Monday. The superhero movie has outpaced the opening weekend for 2015's "Ant-Man" by about a third, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported. The 20th release in Disney's Marvel Cinematic Universe sees ex-con Scott Lang (Paul Rudd) languishing under house arrest in San Francisco after being caught as his shrinkable superhero alter-ego fighting some of the other Avengers in "Captain America: Civil War" (2016).

Struggling to balance home life and his responsibilities as Ant-Man, he's confronted by old flame Hope Van Dyne (Evangeline Lilly), alias the Wasp, with an urgent new mission. The dynamic insect duo far surpassed sales for the weekend's runner-up, Universal's "Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom," which is in its third week and has already passed the \$1 billion mark globally. The movie, which took \$28.6 million, has Chris Pratt and Bryce Dallas Howard struggling to contain dinosaurs rescued from a tropical Pacific island and sheltered temporarily at a California mansion.

A shade behind at \$28.4 million was "Incredibles 2"-a big enough weekend to push the superhero adventure past Pixar staple "Finding Dory" (2016) as the top-grossing animated film of all time. Written and directed by Brad Bird, who helmed the original, the sequel has earned \$503.8 million at home and another \$268.5 million abroad. Fourth spot went to another Universal-distributed film, the newly released "The First Purge," at



\$17.4 million. The dystopian horror-the fourth movie in the series-is a prequel set during the original "purge," a 12-hour period when all crime is legal but certain government officials may not be harmed. In fifth was Sony's "Sicario: Day of the Soldado" with \$7.6 million in its second week. The action thriller has Benicio Del Toro and Josh Brolin teaming up to fight drug cartels smuggling terrorists across the Mexican border. All the top five were sequels or prequels, Exhibitor Relations noted.

Rounding out the top 10 were: "Uncle Drew" (\$6.6 million), "Ocean's 8" (\$5.1 million), "Tag" (\$3 million), "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" (\$2.6 million), "Deadpool 2" (\$1.7 million) — AFP

Hollywood mogul Weinstein pleads not guilty to new sex assault charge

Movie mogul Harvey Weinstein pleaded not guilty yesterday to charges of sexually assaulting a woman in 2006, the third criminal sex assault case brought against him, and his attorney said he expects further charges to follow. More than 70 women, mostly young actresses and other women employed in the movie business, have accused the 66-year-old cofounder of the Miramax film studio of sexual misconduct, including rape, in a series of incidents dating back decades. The accusations gave rise to the #MeToo movement in which hundreds of women publicly accused powerful men in business, politics and entertainment of sexual harassment and abuse, lifting a shroud that had long shielded such behavior.

New York state Supreme Court Justice James Burke rejected a request by prosecutors to order house arrest for Weinstein, allowing him to remain free on the \$1 million bail that has been in effect following his May not guilty plea on charges that he assaulted two other women, one in 2004 and one in 2013. Weinstein has repeatedly denied having any non-consensual sexual encounters.

"Any suggestion that Mr Weinstein raped anyone based on the evidence that I have in my possession already is a ludicrous suggestion," defense attorney Benjamin Brafman told journalists after the hearing. Brafman added: "We anticipate based on what prosecutors have said that there may be more charges." Prosecutors contend Weinstein forcibly performed oral sex on the woman in 2006. The latest charges include two counts of predatory sexual assault, which carry a maximum life sentence, and one count of criminal sexual act.

Earlier charges included two counts of rape and one count of criminal sexual act. Weinstein was charged after a months-long investigation by the New York Police Department. Prosecutors have not named Weinstein's accusers. Details from the 2004 case align with an account by Lucia Evans, a former aspiring actress who told the New Yorker magazine in October 2017 that Weinstein forced her to perform oral sex.

After Weinstein was publicly implicated in sexual misconduct, his eponymous company Weinstein Co fired him and filed for bankruptcy, and he was expelled by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Through his company and Miramax, Weinstein won plaudits and awards for movies including "Shakespeare in Love," "Pulp Fiction," "Sex, Lies and Videotape," "The Crying Game" and "The King's Speech." London police and Los Angeles prosecutors have also been reviewing sexual assault accusations against Weinstein. — Reuters

French film mogul Luc Besson hit by more sex assault claims

A second woman has accused the French movie mogul Luc Besson of sexual assault, according to reports, two months after a young actress alleged he had raped her. The 49-year-old casting director told the French website Mediapart late Monday that she was assaulted by the director "every time I took the lift with him", and that he also demanded sexual favors from her on set. Two other women also said that Besson "behaved inappropriately" with them, with one actress claiming she had to escape from a casting in his Paris office on her hands and knees.

The director's lawyer Thierry Marembert has already denounced the rape allegation as "fantasist accusations". Contacted by AFP yesterday, his office said that he had nothing to add to his statement to Mediapart that Besson "categorically

denies any type of inappropriate or reprehensible behavior." Mr Besson is reserving his answers for the investigators so that his innocence can be shown. Mediapart said that the casting director had written to prosecutors and that the actress who had made the previous rape claim had leveled a further allegation against Besson. But prosecutors said Tuesday that they had yet to receive the new complaints. With a string of international hits-including "The Fifth Element", "The Big Blue" and "Nikita"-and his own studio on the edge of Paris, Besson is one of the most powerful players in the French film industry.

'Controlling relationship'

Blood tests conducted after the rape claim was first made in May showed that the woman was not

drugged. The 27-year-old actress-who has only ever appeared in Besson's films-told police she was in an on-off relationship with the 59-year-old. She said she felt pressured into sex to keep her roles, including in his 2017 sci-fi epic "Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets", which with its 158-million-euro (\$180-million) budget was the most expensive European film ever made.

Her mother, a Belgian doctor, and a number of her friends told Mediapart that the actress had been in a controlling relationship with the director, who made her diet and dye her hair blonde. Hours after the alleged rape in May in a luxury Paris hotel, her mother said that she talked to her daughter on FaceTime and she was "trembling, crying and sweating. It was awful." The actress told the website that the director "liked to make her suffer dur-

ing sex" sometimes until she bled and that he had twice assaulted her while she slept before the rape.

Besson's production company refused to comment on the new allegations but told AFP that "we fully support Luc Besson in this difficult period". The film industry has been rocked by a wave of rape and sexual abuse scandals since Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein was accused of a series of assault last year, sparking the #MeToo movement. The French industry-the world's second-biggest movie exporter-has been relatively untouched, with veteran French actress Catherine Deneuve even making headlines by defending men's right to "hit on" women. — AFP



French director Luc Besson

TV



00:10 The Asian Connection
01:45 I Am Wrath
03:35 Falsely Accused
05:15 Rumble
07:05 Hidalgo
09:40 Live Free Or Die Hard
12:00 Now You See Me 2
14:15 The Core
16:30 The Northlander
18:10 A Good Day To Die Hard
19:50 In The Line Of Fire
22:00 Chosen
23:50 REC 2



00:45 The Lion Queen
01:40 Monsters Inside Me
02:35 Austin Stevens: Snakemaster
03:25 Pit Bulls & Parolees
04:15 The Lion Queen
05:02 Wildest India
05:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
06:36 Orangutan Island
07:00 Escape To Chimp Eden
07:25 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
08:15 Untamed & Uncut
09:10 Pit Bulls & Parolees
10:05 The Lion Queen
11:00 Wildest India
11:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
12:50 Austin Stevens: Snakemaster
13:45 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
14:40 The Lion Queen
15:35 Monsters Inside Me
16:30 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
17:25 Untamed & Uncut
18:20 Austin Stevens: Snakemaster
19:15 Tanked
20:10 Treehouse Masters
21:05 Wildest India
22:00 Monsters Inside Me
22:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
23:50 Tanked



00:25 The Good Karma Hospital
01:15 Death In Paradise
02:15 Father Brown
03:05 The Level
04:00 EastEnders
04:30 EastEnders
05:00 Call The Midwife
06:00 Holby City
06:55 The Moonstone
07:45 The Moonstone
08:30 Holby City
09:25 Holby City
10:20 Death In Paradise
11:20 Father Brown
12:05 The Moonstone
12:55 Call The Midwife
13:50 EastEnders
14:20 Holby City
15:15 Holby City
16:15 The Moonstone
17:05 Call The Midwife
18:00 EastEnders
18:30 EastEnders
19:00 Death In Paradise
20:00 The Split
21:00 Mum
21:30 Mum
22:00 Liar
22:50 Father Brown
23:35 EastEnders



00:00 Kidnapped: Elizabeth Smart
01:30 It Takes A Killer
01:55 Deadly Wives
02:50 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
03:45 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
04:30 Homicide: Hours To Kill
05:15 Cold Case Files
06:00 The First 48
07:00 It Takes A Killer
07:20 The First 48
08:05 Homicide Hunter
08:50 I Killed My BFF
09:35 Deadly Wives
10:30 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
11:25 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
12:20 Homicide: Hours To Kill
13:15 Cold Case Files
14:10 Homicide Hunter
15:05 It Takes A Killer
15:35 It Takes A Killer
16:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
17:00 The First 48
18:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
19:00 The Murder Of Laci Peterson
20:00 Cold Case Files
21:00 Deadly Wives
22:00 Monster In My Family
23:00 Killers: Behind The Myth



00:05 Inside Amy Schumer
00:30 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
00:55 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
01:20 The Meltdown With Jonah And Kumail
01:45 Tosh.0
02:10 Inside Amy Schumer
02:35 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:25 Inside Amy Schumer
03:50 Tosh.0
04:15 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
05:05 I Used To Be Fat
05:55 Disaster Date
06:20 Ridiculousness
06:50 House Of Food
07:40 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
08:30 Disaster Date
08:55 Impractical Jokers
09:20 Ridiculousness
09:45 Impractical Jokers III Jokers Wild
10:10 Punk'd (Bet)
10:35 Punk'd (Bet)
11:00 Idiotsitter
11:25 Impractical Jokers
11:50 The It Crowd
12:15 The It Crowd
12:40 Impractical Jokers III Jokers Wild
13:05 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol

13:55 Friends
14:20 Friends
14:45 The It Crowd
15:10 The It Crowd
15:35 Idiotsitter
16:00 Punk'd (Bet)
16:30 Punk'd (Bet)
16:55 Friends
17:20 Friends
17:45 House Of Food
18:35 Impractical Jokers III Jokers Wild
19:00 The It Crowd
19:25 The It Crowd
19:50 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
20:12 Friends
20:35 Friends
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
22:00 Teachers
22:25 Comedy Central Stand Up Presents
22:50 Comedy Central Stand Up Presents
23:15 Broad City
23:40 Broad City



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 My Cat From Hell
03:00 Tanked
03:50 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
04:40 Guinness World Records Smashed UK
05:30 Fast N' Loud: Demolition Theatre
06:20 How It's Made
06:40 How It's Made
07:00 Kids Do The Craziest Things
07:25 Kids Do The Craziest Things
07:50 My Cat From Hell
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 Tanked
10:20 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
11:10 Kids Do The Craziest Things
11:35 Kids Do The Craziest Things
12:00 How It's Made
12:25 How It's Made
12:50 Made By Destruction
13:15 Made By Destruction
13:40 Strange Evidence
14:30 How It's Made
14:55 How It's Made
15:20 My Cat From Hell
16:10 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
17:00 My Cat From Hell
17:50 Tanked
18:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
19:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
19:30 Made By Destruction
19:55 Made By Destruction
20:20 Strange Evidence
21:10 How It's Made
21:35 How It's Made
22:00 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
22:50 Made By Destruction
23:15 Made By Destruction
23:40 Strange Evidence



00:45 The Real Story With Maria Elena Salinas
01:40 Bad Blood
02:35 Pandora's Box: Unleashing Evil
03:30 Evil Online
04:25 Swamp Murders
05:20 I Almost Got Away With It
06:10 Six Degrees Of Murder
07:00 California Investigator
07:25 Betrayed
08:15 Swamp Murders
09:10 Six Degrees Of Murder
10:05 Murder Calls
11:00 American Monster
11:55 Florida's Craziest Crimes
12:50 I Almost Got Away With It
13:45 Six Degrees Of Murder
14:40 Murder Calls
15:35 Evil Online
16:30 Florida's Craziest Crimes
17:25 Swamp Murders
18:20 I Almost Got Away With It
19:15 I Am Homicide
20:10 Reasonable Doubt
21:05 Disappeared
22:00 Diabolical: Deadly Love
22:55 Blood Relatives
23:50 Forbidden: Dying For Love



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
06:00 Jessie
06:25 Jessie
06:50 Liv And Maddie
07:15 Liv And Maddie
07:40 K.C. Undercover
08:05 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
08:30 Raven's Home
08:55 Elena Of Avalor
09:20 Punk'd
09:45 Tangled: The Series
10:10 Startruck
10:30 K.C. Undercover
10:55 K.C. Undercover
11:45 Bizaardvark
12:40 Bizaardvark
13:30 Stuck In The Middle
13:55 Stuck In The Middle
14:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
14:45 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
15:10 Raven's Home
15:35 Raven's Home
16:00 Tangled: The Series
16:25 Tangled: The Series
16:50 Liv And Maddie
17:15 Liv And Maddie
17:40 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
18:05 Hotel Transylvania: The Series

18:30 K.C. Undercover
18:55 K.C. Undercover
19:20 Descendants Wicked World
19:25 Elena Of Avalor
19:50 Elena Of Avalor
20:15 Bunk'd
20:40 Bunk'd
21:10 Stuck In The Middle
21:35 Stuck In The Middle
22:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
22:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
22:50 Lolirock
23:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:35 Binny And The Ghost



00:00 Trulli Tales
00:30 PJ Masks
01:00 PJ Masks
01:25 PJ Masks
01:50 The Hive
02:00 Zou
02:15 Zou
02:30 Henry Hugglemonster
02:55 Henry Hugglemonster
03:20 The Hive
03:30 The Hive
03:40 Zou
03:55 Zou
04:10 PJ Masks
04:35 The Hive
04:45 Henry Hugglemonster
05:10 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 The Hive
05:45 Zou
06:00 Zou
06:15 PJ Masks
06:30 PJ Masks
07:00 Trulli Tales
07:25 PJ Masks Shorts
07:30 Puppy Dog Pals
07:45 Doc McStuffins
08:00 Jake And The Neverland Pirates
08:15 PJ Masks
08:30 Vampirina
09:00 Doc McStuffins
09:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
09:55 Unbungableable
10:00 The Lion Guard
10:25 The Lion Guard
10:50 The Lion Guard
11:20 The Lion Guard
11:45 The Lion Guard
12:15 The Lion Guard
12:40 The Lion Guard
13:10 Vampirina
13:35 PJ Masks
14:00 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital
14:30 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital
15:00 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital
15:30 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital
16:00 PJ Masks Shorts
16:05 The Legion Of Pirate Villains
16:50 PJ Masks Shorts
17:00 Vampirina
17:30 PJ Masks
17:55 Unbungableable
18:00 The Lion Guard
18:30 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital
19:00 Puppy Dog Pals
19:30 Sofia The First
20:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
20:30 Vampirina
21:00 Trulli Tales
21:30 Sofia The First
22:00 Doc McStuffins
22:30 Puppy Dog Pals
22:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons
23:00 Miles From Tomorrow
23:30 Trulli Tales



00:15 Misfit Garage
01:05 Street Outlaws: Memphis
01:50 American Chopper
02:35 Twin Turbos
03:20 Misfit Garage
04:05 Alaska Monsters
04:50 Deadliest Catch
05:35 Storage Hunters UK
06:00 Backyard Oil
06:23 Dallas Car Sharks
06:45 Storage Hunters UK
07:10 How Do They Do It?
07:35 Alaska Monsters
08:20 Backyard Oil
08:45 Dallas Car Sharks
09:10 Deadliest Catch
09:55 Street Outlaws: Memphis
10:45 American Chopper
11:30 Twin Turbos
12:20 Backyard Oil
12:43 Dallas Car Sharks
13:05 Storage Hunters UK
13:30 How Do They Do It?
13:55 Misfit Garage
14:10 Misfit Garage
14:45 Street Outlaws: Memphis
15:30 American Chopper
16:15 American Chopper
17:05 Twin Turbos
17:50 Alaska Monsters
18:40 Deadliest Catch
19:25 Misfit Garage
20:15 Misfit Garage
21:00 Dangerman
21:40 Heavy Rescue
22:40 Land Rush
23:30 Alaska Monsters



06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:25 Lab Rats
06:50 Phineas And Ferb
07:05 DuckTales
07:32 Big City Greens
07:45 Furki Wheels
08:00 Phineas And Ferb
08:25 Phineas And Ferb
08:50 Lab Rats
09:15 Lab Rats
09:40 Milo Murphy's Law
10:05 Milo Murphy's Law
10:30 Gravity Falls
10:55 Gravity Falls
11:20 Lab Rats
11:45 Lab Rats
12:10 Phineas And Ferb
12:35 Phineas And Ferb
13:00 Big Hero 6 The Series
13:25 Big Hero 6 The Series
13:50 Big Hero 6 The Series
14:15 Big Hero 6 The Series
14:40 Big Hero 6 The Series
15:05 Supa Strikas
15:30 Supa Strikas
16:00 DuckTales
16:25 Disney Mickey Mouse
16:32 Big Hero 6 The Series
17:00 Big City Greens
17:25 Two More Eggs
17:32 Furki Wheels
18:00 Lab Rats
18:25 Lab Rats
18:50 Phineas And Ferb

19:00 Disney11
19:25 Best Sports Ever
19:30 Mech-X4
19:55 Marvel Super Heroes Black Panther: Trouble In
20:00 DuckTales
20:25 Two More Eggs
20:32 Big Hero 6 The Series
20:55 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
21:25 Star Wars Rebels
21:50 Phineas And Ferb
22:05 Furki Wheels
22:20 Big City Greens
22:35 Phineas And Ferb
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA



00:05 WAGs Atlanta
00:55 WAGs Atlanta
01:50 E! News
02:50 Botched
03:40 Botched
04:35 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
06:55 E! News Middle East
07:10 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
08:10 E! News: Daily Pop
09:10 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
10:05 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
11:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
11:40 E! News Middle East
12:15 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
13:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
14:05 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
15:00 E! News Middle East
15:15 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
17:10 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
18:05 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
19:00 E! News
20:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
21:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
22:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
23:00 E! News Middle East
23:15 Botched



00:00 Ancient Impossible
01:00 Million Dollar Genius
02:00 UFO Hunters
02:50 Ancient Aliens
03:40 In Search Of Aliens
04:30 Clash Of Warriors
05:20 Ancient Impossible
06:10 Smartest Guy In The Room
06:35 Smartest Guy In The Room
07:00 Million Dollar Genius
08:00 UFO Hunters
09:00 Ancient Aliens
10:00 In Search Of Aliens
11:00 Clash Of Warriors
12:00 Ancient Impossible
13:00 Million Dollar Genius
14:00 UFO Hunters
15:00 Ancient Aliens
16:00 In Search Of Aliens
17:00 Clash Of Warriors
18:00 Ancient Impossible
19:00 Million Dollar Genius
20:00 UFO Hunters
21:00 Ancient Aliens
22:00 United Stuff Of America
23:00 Clash Of Warriors



00:20 Alone
01:10 Ultimate Soldier Challenge
02:00 Forged In Fire
02:50 The Curse Of Oak Island
03:40 Ice Road Truckers
04:30 Forged In Fire
05:20 Alone
06:00 The Curse Of Oak Island
06:50 Ice Road Truckers
07:40 Ultimate Soldier Challenge
08:30 Forged In Fire
09:20 The Curse Of Oak Island
10:10 Ice Road Truckers
11:00 Ozy And Jack's World Detour
11:50 Ultimate Soldier Challenge
12:40 Forged In Fire
13:30 The Curse Of Oak Island
14:20 Ice Road Truckers
15:10 Alone
16:00 Ozy And Jack's World Detour
16:50 Ultimate Soldier Challenge
17:40 Forged In Fire
18:30 The Curse Of Oak Island
19:20 Ice Road Truckers
20:10 Alone
21:00 Detroit Steel
21:50 Road Hawks
22:40 The Curse Of Oak Island
23:30 Ice Road Truckers



00:15 Valentine Warner Eats Scandinavia
00:45 John Travels Asia
01:10 Raw Road
01:40 This Is Brazil
02:35 Fish Tank Kings
03:30 My Dubai
03:55 Fish Of The Day
04:25 A Is For Apple
04:50 What's For Sale With A View
05:20 David Rocco's Dolce Africa
05:45 Patisserie With Michel Roux Jr
06:15 This Is Brazil
06:45 Fish Tank Kings
09:00 My Dubai
09:25 Fish Of The Day
09:55 A Is For Apple
10:20 What's For Sale With A View
10:50 David Rocco's Dolce Africa
11:15 Patisserie With Michel Roux Jr
12:40 This Is Brazil
13:35 Fish Tank Kings
14:30 My Dubai
14:55 Fish Of The Day
15:25 A Is For Apple
15:50 What's For Sale With A View
16:20 David Rocco's Dolce Africa
16:45 David Rocco's Dolce Africa
17:15 Eat: The Story Of Food

18:10 Glamour Puds
18:35 The Game Chef
19:05 Fish Tank Kings
20:00 My Dubai
20:30 Fish Of The Day
21:00 A Is For Apple
21:30 What's For Sale With A View
22:00 David Rocco's Dolce Africa
22:25 David Rocco's Dolce Africa
22:55 Eat: The Story Of Food
23:50 Glamour Puds



00:10 Taiwan: Island Of Fish
01:00 Wicked Tuna
02:00 Air Crash Investigation
03:00 Dictators Rulebook
04:00 Taiwan: Island Of Fish
05:00 World's Toughest Fixes
06:00 Mine Kings
07:00 Dog Whisperer
08:00 Eat: The Story Of Food
09:00 World's Toughest Fixes
10:00 Cesar To The Rescue Compilations
11:00 Vinnie Jones: Russia's Toughest
11:55 The Putin Interviews
13:00 Startalk
14:00 Eat: The Story Of Food
15:00 Dog Whisperer
16:00 Cesar To The Rescue Compilations
17:00 Japan: Between Earth And Sky
18:00 Uncensored With Michael Ware
19:00 Inside Cocaine Wars
20:00 Cesar To The Rescue Compilations
20:50 Japan: Between Earth And Sky
21:40 Uncensored With Michael Ware
22:30 Inside Cocaine Wars
23:20 Eat: The Story Of Food



00:30 Shark Junction
01:30 Croc Labyrinth
02:30 Dr Oakley: Yukon Vet
03:30 Sharkatrax
04:30 World's Deadliest Killer Three
05:30 Snakes In The City
06:30 Monster Fish
07:30 Sharkatrax
08:30 World's Deadliest Killer Three
09:30 Snakes In The City
10:30 Jaguars vs Crocs
11:30 Australia's Deadly Monsters
12:30 Monster Fish
13:30 Shark Kill Zone
14:30 Croc Inside Out
15:30 Snakes In The City
16:30 Lion vs. Giraffe
17:30 Australia's Deadly Monsters
18:30 Monster Fish
19:30 Croc Inside Out
20:30 Snakes In The City
21:30 Lion vs. Giraffe
22:30 Australia's Deadly Monsters
23:30 Monster Fish



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 Harvey Beaks
06:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
06:36 SpongeBob SquarePants
07:00 Breadwinners
07:24 Welcome To The Wayne
07:48 Sanjay And Craig
08:12 Rabbids Invasion
08:36 The Loud House
09:00 Regal Academy
09:24 Winx Club
09:48 Game Shakers
10:12 School Of Rock
10:36 Henry Danger
11:00 The Thundermans
11:24 Massive Monster Mayhem
11:48 Hunter Street
12:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky And Dawn
12:36 Knight Squad
13:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
13:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
13:48 The Loud House
14:12 The Adventures Of Kid Danger
14:36 Toon Marty
14:48 Toon Marty
15:00 Welcome To The Wayne
15:24 Bunsen Is A Beast
15:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
16:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
16:36 The Loud House
17:00 The Adventures Of Kid Danger
17:24 Knight Squad
17:48 Hunter Street
18:12 Henry Danger
18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky And Dawn
19:00 School Of Rock
19:24 Game Shakers
19:48 The Thundermans
20:12 Talia In The Kitchen
20:36 SpongeBob SquarePants
21:00 Harvey Beaks
21:24 Breadwinners
21:48 Bunsen Is A Beast
22:12 Sanjay And Craig
22:36 Rabbids Invasion
23:00 The Loud House
23:24 Regal Academy
23:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles



00:02 Max & Ruby
00:25 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
00:35 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
00:45 The Day Henry Met
00:50 The Day Henry Met
00:56 Blaze And The Monster Machines
01:18 Blaze And The Monster Machines
01:40 Paw Patrol
01:52 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
03:46 Sunny Day
04:08 Nella The Princess Knight
04:31 Shimmer And Shine

00:02 Criminal
02:40 The Shamer's Daughter
04:25 Love On The Slopes
05:55 The Age Of Innocence
08:15 Made In America
10:15 Waiting For Superman
12:05 Finding Altamira
13:45 The Hollars
15:15 Monster Trucks
17:05 A Thousand Words
18:50 The Darkest Hour
20:25 Babylon A.D
22:00 Predator
23:45 Arachnophobia

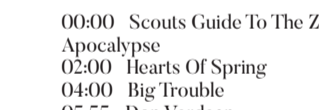
04:42 Shimmer And Shine
04:53 Wallykazam!
05:17 Zack & Quack
05:27 Top Wing
05:39 Blaze And The Monster Machines
06:00 Rusty Rivets
06:14 Paw Patrol
06:37 Dora The Explorer
07:00 Nella The Princess Knight
07:22 Kiva Can Do!
07:33 Kiva Can Do!
07:44 Paw Patrol
07:56 Paw Patrol
08:20 Shimmer And Shine
08:31 Shimmer And Shine
08:42 Nella The Princess Knight
09:05 Top Wing
09:17 Paw Patrol
09:39 Rusty Rivets
10:02 Wallykazam!
10:25 Bubble Guppies
10:49 Team Umizoomi
11:11 Kid-E-Cats
11:17 Shimmer And Shine
11:29 Sunny Day
11:51 Kiva Can Do!
12:02 Max & Ruby
12:25 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
12:36 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
12:46 The Day Henry Met
12:51 The Day Henry Met
12:56 Blaze And The Monster Machines
13:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
13:41 Paw Patrol
13:53 Kid-E-Cats
13:58 Kid-E-Cats
14:03 Shimmer And Shine
14:26 Nella The Princess Knight
14:38 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
16:42 Shimmer And Shine
16:53 Wallykazam!
17:17 Zack & Quack
17:27 Top Wing
17:39 Blaze And The Monster Machines
18:00 Rusty Rivets
18:14 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 Paw Patrol
19:56 Paw Patrol
20:20 Shimmer And Shine
20:30 Shimmer And Shine
20:41 Nella The Princess Knight
21:04 Top Wing
21:15 Paw Patrol
21:38 Rusty Rivets
22:01 Wallykazam!
22:24 Bubble Guppies
22:48 Team Umizoomi
23:10 Kid-E-Cats
23:16 Shimmer And Shine
23:27 Sunny Day
23:48 Kiva Can Do!



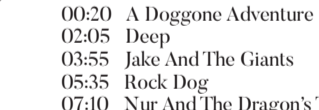
00:30 Khiladiyon Ka Khiladi
03:00 Khiladiyon Ka Khiladi
03:40 The Front Row
04:05 Koffee With Karan
05:00 Koffee With Karan
05:55 Tees Maar Khan
08:25 Hum Aapke Dil Mein Rehte Hai
11:45 Mujhe Kuch Kehna Hai
14:30 Kyra Kehna Highway
20:00 Crack
22:30 Akira



01:45 Fifteen And Pregnant
03:15 Stardust
05:30 The Rewrite
07:15 Monster's Ball
09:00 K-Pax
11:45 Maps To The Stars
13:00 The Giant Mechanical Man
14:30 Fifteen And Pregnant
16:00 Smilla's Sense Of Snow
18:00 The Hoax
20:00 Confidence
21:45 The Blair Witch Project
23:15 That's What I Am



00:10 Amateur Night
01:40 Shepherds And Butchers
03:30 The Emoji Movie
05:10 A Quiet Passion
07:25 Loving
09:40 Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie
11:45 Valerian
13:35 Betting On The Bride
15:15 Dean
16:55 Jackie
18:40 Passengers
20:40 My Cousin Rachel
22:30 All Eyez On Me



00:20 A Deggone Adventure
02:05 Deep
03:55 Jake And The Giants
05:35 Rock Dog
07:10 Nur And The Dragon's Temple
08:30 Azur & Asmar: The Prince's Quest
10:15 Last Wizard
11:35 Rh+ The Vampire Of Seville
13:00 Deep
14:40 Jake And The Giants
16:15 Capture The Flag
17:55 Last Wizard
19:15 Operation Arctic
20:55 Ethel & Ernest
22:35 Capture The Flag



00:05 Food Factory USA
00:30 Building The Biggest
01:20 Sci-Trek
02:10 NASA's Unexplained Files
03:00 You Have Been Warned
03:48 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
04:36 Building The Biggest
05:24 How Do They Do It?
05:48 Food Factory USA

06:12 Sci-Trek
07:00 How Do They Do It?
07:26 You Have Been Warned
08:14 Building The Biggest
09:02 NASA's Unexplained Files
09:50 How Do They Do It?
10:14 Food Factory USA
10:38 You Have Been Warned
11:26 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
12:14 Building The Biggest
13:02 Sci-Trek
13:50 NASA's Unexplained Files
14:38 How Do They Do It?
15:02 Food Factory USA
15:26 You Have Been Warned
16:14 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
17:02 NASA's Unexplained Files
17:50 Sci-Trek
18:40 How Do They Do It?
19:05 Food Factory USA
19:30 Silicon Valley: The Untold Story
20:20 Building The Biggest
21:10 NASA's Unexplained Files
22:00 Silicon Valley: The Untold Story
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00:35 Khiladiyon Ka Khiladi
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01:45 Fifteen And Pregnant
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14:30 Fifteen And Pregnant
16:00 Smilla's Sense Of Snow
18:00 The Hoax
20:00 Confidence
21:45 The Blair Witch Project
23:15 That's What I Am



00:00 House Of DVF
01:00 House Of DVF
02:00 Cedar Cove
03:00 Married At First Sight: The First Year
04:00 Project Accessory
05:00 Mistresses
06:00 House Of DVF
07:00 House Of DVF
08:00 Cedar Cove
09:00 Married At First Sight: The First Year
10:00 Project Accessory
11:00 Mistresses
12:00 House Of DVF
13:00 House Of DVF
14:00 Cedar Cove
15:00 Married At First Sight: The First Year
16:00 Project Accessory
17:00 Mistresses
18:00 Fashion StartUp
19:00 Fashion StartUp
20:

Trump names Kavanaugh to top court, Senate battle looms

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Monday nominated conservative judge Brett Kavanaugh to the US Supreme Court, a decision likely to cement a rightward tilt on the top judicial body with momentous implications for American society. Trump's decision stands to be among the most consequential of his presidency as he seeks to shape the high court to his conservative leanings for decades to come. With Kavanaugh a mere 53 years old, he could serve for a generation or more.

"Judge Kavanaugh has impeccable credentials, unsurpassed qualifications, and a proven commitment to equal justice under the law," Trump said as he introduced his nominee in a prime-time address from the White House, praising him as "one of the finest and sharpest legal minds of our time". After days spent teasing his highly-anticipated decision, Trump ended up picking a jurist with extended federal bench and administration experience to fill the vacancy left by retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy.

Kavanaugh worked for president George W Bush, who appointed him in 2003 to the US Court of Appeals in Washington - where he was finally confirmed by the Senate in 2006 after years of Democratic obstruction. He is also a robust supporter of the executive power of the presidency. Kennedy was long a swing vote on the nine-member court, and Trump's choice - his second opportunity in 18 months to fill a Supreme Court seat - stands to dramatically affect many aspects of American life, from abortion to voting rights to immigration.

While conservative on firearms and election financing, Kennedy showed a more progressive streak on issues such as abortion and affirmative action. An example of this came in 2015, when, thanks to him, same-sex marriage was legalized across the United States. But Kavanaugh, who grew up in Washington as the son of a schoolteacher, has the reputation of a staunch conservative, one who many Republicans no doubt hope could help overturn Roe v Wade, the landmark 1973 decision that guarantees women the right to an abortion.

He has ruled on hundreds of cases, and contributed to prosecutor Kenneth Starr's report into president Bill

Clinton's affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky, which outlined several grounds for Clinton's impeachment. Later he was part of Bush's legal team working on the 2000 Florida recount, which resulted in Bush winning the presidency. Kavanaugh recently voiced disagreement with a court decision allowing an undocumented teenage immigrant to get an abortion.

#StopKavanaugh

The nominee made no mention of his leanings in brief remarks at the White House, where he was joined by his wife and their two daughters. "My judicial philosophy is straightforward. A judge must be independent and must interpret the law, not make the law," he told the assembled dignitaries, as Trump beamed. "I believe that an independent judiciary is the crown jewel of our constitutional republic. If confirmed by the Senate... I will always strive to preserve the constitution of the United States and the American rule of law."

Kavanaugh heads to Capitol Hill this week to make his case for confirmation, and he will face deep skepticism and outright opposition from most if not all Democrats. The minority party - unable to block the nominee unless they lure some Republican senators to their side - have stressed the high stakes of the president's decision as they prepare for the confirmation battle ahead. In selecting Kavanaugh, Trump "has put reproductive rights and freedoms and health care protections for millions of Americans on the judicial chopping block," tweeted Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, adding the hashtag #StopKavanaugh.

Schumer and other Democratic senators have blasted Trump for having chosen Kavanaugh from a list pre-approved by rightwing outside groups, including the conservative Federalist Society. Liberal Democratic Senator Bernie Sanders said in a tweet that if Kavanaugh is confirmed "it will have a profoundly negative effect on workers' rights, women's rights and voting rights for decades to come. We must do everything we can to stop this nomination."

Republican Senator John McCain, key to a Republican 'yes' vote, endorsed the new nominee. He said Kavanaugh has "impeccable credentials & a strong

record of upholding the Constitution. He is widely respected as a fair, independent & mainstream judge". I look forward to the Senate moving forward with a fair & thorough confirmation process," McCain tweeted.

Trump's nominees edged out three other reported frontrunners: Raymond Kethledge, a strict interpreter of the US Constitution; Amy Coney Barrett, a devout Catholic and social conservative; and Thomas Hardiman, a staunch gun rights advocate. The Senate's top Republican, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, hailed a "superb choice" in Kavanaugh and urged senators to "put partisanship aside and

consider his legal qualifications with the fairness, respect, and seriousness that a Supreme Court nomination ought to command."

Democrats have sounded the alarm that by shifting the ideological balance of the top court Trump could place women's reproductive rights, health care and LGBT rights at risk, and demonstrators gathered at the Supreme Court Monday night in protest at the nomination. Trump indeed said during the 2016 campaign that he would put "pro-life justices on the court", thrilling his grassroots base although polls show most Americans support abortion rights. —AFP

backup plans," Weiss said. "Earth is becoming small," and ultimately "the future of humanity is in space". While the planned landing of the small unmanned vessel is one small step toward that end, it is nonetheless "a very significant one", Weiss said.

On the moon, the vessel will transmit data to the control center at IAI for two days before its systems shut down. It is hoped the mission's success will inspire scientific curiosity among Israeli youth. "We're trying to replicate the Apollo effect in the US," Kahn said, referring to the US program that landed the first humans on the moon in 1969. "If we're going to continue being the start-up country we've got to get engineers."

But even before its launch, the pod and its project have stirred great interest among children, according to Damari. "They say kids are excited by space, robots and dinosaurs. We have a robotic spacecraft - that's two out of three," he said. "When you meet school children and tell them about the project you can see the spark in their eye. Even if they don't deal with space but enter another scientific or engineering field, we've realized the vision."

Damari noted the shift his project created in the Israeli space industry, which has focused on security-related projects and long carried out satellite launches. "Since we began you can see more and more start-ups and projects that deal with space in the civilian aspect," he said. The relatively lean Israeli project, which was not initiated or funded by the state, could also mark a change in the way space-related projects are construed and performed, paving the way for more private initiatives. "It's going to show the way for the rest of the world" to send a spacecraft to the moon at a reasonable cost, said Ofer Doron, head of IAI's space division. —AFP

influence in the Middle East and Africa. The money will be earmarked for "projects that will produce good employment opportunities and positive social impact in Arab States that have reconstruction needs," said Xi, without providing further details. It is part of a special Chinese program for "economic reconstruction" and "industrial revitalization," Xi told participants at a China-Arab States forum in Beijing's Great Hall of the People.

Beijing is also prepared to provide another one billion yuan to countries in the region to "build capacity for stability maintenance," Xi said, using a term commonly associated with policing and surveillance. Since taking office, Xi has overseen a concerted effort to expand Chinese influence in the Middle East and Africa, including the construction of the country's first military base in Arab League state Djibouti.

China has already provided vast sums to Arab countries, with Djibouti alone owing some \$1.3 billion, according to estimates from the US-based China Africa Research Initiative. At the heart of Xi's vision is the Belt and Road initiative, a \$1-trillion infrastructure program billed as a modern revival of the ancient Silk Road that once carried fabrics, spices and a wealth of other goods between Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe.

The Arab states' position at the center of the ancient trade route makes them "natural partners" in China's new undertaking, he said, adding he expected the summit would end with an agreement on cooperation on the initiative. "Chinese and Arab peoples, though far apart in distance, are as close as family," he said, describing a romanticized history of trade along the Silk Road.

The project, which has already financed ports, roads and railways across the globe, has spurred both interest and anxiety in many countries, with some seeing it as an example of Chinese expansionism. "China welcomes opportunities to participate in the development of ports and the construction of railway networks in Arab states" as part of a "logistics network connecting Central Asia with East Africa and the Indian Ocean with the Mediterranean," said Xi. —Agencies

the club's hierarchy in 2012 by saying in a post-game interview: "I'm sad and the club know why". Reports emerged last year that Ronaldo was again upset with the club's President Florentino Perez over a pay dispute and was intent on leaving, although he stayed on to lead the club to a third successive Champions League triumph.

Ronaldo, however, soured the celebrations immediately after the 3-1 win over Liverpool in the final in Kiev by indicating he had decided to leave, saying in a post-match interview "It was beautiful to play for Real Madrid." The Portugal international scored two goals against Juventus in Real's 4-1 win in the 2017 Champions League final and earlier this season struck a jaw-dropping bicycle kick against the Italians in a 3-0 win in a quarter-final first-leg game in Turin which prompted Juve supporters to give him a standing ovation. The Portuguese converted a stoppage-time penalty in the second leg to knock the Italians out 4-3 on aggregate. — Reuters

fear had been that they would panic while trying to swim underwater, even with a diver escorting them.

Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha revealed yesterday the boys had been given some medication to help them remain calm. "It was a minor tranquilizer to prevent (the) boys from being anxious," Prayut told reporters. The ups and downs of the rescue bid entranced Thailand and also fixated a global audience, drawing support from celebrities as varied as US President Donald Trump, football star Lionel Messi and tech guru Elon Musk.

"On behalf of the United States, congratulations to the Thai Navy SEALs and all on the successful rescue of the 12 boys and their coach from the treacherous cave in Thailand," Trump tweeted. "Such a beautiful moment - all freed, great job!" Manchester United also invited the "Wild Boars", as well as those involved in the rescue, to travel to England and visit the club. "Our thoughts and prayers are with those affected. We would love to welcome the team from Wild Boars Football Club and their rescuers to Old Trafford this coming season," the club said in tweet.

Now they are out, concerns are set to focus on the physical and mental toll of the ordeal. Experts warned that drinking contaminated water or otherwise being exposed to bird or bat droppings in the cave could lead to dangerous infections. They also said counselling would be needed to deal with the psychological trauma of spending so long not knowing whether they were going to survive. But there were some promising initial signs. Medical chiefs reported yesterday morning that the eight boys rescued on Sunday and Monday were in relatively good mental and physical conditions.

"All eight are in good health, no fever... everyone is in a good mental state," Jedsada Chokdamrong, permanent secretary of the public health ministry, said before all 13 had been rescued. Nevertheless, the boys would remain in quarantine in hospital until doctors were sure they had not contracted any infections from inside the cave. —AFP

expressed by the player," the European champions said. "Today Real Madrid would like to express its gratitude to a player that has proved to be the best in the world and has carved out one of the most brilliant eras in the history of our club and world football. Beyond all the trophies and matches he won on the pitch during these nine years, Cristiano Ronaldo has also been a role model in commitment, hard work, responsibility, talent and a desire to always exceed himself."

Despite his remarkable consistency, Ronaldo often appeared unsettled at Real and had threatened to leave on several occasions, first airing his dissatisfaction with

All 12 boys and coach rescued...

The last four Thai navy divers, including a doctor, who had been with the boys emerged safe from the cave late yesterday, rescue chief Narongsak Osotanakom said.

The children, aged from 11 to 16, and their coach, ventured into the Tham Luang cave in mountainous northern Thailand on June 23 after football practice and got trapped when heavy rains caused flooding that forced them to take shelter on a muddy ledge. They spent nine days in darkness until two British divers found them, looking gaunt but offering smiles to the divers and appearing to be in remarkably good spirits. The initial euphoria at finding them dissipated as authorities struggled to devise a safe plan to get them out, with the shelf more than four kilometres inside the cave and the labyrinth of tunnels leading to them filled with water.

Authorities mulled ideas such as drilling holes into the mountain or waiting months until monsoon rains ended and they could walk out, with the rescue chief at one point dubbing the efforts to save them "Mission Impossible". With oxygen levels in their chamber falling to dangerous levels and monsoon rains threatening to flood the cave above the ledge where the boys were sheltering, rescuers decided on the least-worst option of having divers escort them out through the tunnels.

The escape route was a challenge even for experts - a former Thai Navy SEAL diver died when he ran out of oxygen in a flooded area of the cave on Friday while trying to prepare the escape route. Many of the boys could not even swim and none of them had diving experience, so the rescuers trained them how to use a mask and breathe underwater via an oxygen tank. One



WASHINGTON: US Judge Brett Kavanaugh (left) shakes hands with US President Donald Trump after being nominated to the Supreme Court in the East Room of the White House on Monday. — AFP



TURIN: Juventus' supporters show their Cristiano Ronaldo's Juventus official jerseys in front of the Juventus store yesterday. — AFP

Israel planning its first moon launch...

Continued from Page 1

Yonatan Winetraub, decided to join the fray. "We met in a pub and started to discuss what it meant," Damari recalled. The trio formed SpaceIL and partnered with state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries, envisioning a very small craft they believed could land on the moon by 2013. "As we went deeper into the project and the more people joined, we understood its complexity," Damari said.

Although the Google prize expired in March without a winner having reached the moon, Israel's team pledged to push forward. A key figure to hop on board the project was Morris Kahn, a South African-born Israeli billionaire, who heard SpaceIL present their project. "I thought this was a great idea," he said, "and I asked them - 'do you have any money?' They hadn't really thought about the financial side," Kahn said, relating how he gave them an initial grant of \$100,000, with his support growing with the project to largely cover the \$95 million project. To Kahn, for Israel to have a stake on the moon alongside the three global powers already there - the United States, Russia and China - would be "a tremendous achievement" that "will give us a sense of pride we really need".

Yossi Weiss, the CEO of IAI, said conquering space is not just a way to prove technological prowess, but also an increasingly urgent need for a human race rapidly dilapidating its resources. "We need to think about

Amir urges closer Arab-China...

Continued from Page 1

this regard like the Silk project and Kuwait Islands, voicing absolute confidence in the Chinese leadership's directions and credibility. On trade exchange, he elaborated that China is ranked the second importer of Kuwait's oil and its derivatives, adding that Kuwait's non-oil exports to Beijing reach \$480 million, while China's exports to Kuwait hit \$5.1 billion, pointing to Kuwaiti huge investments in China.

Bilateral cooperation, which is based on the fact that China is Kuwait's key trade partner, represents an essential dimension and important addition in line with mechanisms of cooperation with Beijing. His Highness the Amir pointed out. Constructive and continuing Chinese-Gulf cooperation is a strong catalyst for bilateral cooperation within the Arab framework, as negotiations of a free trade zone between GCC member states and China are a reflection of this joint cooperation, he said, estimating Arab-Sino trade exchange at \$191 billion in 2017.

Arab countries are looking forward to promising partnership in the Belt and Road Project which has strategic goals and unlimited opportunities for promoting cooperation and linkage, facilitating transportation, doubling investment openings and boosting global economy, the Amir noted. He underlined the utmost importance of cooperation between the two sides in the energy sector through carrying out mega investment ventures in oil and natural gas, and tapping the Chinese expertise in the peaceful use of nuclear and renewable energy. HHI the Amir concluded by emphasizing that today's critical circumstances and conditions require more insistence on realizing progress and the aspired results.

Meanwhile, China will provide Arab states with \$20 billion in loans for economic development, Xi told top Arab officials yesterday, as Beijing seeks to build its

Ronaldo joins Juventus from...

Continued from Page 1

expressed by the player," the European champions said. "Today Real Madrid would like to express its gratitude to a player that has proved to be the best in the world and has carved out one of the most brilliant eras in the history of our club and world football. Beyond all the trophies and matches he won on the pitch during these nine years, Cristiano Ronaldo has also been a role model in commitment, hard work, responsibility, talent and a desire to always exceed himself."

Despite his remarkable consistency, Ronaldo often appeared unsettled at Real and had threatened to leave on several occasions, first airing his dissatisfaction with

All 12 boys and coach rescued...

Continued from Page 1

The last four Thai navy divers, including a doctor, who had been with the boys emerged safe from the cave late yesterday, rescue chief Narongsak Osotanakom said.

The children, aged from 11 to 16, and their coach, ventured into the Tham Luang cave in mountainous northern Thailand on June 23 after football practice and got trapped when heavy rains caused flooding that forced them to take shelter on a muddy ledge. They spent nine days in darkness until two British divers found them, looking gaunt but offering smiles to the divers and appearing to be in remarkably good spirits. The initial euphoria at finding them dissipated as authorities struggled to devise a safe plan to get them out, with the shelf more than four kilometres inside the cave and the labyrinth of tunnels leading to them filled with water.

Authorities mulled ideas such as drilling holes into the mountain or waiting months until monsoon rains ended and they could walk out, with the rescue chief at one point dubbing the efforts to save them "Mission Impossible". With oxygen levels in their chamber falling to dangerous levels and monsoon rains threatening to flood the cave above the ledge where the boys were sheltering, rescuers decided on the least-worst option of having divers escort them out through the tunnels.

The escape route was a challenge even for experts - a former Thai Navy SEAL diver died when he ran out of oxygen in a flooded area of the cave on Friday while trying to prepare the escape route. Many of the boys could not even swim and none of them had diving experience, so the rescuers trained them how to use a mask and breathe underwater via an oxygen tank. One

Sports



Hoops-mad Philippines finally catches case of World Cup fever

‘Our physique, our skill, moves and agility are really very good for football’

MANILA: Shirts are selling briskly, crowds pack sports bars to watch matches and football is front-page news. Whisper it quietly, but basketball-crazy Philippines has finally been afflicted by World Cup fever. For decades, the nation of more than 100 million was on a very short list of global locations that had failed to fall for the beautiful game.

That is beginning to change as football's narrow, but passionate, Filipino following grows fuelled by success of the national team whose new coach is former England great Terry Butcher—a World Cup semi-finalist with the Three Lions in 1990.

“Definitely, we do have... World Cup fever,” television sportscaster Bob Guerrero told AFP outside a Manila bar where he was watching France knock Argentina out of the global tournament. “We’re hoping that it’s going to be a snowball effect and football will really start to grow here in the Philippines,” said Guerrero, who works for top TV network ABS-CBN who are airing World Cup matches live.

Grow it may, but at the moment there are only an estimated 1.5 million football-playing Filipinos compared to figures claiming that some 40 million regularly flock to the basketball courts that populate every barangay (borough) across the archipelago.

It’s a love affair that goes back to the 1900s when basketball was introduced to the archipelago by the Americans. Rather than reject the pastime of their colonial masters, Filipinos made it their own.

It became part of the curriculum in schools and since then Philippine squads have played respectably on an international level. Basketball’s governing body FIBA has them ranked 30th out of 159 nations, just behind China.

But, until recently Philippine love and prowess in hoops

was missing from their football team, a gap evident even in the nicknames of the respective squads. The Philippines basketball team are dubbed the “Gilas”, the local word for elegance, while the football team are called the “Azkals” which is a slang term for stray dogs.

“When I arrived, the football community was very small,” said Azkals captain Phil Younghusband, who made his debut in 2009. “You can probably count in the hundreds the people who were aware of football and playing football.”

The former youth player with English Premier League club Chelsea is one of a wave of photogenic foreign-based players of part-Filipino parentage recruited by the Azkals. In a few short years they have vaulted the team to qualification for the Asian Cup for the first time, and in May they hit their highest ever FIFA ranking of 111th in the world.

That success comes on the heels of the launching last year of the country’s first pro-league, the Philippines Football League, which added to the momentum. Experts say the Azkals’ steady rise, which has given fans hope of international success, has been key to the game’s growth spurt of popularity in recent years.

“We’re small (people). Let’s face it we can’t be world champions in basketball,” said Edwin Gastanes, general secretary of the Philippines Football Federation. “Our physique, our skill, moves and agility are really very good for football. That’s why we have a chance there,” he added.

The Azkals have never qualified for the World Cup, but Butcher last month made that his goal for the side after they make their Asian Cup debut in the UAE in January. “There is a hype now,” said Francis Castilla from sport marketing firm MMC Sportz. “Everybody wants to jump in on the (Azkals’) achievement.—AFP



MANILA: This photo taken on June 30, 2018 shows bar staff displaying their faces painted with the flags of France (R) and Argentina (L) as fans watch the 2018 Russia World Cup match between France and Argentina at a bar in Manila. Shirts are selling briskly, crowds pack sports bars to watch matches and football is front-page news. — AFP

How England’s young lions match up with the heroes of 1990

MOSCOW: A thoroughly decent manager with his hand on the tiller, an iconic goal machine up front. Mercurial midfielders and a talismanic giant of a central defender... analyse England’s World Cup 2018 team, and remarkable similarities emerge between the XI expected to start the semi-final against Croatia on Wednesday, and the team that last reached a semi-final in 1990.

As Gareth Southgate’s men shoulder the hopes of a nation, we compare them with Bobby Robson’s team of 1990.

JORDAN PICKFORD v PETER SHILTON

Peter Shilton: Shilts had been widely considered one of the world’s best goalkeepers for almost 20 years. Having not made his World Cup debut until aged 32, he went on to play in 17 World Cup finals matches, and shares the record 10 clean sheets held with France’s Fabien Barthez. By 1990, though, he was 40-years-old and had lost some of the agility and speed which carried him to 125 caps. His immobility was most marked in the penalty shootout defeat to Germany. Jordan Pickford: A revelation of the tournament, the 24-year-old only made his competitive England debut in the first match of this World Cup, but has looked rock solid. He commands his box well, and a series of superb saves in the quarter-final against Sweden earned him the man of the match accolade and universal praise from players and pundits alike. In contrast to the seasoned Shilton in 1990, Pickford has become the youngest England goalkeeper to keep a clean sheet in a World Cup match at 24 years and 122 days.

KYLE WALKER v DES WALKER

Des Walker: “You’ll never beat Des Walker” was the chant of the summer 28 years ago, and the central defender’s lightning speed regularly helped bear out that prophecy as he often eased himself into position and the ball away from his opponent without ever having to resort to anything as ungainly as a tackle. Kyle Walker: Same name, same speed. Walker’s pace over 20-30 metres matches anyone at the World Cup and has helped ensure England have never really been exposed by a counter-attack. Naturally a full back, his switch to central defence has added mobility to the middle but at the cost of losing Walker’s threat on the overlap.

HARRY MAGUIRE v TERRY BUTCHER

Terry Butcher: A warrior of a man, Butcher will be forever remembered leading England’s defence in a World Cup qualifier against Sweden in 1989, his white England shirt turned red from the blood pouring down his face from a deep forehead wound. Having cut his head he had some impromptu stitches and bandaged it to keep playing but his relentless heading of the ball caused the wound to reopen resulting in the iconic image. Harry Maguire: Maguire’s previous experience of international competition - Euro 2016 - was as an England fan. The 25-year-old

only made his England debut in the World Cup qualifier against Lithuania in October. Maguire scored England’s opening goal in their quarter-final win over Sweden with a thumping header, and has won more aerial duels in this World Cup than any other defender.

KIERAN TRIPPIER v PAUL PARKER

Paul Parker: That summer of 1990 was the highlight of full back Parker’s career. Having travelled to Italia ‘90 as a back-up to Gary Stevens, he replaced him just one match in and kept his spot for the duration of the tournament. A back-peddling Shilton was breached for the first time in the semi-final when Andreas Brehme’s shot clipped Parker’s heel, but the defender made amends in the dying minutes of the match, setting up Gary Lineker for the equaliser. Kieran Trippier: Another unburnished gem unearthed by Southgate, Trippier has been superb in Russia and has set up 13 chances so far, the fourth highest number in the tournament. Also stepped up nervelessly in the shootout win over Colombia.

DELE ALLI v PAUL GASCOIGNE

Paul Gascoigne: There can never be another Gazza. Sublimely gifted, irrepressibly gregarious, tragically flawed, Gazza’s tears in the semi-final marked one of the defining moments of that tournament, and touched hearts throughout the country. Creatively, he was at the centre of the England team throughout the World Cup and could do things other players could only dream of. ‘Gazzamania’ gripped Britain in the wake of the World Cup and saw him reach No.2 in the UK pop music charts. Dele Alli: Supremely talented in all areas of the game, there remains a nagging feeling that Alli, and his coaches, still don’t quite know what to do to extract the best from him. Operates best in the netherworld between midfield and attack, drifting, arriving, slipping and, against Sweden, scoring. Has not been 100 percent fit in Russia but remains a key piece in the England jigsaw.

JORDAN HENDERSON v DAVID PLATT

David Platt: His place in English soccer history is secure thanks to his wonderful volleyed goal a minute from the end of extra time to beat Belgium in the second round in 1990. Developed into a terrific all-round midfielder with bottomless energy and scored an impressive 27 goals in his 62 internationals. No penalty hang-ups for Platt either, as he confidently dispatched his spot kicks in the shootouts against Germany in 1990 and then Spain and Germany again in Euro 96. Jordan Henderson: A little like Platt, he is probably not noticed that much until he is not there. Sometimes criticised for his lack of adventure, conversely Henderson is the midfield enabler that every team needs. An accurate and astute passer who has grown into a real midfield controller, he now has the proud boast of not having lost in any of his last 30 England matches.

JESSE LINGARD v PETER BEARDSLEY

Peter Beardsley: Beardsley was the perfect foil for Gary Lineker, and the duo combined brilliantly when England were at their best. He hardly looked an elite athlete, hunched of back and face, but he played with skill, instinct and total commitment and was a supremely difficult man to pin down. A relatively poor return on nine goals from 59 games does not showcase his ability. He was also one of the successful ones in the 1990 semi-final shootout. Jesse Lingard: Lingard

joined Manchester United at the age of seven and has been the “next big thing” pretty much ever since. His talent is undoubted but only in the last year or so has he really established himself for club and country. He has covered more ground than any team mate during the current tournament but has yet to really shine as a creative force.

ASHLEY YOUNG v STUART PEARCE

Stuart Pearce: Revelled in his nickname of “Psycho”, Pearce had great slabs of meat for thighs and thundered into tackles with 100 percent commitment. Did not kid himself that he was anything other than a destroyer, though his wicked left foot could deliver a mean free kick. Suffered the agony of missing a penalty in the semi-final but then, in one of the most memorable moments in English soccer history, gained glorious redemption by smashing one home in the Euro 96 win over Spain - until last week England’s only shootout win. Ashley Young: One of the few survivors from England’s dire 2016 European Championship campaign, Young must be pinching himself. After winning his 30th cap in 2013 he would have thought his international career was over when he went over four years without a look-in. But brought back in 2017 after a lift in form also made him a Manchester United regular, he is having the season of his life. Nominally a wing back under Southgate he has been more “back” than “wing” in Russia but has brought stability and experience to a very young squad.

RAHEEM STERLING v CHRIS WADDLE

Chris Waddle: Ungainly and unpredictable - which made him a difficult man to mark. Waddle was a classic winger in that he loved the simple challenge of getting past his man and delivering a cross. He was inconsistent but dangerous. Could have been a national hero if his shot that hit the post in extra-time had been an inch to the side. Instead he is destined to be remembered for blasting his decisive shootout penalty over the bar. Raheem Sterling: Ungainly and unpredictable... Sterling has come in for a lot of criticism at this tournament where he has not had the impact the country hoped for after a terrific season with Manchester City. He is a rarity in the modern game - a slightly-framed player who can dribble past and bamboozle the best defenders in the game. He often does not seem to quite know what his feet are doing - which makes him all the more difficult to nullify. At times he had the sturdy Swedish defence in tatters in the quarter-final but his subsequent finishing and decision-making let him down. He does, though, possess the X-factor that might just make the difference.

HARRY KANE v GARY LINEKER

Gary Lineker: “Gary Goal” was the Golden Boot winner at the 1986 World Cup, with six goals in five matches, and fired home four goals in the 1990 run to the semis. Lineker was essentially a lethal lurker, with most of his goals stabbed in from close range. He retired from international football with 48 goals from 80 matches, one fewer than Bobby Charlton’s record - since eclipsed by Wayne Rooney (53) - but Charlton’s 49 had come from 106 appearances. Harry Kane: Like Lineker before him, Kane is the golden boy of the England team, and a lethal finisher. Kane is on track to join Lineker as a Golden Boot winner - his six goals so far in this tournament are two more than the next-best Romelu Lukaku’s four for Belgium. — Reuters

Boys from the hood: French team ignites dreams in suburbs

BONDY: In a housing estate in the gritty northern Paris suburb of Bondy, Adama Wagui showed off the stack of trophies he has accumulated during his budding football career. “Best goalkeeper AS Bondy 2016, best goalkeeper Vichy U17 tournament,” the tall 16-year-old with the shaved zig-zag footballer haircut said, reading out the inscriptions on the cups that his parents keep on their bedside table. Wagui’s finest hour, however, may have been when he was called on to block shots from local wonderkid, star France striker Kylian Mbappe.

“It was difficult,” he says with a shy smile, “but sometimes I succeeded.” As excitement builds at the prospect of Les Bleus taking home the World Cup, 20 years after their win on home soil, their success is a source of pride in the deprived estates or “banlieues” where many of France’s players honed their game.

Of the 23 players in the French squad, around two-thirds are of Arab or African descent, drawing comparisons with the mythologised “Black-Blanc-Beur” (Black-White-Arab) team of 1998. Their legend looms large over the tower blocks that dominate the skyline of northeast Paris. “Nowadays young people are proud to say they come from Bondy,” said Issa, Adama’s Senegalese-born father of seven.

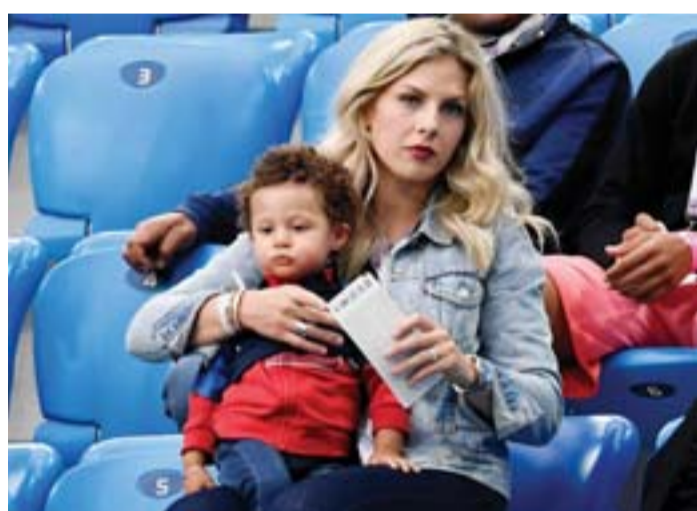
Standing on the pitch at AS Bondy’s home ground, coach Antonio Riccardi recalls the almost freakish talent of a young Mbappe, slaloming Maradona-style past five defenders to ram a ball into the back of the net. “The best players come out of these neighbourhoods because the kids here are always out kicking a ball,” Riccardi told AFP. “They live for football, whether at school or on the estate.” Like Paris Saint-Germain’s Mbappe, whose parents have Cameroonian and Algerian roots, many were born into immigrant families. But few make it out of the “banlieues”, trapped in a cycle of poverty, discrimination and underachievement that President Emmanuel Macron has compared to being “under house arrest” and former prime minister Manuel Valls criticised in 2015 as “apartheid”.

“The only way out to make it here is in sport or rap,” said Ismail Gencel, the owner of a restaurant in Bondy. While Mbappe, born five months after France’s 1998 victory, dreams of joining the pantheon of World Cup winners, Adama dreams about following in his footsteps, out of Bondy into the big league.

The task of managing his expectations falls to his coaches. “We tell them there is only one Messi, only one Ronaldo, only one Mbappe, and that the road to success cuts through school,” said Jeremy Mimouni, another coach at AS Bondy.—AFP



SNIPPETS



England dreaming but Croatia set to provide biggest World Cup test

Can Southgate win a World Cup semi-final with England

MOSCOW: England are dreaming of a first World Cup final since 1966 but first they must come through today's semi-final at the Luzhniki Stadium against Croatia in what looks like their toughest test yet in Russia. Excitement has reached fever-pitch levels back in England, with Gareth Southgate's young team making it to the last four of a major tournament for the first time since Euro '96, and for the first time at a World Cup since Italy in 1990.

Both of those runs ended in defeats on penalties, but there is a belief that something could be different this time. England have already won a shootout in Russia, against Colombia in the last 16. And a young, likeable side with an eminently sensible and humble manager in Southgate have captured the hearts of a nation. Can Southgate now become the first manager to win a World Cup semi-final with England on foreign soil as he bids ultimately to match the achievement of Alf Ramsey's side? "We were not certain what this team might be capable of," Southgate admitted to ITV, mindful of England's many recent failures. They had won just one knockout match at a major tournament in 16 years before coming to Russia, a 1-0 victory against Ecuador at the 2006 World Cup in Germany. "We believed in its potential, and I think the games that we've prepared for, we had belief we would win, but there is still pressure in all of those matches, so I'm really pleased with how the team have emerged and developed." Southgate has been just the voice of reason England have needed to prevent anyone from getting too carried away. For all of the hype around England, they have yet to come up against one of the really big guns at the World Cup.

They beat Tunisia in their tournament opener thanks to a late Harry Kane goal, brushed aside a poor Panama, edged out Colombia on penalties and easily beat Sweden in the quarter-finals. Their one defeat came against Belgium in their final group game, in a match between two essentially reserve sides. The challenge posed by Croatia is likely to be more demanding, especially as Zlatko Dalic's side features one of the best midfield pairings around, in Luka Modric and Ivan Rakitic. Real Madrid playmaker Modric, who was



KAZAN: Belgium's goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois stops a shot on goal during the Russia 2018 World Cup quarter-final football match between Brazil and Belgium at the Kazan Arena in Kazan on Friday. — AFP

at Tottenham Hotspur earlier in his career at the same time a young Kane was starting out, has been a particular inspiration.

The captain was the man of the match again in the penalty shootout win over Russia in Sochi at the weekend. That allowed Croatia to reach the semi-finals for the first time since the 1998 World Cup in France, which was their first as an independent nation. For a country with a population of little more than four million, making it all the way to the final would be a remarkable achievement. "There is still a lot to play. England is also one of the favourites to win the World Cup and you need to respect that. But we have nothing to lose, we will enjoy this game, and hopefully we can write history," said defender Dejan Lovren, of Premier

League side Liverpool.

Since 1998, Croatia have endured disappointments at major tournaments themselves, notably losing on penalties to Turkey in the Euro 2008 quarter-finals. But there is less pressure on them now. "The biggest pressure came against Denmark in the round of 16 (which also went to extra-time and a penalty shootout). We feel much easier at this point," said striker Mario Mandzukic.

The fact that Croatia have had to play so much football could perhaps give England an edge, all the more so given the injury problems faced by Dalic. Goalkeeper Danijel Subasic soldiered on against Russia despite hurting a hamstring, while right-back Sime Vrsaljko is expected to miss the game. — AFP

Disappointed fans join Moscow ticket scalpers as WCup final nears

MOSCOW: Across the street from FIFA's World Cup ticket office in Moscow, a man says he'll give you a "cheap price" for his ticket to today's England-Croatia semi-final - just \$1,500, double the official cost of a seat. He knows he is breaking the law, but the man, from Colombia, says he purchased the ticket expecting his team to get further than the last 16. Then Colombia lost on penalties to England on Tuesday last week, and now he, along with dozens of other ticket scalpers in the Russian capital, is trying to resell his seat at a profit.

"I don't need the ticket, that's why I'm selling," the man said, declining to give his name, although he still had his World Cup fan ID slung around his neck, meaning he had been vetted and cleared by the Russian authorities.

Four matches remain in the 2018 World Cup and ticket scalping seems to be picking up momentum as the July 15 final nears, especially as many top teams -

including Germany, Brazil and Argentina - have not done as well as expected.

Earlier this year Russian President Vladimir Putin signed legislation that banned the resale of World Cup tickets. Offenders can face a fine of up to 25 times the original price of the ticket. But outside Dobryninskaya metro station, no police officers were visible on the street on Monday afternoon. One police car drove past but did not stop, and an officer in the metro entrance hall said he was not aware that the ticket scalping taking place outside was illegal.

Another scalper, a man with an American accent, said the police had intervened but had not stopped the resale of tickets. "The police have been down a couple of times," he said. "They grabbed some people and took them away, but apart from that they don't really seem to care."

There have been a handful of reported cases of ticket scalpers being detained in some of the 11 Russian World Cup host cities, but police have not released statistics regarding the number of ticket resale offences recorded so far at the tournament.

Russia's Interior Ministry did not reply to a request for comment. Global soccer governing body FIFA condemns scalping and permits ticket transfers only if ticket holder has a "pre-existing relationship" with the person receiving the ticket.

"FIFA regards the illicit sale and distribution of tickets as a serious issue and in cooperation with local authorities, including consumer protection agencies in numerous countries, strives to identify

and curb unauthorised ticket sales," a FIFA spokesman said in a statement e-mailed to Reuters.

However, he did not answer questions about the fact the scalping has been taking place near its ticketing centre in Moscow. Another scalper, speaking Russian, told Reuters: "Some people pick up their tickets at the FIFA centre, then come straight across the road and sell them." He said he did not want give his name since scalping was a crime.

Anyone who hands in their unwanted ticket to FIFA is refunded its original price if the ticket is resold through its official online resale platform. FIFA said that more than 95,000 tickets had been resold via the platform and that fans could still submit their extra tickets for resale until the final.

"The stadiums would be empty without this (scalping)," said a 28-year-old scalper from Kyrgyzstan. "Everybody does it and the cops won't stop you." — Reuters

WORLD CUP 2018

Today's Match (Local timing)

Croatia | 21:00 | England

Sporting give Fernandes new 5-year contract to halt exodus

LISBON: Portugal midfielder Bruno Fernandes, one of nine players who quit Sporting Lisbon last month after an attack by angry supporters, rejoined the club yesterday, saying he believed it had a more stable future.

Fernandes, 23, signed until 2023 with a release clause set at 100 million euros (\$117 million). He said he had received better offers from other clubs but chose to return after Sporting guaranteed improved security for him, other players and their families.

He said an invasion in May of the club's training camp by hooded supporters, some armed with sticks, in which Dutch forward Bas Dost was injured and the dressing room was vandalised, "left its marks", but things were now looking up.

"It doesn't matter who is to blame, now it is over. Sporting is opening a new page and I believe it will be very good," he told a news conference. Fernandes, who was part of the Portugal squad at the World



MOSCOW: File photo shows Portugal's defender Ruben Dias (L) and Portugal's midfielder Bruno Fernandes (C) arrive at the Zhukovsky airport, about 40 km southeast of Moscow, on July 1, 2018. — AFP

Cup, would not confirm or deny media reports that he had doubled his money under his new contract.

"What I said was that I did not want to improve the contract... I have done no blackmail. If it were for the financial side, I would not be here," he said. Interim club president Jose Sousa Cintra lauded Fernandes over this attitude as "a case apart, the best as a player and a person".

Sporting members overwhelmingly voted last month to remove president Bruno de Carvalho, whom the nine players had blamed for stoking anger among fans with his public rebuke of the team over their

performance last season.

Carvalho will still run for club presidency in September. Fernandes did not rule out that other players may return to Sporting, but said he could only speak for himself. Most have already been signed by other clubs, including Portugal goalkeeper Rui Patrício, now with Wolverhampton Wanderers of the English Premier League.

Dost also quit the club, as did Argentina midfielder Rodrigo Battaglia and Portuguese players Daniel Podence, Gelson Martins, William Carvalho, Rafael Leao and Ruben Ribeiro. — Reuters

25 Hoops-mad Philippines finally catches case of World Cup fever



26 Pearce, Martinez homer in Red Sox 5-0 win over Rangers



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Umtiti header sends France into final

French look to lift World Cup trophy for the second time



SAINT PETERSBURG: Belgium's forward Eden Hazard (2R) falls on the field during the Russia 2018 World Cup semi-final football match between France and Belgium at the Saint Petersburg Stadium in Saint Petersburg yesterday. — AFP

ST PETERSBURG: Samuel Umtiti's 51st-minute header sent an impressive France into the World Cup final with a 1-0 win over Belgium in an absorbing first semi-final yesterday. Didier Deschamps' side will face England or Croatia in Moscow on Sunday as the French look to lift the trophy for the second time following their triumph on home soil in 1998. In an enthralling tactical match, it was once again a set-piece that proved decisive with Umtiti's near-post header from an Antoine Griezmann corner settling matters.

Belgium took early control of midfield with France content to sit deep and eliminate the threat of counter-attacks from Eden Hazard and Kevin de Bruyne.

But it was by no means a purely negative approach as the French offered their own danger on the break, perfectly illustrated when Paul Pogba's delivery sent Kylian Mbappe racing towards goal and Belgium were thankful their keeper Thibaut Courtois was alert to snuff out the danger.

The first real opening came in the 16th minute when De

Bruyne hooked the ball into the path of Hazard whose shot was just wide of Huge Lloris's far post.

Hazard was dangerous again moments later when he cut in from the left and unleashed a rasping drive which clipped off the back of Raphael Varane and just over the bar. From a Belgium corner, Toby Alderweireld tested Lloris with a smart shot on the turn but as the half progressed France began to create more.

Olivier Giroud flashed a header just wide and Mbappe set up Benjamin Pavard whose low shot was kept out by

the outstretched leg of Courtois. It was a fascinating first half and all that was missing was a goal but one came soon after the break.

From Griezmann's corner, Umtiti beat Marouane Fellaini at the near post and powered a header home to put France ahead. Fellaini flashed a header just wide and Axel Witsel forced a good save out of Lloris as Belgium pushed forward for an equaliser and France hung on in six minutes of stoppage time to book their place in the final. — Reuters

Serena battles into 11th Wimbledon semi, Kerber advances

LONDON: Serena Williams survived a major scare before sealing her 11th Wimbledon semi-final appearance, while Angelique Kerber remains the seven-time champion's main title rival after the German joined her in the last four yesterday.

Williams was in danger of a stunning quarter-final exit after world number 52 Camila Giorgi became the first player in this year's tournament to take a set off the former world number one.

But Serena bludgeoned her way out of trouble, winning 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 to stay on course for an eighth All England Club triumph. It was Serena's 100th career main draw victory on

grass. The 36-year-old will play German 13th seed Julia Goerges tomorrow for a place in Saturday's final.

Her path to the title has been wide open from early in the tournament as Garbine Muguruza, Maria Sharapova, Simona Halep, Petra Kvitova, Venus Williams, Caroline Wozniacki and Sloane Stephens have all been eliminated.

Williams, a 23-time major winner, is hoping to join a select group of women who have won Grand Slams after becoming mothers. Goerges advanced to the Wimbledon semi-finals for the first time with a 3-6, 7-5, 6-1 win against Dutch 20th seed Kiki Bertens.

With Kerber also in the last four, it is the first time two German women have made the semi-finals of a Grand Slam since Steffi Graf and Anke Huber at the 1993 French Open. The carnage at the top leaves 11th seed Kerber-beaten by Serena in the 2016 Wimbledon final-as the highest ranked player left.

Kerber takes on Latvia's Jelena Ostapenko in the other semi-final. The 30-year-old clinched her third appearance in the Wimbledon semi-finals with a 6-3, 7-5 win over Russian 14th seed Daria Kasatkina.

Meanwhile, Argentina's Juan Martin del

Potro earned himself a chance to set the record straight against Rafael Nadal after sealing a place in the Wimbledon quarter-finals yesterday. He completed a 7-6(1) 7-6(5) 5-7 7-6(5) win over Frenchman Gilles Simon after fading light interrupted their last-16 clash the previous evening with the fifth seed up two sets to one.

Del Potro was in danger of being dragged into a fifth set when he squandered four match points, one with a double-fault, at 5-4 having hit back from 1-3 down. He eventually finished off world number 53 Simon in the match's third tiebreak to move into his second Wimbledon quarter-final where twice champion Nadal is waiting.

Del Potro was thrashed by the Spaniard in the French Open semi-final last month but feels his game matches up better against the world number one on grass despite losing their only two meetings on the surface. "It will be a different match that we played in Paris a few weeks ago," Del Potro told reporters.

"I will try to hold my service games most of the time. If I want to beat him, I have to come to the net very often and play hard with my forehands, with my backhands." Del Potro trails Nadal 10-5 in head-to-head meetings-his five wins all coming on hardcourts. — Agencies



LONDON: Germany's Angelique Kerber returns against Russia's Daria Kasatkina during their women's singles quarter-final match on the eighth day of the 2018 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, yesterday. — AFP