

Friday Times

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EID GREETINGS

Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan wishes HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Cabinet members, heads of states around the world, Kuwaitis, expatriates and our valued readers Eid Mubarak. Kuwait Times will not be published from June 16 to 18. Our next issue will be published on Tuesday, June 19.



Russia kick off World Cup in style, thrash Saudi 5-0

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Local

2018 World Cup



Local Spotlight
By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Happy Eid everyone! It is the end of a beautiful and spiritual month. The Eid holiday will be a good opportunity for football fans as well. This year's Eid Al-Fitr holiday coincides with the kickoff of a major world tournament - the 21st World Cup, which will be held from June 14 to July 15, 2018 in Russia.

There is no doubt that the World Cup will be eagerly watched by millions of fans from all over the world. Football is a hobby and favorite street game that has turned into a global industry dominated by supply and demand laws, players' popularity, TV rights, sponsors and advertising. It has turned into a huge economic machine that supports tens of thousands of people's jobs all over the globe.

In the past decades, we have seen a dramatic increase in the amount of money flowing into the football industry, both in terms of broadcasting television rights and increasing audiences. But I wonder if this beautiful game has lost its spirit since the media dominated it? Since last week, anticipation for this event in the Arab world has been growing, especially among young people and youth in general.

Clearly, football is widely popular in the Arab world. I think that the great interest shown by Arab masses in the game of football is at least in part a means of distraction and a way for us to break from thinking about all the problems that face the region. There's no better entertainment than following football matches, especially the Arab teams as they progress through the tournament. It seems like football satisfies the Arab desire for victory by engaging in competition and standing up against more powerful nations. As a result of this competition, Arabs witness their teams' strength and gain confidence to stand among others.

But sometimes, the competition is understood wrongly because fans hope that only their team will win. This explains the emergence of hostility and fights between fans of different clubs following matches. They miss the point that football is just a sport. There are many areas where the Arab world should be striving to improve including sciences and the arts, but unfortunately this is not as popular on TV as football.

The most prominent speculations revolve around matches of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, with many videos about Liverpool's Egyptian star Mohammed Salah and the huge popularity he enjoys. It seems like winning any match depends solely on him, and I think this is unfair because while he is an amazing player, he isn't the only one on the team. Football is collective work, but you wouldn't think so if you read the comments of Arab fans following the recent UEFA Champions League final between Real Madrid and Liverpool.

One thing is for sure - there will be a lot of football games to look forward to. I wish everyone a happy holiday!

PHOTO OF THE DAY



KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti man shows World Cup key chains at a shop in Salmiya yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Eid: Not like it used to be

IN MY VIEW

By Faten Omar

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Receiving Eid Al-Fitr as a kid was pure joy all over that comes as a reward for fasting (at least till afternoon) the holy month of Ramadan. Parents used to prepare for Eid with decorations, cookies, new clothes, greetings, gatherings, eidiya, feasts are all still part of this festivity but nothing feels the same as eid during childhood.

Eid was once a community affair. Children couldn't wait to rush out and show their neighbors and friends the new clothes they received for eid. Whole neighborhoods would gather to eat and talk and celebrate together. Today, even though we greet people for Eid on social media, the feeling of community and festivity is gone.

Nowadays, most people spend the day with their immediate family at home, relax and few bother to visit their neighbors. A

collective joy and sharing of happiness among our society members is missing from the Eid scenario today.

Even children aren't interested in getting into the spirit of celebrating Eid. During my childhood, we were content with the little things we had or were given on Eid day where the Eidiya was 250 fils. But now it's a showy race among families and friends to spend a hefty amount of money at any cost to show that you are indeed celebrating Eid. Our eid was simple and happy. As a kid, going to Eid prayer with your parents was a joy, because you will have the chance to wear the new clothes - finally - and maybe get toys or candies from prayers in the mosque. After that, the fun will begin with mothers preparing Eid cookies with neighbors and children will go outside to play.

Today, however, Eid is all about 'take away' or delivery meals from restaurants. Few want to spend the time together as a community, preparing eid cookies or treats. Mothers and daughters had to have their moments in putting henna on their hands and feet, as well as mothers putting henna in their hair. Boys will go with their fathers to get the Eid haircut. Then the father buys meat and rice to prepare lunch.

The new generation now are spending Eid sleeping late. Most of them refuse to visit relatives or neighbors. They spend Eid in chalets away from the noise of the crowded city and traffic congestion.

Kuwait Times



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Kuwait's Summer seaside spots

By Faten Omar

During the summer holidays, whether you like walking, fishing, swimming or just tanning, Kuwait has plenty of family-friendly beaches. It is common to find jet-skiers, swimmers and families enjoying the white sand and the sea, while parents with children enjoy the playgrounds by the seaside. Watia beach in Shuwaikh and Anjafa beach in Salwa have playgrounds with seesaws, spring rockers, swings, slides, rocking boats and merry-go-rounds for the kids. These beaches are not only great for families, but also for sport lovers, as there are small exercise machines dotting the coastline walkways.



Kuwait's beautiful coastline presents a variety of public beaches and walkways along the cornice, though not all places are well-maintained. Stretching from Shuwaikh beach all the way down south to Khairan, there are plenty of places to visit, walk along the cornice or picnic on the seaside. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local



There are other stretches of sandy beaches along the corniche, where you will find people relaxing and enjoying the blue waters. In Salmiya, behind Marina Crescent, the beach is usually crowded. There are play areas, inflatable slides, grassy areas, basketball courts, a skate park and food and drink outlets.

But go along toward Kuwait City and between the Green Island and the Kuwait Towers are many nice spots along the walkway to sit and picnic (please don't leave any trash behind). The area around the towers is also great for an evening stroll and for the kids to ride bikes or rollerblade when its not too hot.

In Fahaheel, alongside Kout Mall, the beach is good



for walking and to stop by at cafes and restaurants nearby with a nice view. If you are a barbeque fan, private beaches in Messila and Egaila are perfect. They have many facilities, including changing rooms, shaded areas and food and drink stalls. Entrance is restricted to women only on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays with a KD 1 entrance fee.

The beach by the Scientific Center is also popular. This is the place to come if you are looking for a fun day out strolling, picnicking or walking your dog. The Scientific Center walkway is generally pet-friendly. Also, exercising there will never be exhausting because of soft drink and water vending machines lining the sidewalk.



Local



KUWAIT: The Marina Crescent is seen at sunset. — KUNA

Al Bastaki Hotel wins the 2nd HFC - Hotels Football Championship Cup

The Hotels Football Championship (HFC) concluded with Al Bastaki Hotel who has been crowned the title after great game against Safier Fintas Hotel. The 2nd HFC tournament was held in Sahet Mishref Playgrounds.

Mr. Moustafa Sallam Founder & CEO who was the head of the organizing committee said «this is the second tournament of its kind in Kuwait». He added that the 2nd HFC tournament succeeded due to the efforts of all volunteers, hotels management and the wide participation of teams representing many of the hotels operating in Kuwait.» Mr. Sallam added, the 2nd HFC tournament showcased the amazing talents of players and their drive to progress towards the title and cup.

On the other hand, there were a lot of different awards announced and presented during the coronation day such as; Best Player Trophy won by Mr. Ahmed Sami, Best Goalkeeper Trophy won by Mr. Saied Mohamed, Best Team Captain won by Mr. Hani

Ali, Best Scorer Trophy won by Mr. Wessam Bin Mohsen and Best Team Spirit went to Four Season Hotel plus two other awards for Regency Hotel & Safier International.

The 2nd HFC tournament was sponsored by Public Authority for Sport presented by Mr. Hamed Alhazim from the management of All Sports Department. HFC is simply an initiative and creative idea came from a group of employees from the different participating hotels lead by Mr. Moustafa Sallam. The participating hotels included many of Kuwait's leading hospitality heavy weights such as Four Seasons, Movenpick Albidaa, Safier Fintas, Copthome Al Jahra, Safier International, Le Royal Hotel, Palms Hotel, Symphony Hotel, Ramada Hotel, Millennium & Copthome, Regency Hotel, Adams Hotel, Al Bastaki Hotel and Hilton Kuwait Resort.

«Congratulations to the winning team, Al Bastaki Hotel for achieving the title of the second iteration of HFC.» said



Moustafa Sallam, Founder & CEO of HFC

Mr. Moustafa Sallam, Founder & CEO of HFC. «We were delighted to take part in a well organized tournament of this caliber alongside many of our peers from the participating hotels. The audience enthusiastically supported their favorite teams and the teams in return were eager to please their supporters and all soccer fans. Everyone showed great spirit and determination.»



All the winners in the 2nd HFC



Al Bastaki Hotel celebrating the championship

Going digital



KAFFEKLATSCH
By Shakir Reshamwala

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Processing paperwork at public bodies is a bureaucratic nightmare, not only in Kuwait, but the world over. One has to wade through red tape and obscure requirements, not to mention the whims of officials and indifferent if not downright rude employees. So the recent move by the interior ministry to shift the issuance and renewal of driving licenses online is a welcome one. A similar move is also eyed for renewal of residencies, and will likely be in place by next year. These changes have long been overdue. It's not that they weren't doable - some public bodies shifted whole or part of their operations online years ago. The interior ministry also offers a lot of online services, but not the most time-consuming and physically-demanding ones.

The Public Authority for Civil Information has long been a pioneer in going digital and paperless. Its envelope deposit process is being phased out too with the introduction of the e-envelope system, while paying for the ID cards can only be done online. It has also been possible to pay electricity and telephone bills online for years, along with traffic fines, a relief for those who still shudder at the memories of paying these in person at the ministries' offices in the days of yore.

Other ministries are also getting in the act, especially for local entrepreneurs who want to open small and medium enterprises, with 'one-window' initiatives and drastically cutting the time needed to obtain business licenses. And long after similar schemes were put in place by other Gulf states, it is now possible for some categories of visitors to Kuwait to obtain e-visas online.

While many remain skeptical about the paperless and cashless trend sweeping the world, most will agree that when it comes to the government, it is a good thing, as people dread dealing with public sector staff. Even in Ramadan when working hours at most public and private institutions are reduced by two hours or more, some workers still behave crankily and slack at their jobs. The oppressive heat and the long daylight hours surely make fasting tough, but this doesn't mean staying 'hangry' and sniping at patrons and coworkers, who may also be fasting.

Moving things online reduces corruption too. The lesser contacts one has with public servants, the fewer the possibilities of some unscrupulous employee asking for a bribe or favor, or of paperwork stuck in limbo until some palms are greased. Going digital also boosts transparency and prevents those with wasta to gain unfair advantages.

It is a common quip that at public institutions, the only document you don't have with you will be demanded by the employees. At least online, you know what documents need to be uploaded and which forms need to be filled, and rejection doesn't mean rushing back home to bring the needed paper or the waste of an entire day's efforts. Just get the captcha code right.

Local

Kuwait center of purebred Arabian horses in the past

KUWAIT: Kuwait is considered one of the most important centers for the sale and export of Arabian horses, as opposed to breeders in other countries. Arabian horses are one of the best breeds in the world due to their speed and stamina, and this applies both in the past and modern times. In his book "Pages from the History of Kuwait", historian and writer Yousef bin Isa Al-Qenai said the horse trade was popular in the past. Back in the day, Kuwaiti traders took their horses on ships to regional ports such as in Basra, Iraq, and then they transferred them to international destinations such as the Indian city of Bombay, currently known as Mumbai, said Qenai.

According to the book "The Kuwait Message" issued by the Center for Research and Studies of Kuwait - Volume V - Traveler James Buckingham

(1855-1786) reported that the total Arabian horses sent from Kuwait and Basra to the ports of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta in 1816 was 1,500 horses. He noted that the price per horse amounted to 300 rupees at the time, while the cost of transport and sponsorship was 200 rupees, in addition to other expenses incurred. The annual trade of horses in Kuwait was worth up to 900,000 rupees. Selling prices in Bombay were up to 800 rupees, which means that the net profit per horse was 100 rupees. Horses sold in Bengal were worth up to 1,000 rupees.

One of the most well-known horse dealers in Kuwait in the past was Yusuf Al-Bader Al-Khalid. He was also one of the original owners of horses, who continued to maintain the authenticity and purity of Arabian horses in Kuwait, documenting

horses' names and those who owned and sold them. Kuwait's rulers and sheikhs took care of original Arabian horses, and this is evident in British documents that confirm that the late Sheikh Salem Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah gave an original Arabian horse to King George V in 1919 on the occasion of Sheikh Salem's invitation to attend the celebrations of Britain's victory in World War I.

Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah established Salwa Park in 1954 as a place to entertain citizens, including a stable of authentic Arabian horses. With development, change of conditions and the introduction of cars throughout the country, the horse trade ceased to export abroad with the exception of some individuals who did not stop their passion for Arabian horse breeding and trading. —KUNA



Tune into World Cup Fever amidst Eid Carnival at Award-Winning Al Areen Palace & Spa

Al Areen Palace & Spa, a leading luxury property in Bahrain, brings its customers a new level of festive experience this joyous season by offering exclusive discounts and entertainment at its award winning premise.

This Eid Al Fitr, customers can explore a world of options to welcome the most auspicious time of the year with their family and friends. Football fans in Kuwait can fly down to Bahrain to cheer on their favorite teams during the mega football event starting on June 14, 2018. Al Areen Palace & Spa guarantees the most comfortable setting with its World Cup Tent equipped with massive TV's and surround sound to watch all the games with soccer style snacks and refreshments.

Meanwhile, other members of the family can book a sensational 90 minute spa treatment at the award winning brand spa that comes with a stunning indoor and outdoor swimming pool and Garden Hammam. Additionally, those interested in a wellness, spa or beauty session at 'Live Your Life' can take advantage of Al Areen's World Cup Wellness package, which includes a delightful pedicure, the perfect facial or perhaps a Moroccan bath followed by a sports massage. Al Areen and Spa is home to the largest spa in the Middle East, fusing Western and Eastern medicines, with advanced technologies that is practiced by a group of internationally certified health professionals to ensure a revolutionized experience. Famed for its approach to magical healing, the 'Live your Life' programs



encompass detox, re-energizing, weight optimization, fitness and beauty solutions for all types of adults.

To truly soak up the game mode, footballers can also work out like Ronaldo and get as match fit as Messi by joining Al Areen's World Cup Training Sessions in the Fitness for Life studio. Classes are only KD 4/- for 45 mins with mixed and ladies only sessions.

Enhancing the spirit of the season, East meets West with Arabic and International cuisine being served in both Rimal and Saffron restaurants, the carnival will also host an international DJ, live bands and live cooking stations serving sumptuous delights at the family-friendly Carnival Brunch this Eid Al Fitr. Children can look forward to meeting with their favorite Disney Characters and enjoy Face Painting and Spin & Win games. For only KD 14++ per person with children under six years old free of charge. Renowned for its world class hospitality, decor and ambience, travelers can dive into the convenience of a premium, luxurious and private setting adorned with local architectural elements in the Al Areen Palace and Spa Villa featuring a desert pool villa, Jacuzzi and steam bathrooms.

Local

Central Bank keeps discount rate at 3%

Decision in support of economic growth

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) decided to keep its discount rate unchanged, its current position 3 percent, CBK Governor and Chairman of the board of directors Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel said on Wednesday. In a statement, Hashel told KUNA, that the decision to keep the discount rate as is comes in support of recovered economic growth rates and to continue utilizing the tools and procedures of monetary policy available to him to establish the appeal and competitiveness needed for the national currency, making it a profitable and reliable domestic savings.

Hashel pointed out that as part of their "continuous monitoring of economic developments, monetary and banking conditions, and their expected

trends and periodic review, including developments in interest rate trends on global currencies, namely the US dollar and the decision of the US Federal Reserve at its meeting today to raise interest rates, which decided to keep the discount rate unchanged". Hashel added "the decision to continue to use available monetary policy instruments and procedures, including Central Bank bonds, other measures from local banks and direct intervention, reflects the bank's keenness to enhance economic growth rates for the non-oil sectors and to consolidate the competitiveness and appeal of the national currency".

He said the decision to keep the discount rate unchanged was also based on current available

data, and the ability of local banks to absorb efforts by the Central Bank to enhance the interest rates on deposits in dinar within the existing maximum rates of loan interest, and taking into consideration the current discount rate. Hashel mentioned that competition between local banks are working to attract borrowers in light of the modest growth rates of domestic bank credit linked mainly to the modest economic activity in the non-oil sectors.

Hashel noted that available up-to-date data indicate the Central Bank is able to maintain the margin of stability between interest rates on deposits in Kuwaiti dinars and interest rates on deposits in US dollars, with the remaining margin in favor of deposits in dinars. — KUNA



News in brief

Amir mourns UAE martyrs

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences on Wednesday to UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahayan, expressing his sincere sympathy for the four martyred soldiers of the UAE armed forces during the battle to free Hodeida, part of the operation "Restoring Hope" to support the legitimacy in Yemen. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the UAE president. Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah yesterday sent cables of condolences to UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Dubai Ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahayan. — KUNA

Amir congratulates Queen

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable to Queen of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth realms Elizabeth II, congratulating her majesty on her birthday's parade. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables. — KUNA

Body of missing Asian man found

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The body of an Asian who had been reported missing in Khairan waters was found yesterday. Security sources said rescue forces and divers had started the search on Wednesday, when his friends reported him missing.

Cafe raided

Salmiya detectives raided a cafe that had been operating during the daytime in Ramadan and arrested six people inside, including a woman, smoking shisha. Security sources said the arrested people include two male citizens, a female citizen, a non-Kuwaiti and two Egyptian waiters.

Disability allowances

Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Planning and Development Hind Al-Sabeeh said according to article 29 of law number 8/2010, its amendments and resolution number 210/2017, citizens with severe disability get a monthly allowance of KD 227, those with medium ones get KD 225, and those with minor disability get KD 185. Sabeeh added that an unemployed mother of a child with severe disability gets a monthly allowance of KD 300.



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah welcomes the new batch of diplomats. — KUNA

FM welcomes new diplomats

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Wednesday welcomed a new batch of diplomats who joined the ministry. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled expressed pride of the fresh diplomats - males and females - as well as confidence that they will be committed to the text, spirit and obligations of the diplomatic oath. Graduates of the 6th batch of Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute

took the oath at the foreign ministry after they passed academic and training programs. The minister urged them to be keen on raising Kuwait's name and status on the international scene, and serving the interests of the Kuwaiti people globally. He stressed the necessity of diligence amid the difficulties and challenges the region is going through. The ceremony was attended by the foreign ministry's senior officials. — KUNA

Jabri: We support all achievers

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri yesterday said all state bodies are keen on supporting Kuwaitis to achieve high ranks in various fields. Jabri made the statement after the reception of jet ski champion Yousef Al-Abdulrazzag, who won the first place in a world tournament in Italy.

"This support comes from the instructions of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad



KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri meets jet ski champion Yousef Al-Abdulrazzag. — KUNA

Al-Sabah," Jabri said. Jabri congratulated the world champion Abdulrazzag for his accomplishment and for raising the Kuwaiti flag in international sport forums. Abdulrazzag

expressed his gratitude towards the minister for all the support and sponsorship that helped him win this championship and well deserved international accomplishments. — KUNA

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Midnight market abuzz in Syria's divided Hasakeh

Pakistan student stabbed 23 times fights for justice

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Yemeni pro-government forces stand next to a pickup truck carrying anti-aircraft guns along the way to Al-Durayhimi district, about nine kilometers south of Hodeidah international airport. — AFP

Yemen forces assault rebel port city

The offensive remained on the outskirts of the rebel-held airport

AL JAH: Yemeni forces backed by a Saudi-led coalition launched an offensive to retake the rebel-held port city of Hodeida, a key aid hub, sparking calls from the international community for restraint.

Pro-government troops began the assault Wednesday despite mounting international fears about the humanitarian fallout, pressing toward Hodeida airport south of the city after receiving a "green light" from the coalition.

The UN Security Council will meet for urgent talks on the offensive, diplomats said, after a request from Britain. The closed-door meeting will be the second this week on the Yemen crisis. By Wednesday night, the offensive remained on the outskirts of the rebel-held airport. The Red Sea port, controlled by the Iran-backed Houthi rebels who hail from northern Yemen, serves as

the entry point for 70 percent of the impoverished country's imports as it teeters on the brink of famine.

The official United Arab Emirates news agency WAM confirmed that the operation was ongoing "with the participation and the support, through land and sea and air, of the Emirati armed forces". It added that the attacking forces managed to "liberate areas... in the surroundings of the airport" and captured and killed "dozens of Houthi" rebels.

The request for the Security Council meeting came after the UN envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, said he was still holding negotiations on keeping the key port open to aid deliveries. "We are in constant contact with all the parties involved to negotiate arrangements for Hodeida that would address political, humanitarian, secu-

rity concerns of all concerned parties," he said. US Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis has said he "strongly supports" Griffiths' efforts "to bring all sides of the conflict to the negotiating table".

The European Union's foreign policy chief warned of the "devastating" impact the assault would have. "The latest developments will only lead to further escalation and instability in Yemen," Federica Mogherini said in a statement. The coalition insisted its humanitarian aid response would go in parallel with military operations.

Houthis fan out

Two Saudi and UAE aid ships were in the waters off Hodeida, coalition spokesman Turki al-Maliki told Saudi state media. The two countries also said they would operate a dedicated shipping lane to Hodeida from Abu Dhabi and the

southern Saudi city of Jizan to deliver food and medical supplies. In Hodeida, people waited anxiously for the fighting to reach their neighborhoods. Those contacted by AFP said Houthi fighters had fanned out across the city. Coalition sources said the alliance carried out 18 air strikes on Houthi positions on the outskirts of Hodeida on Wednesday.

According to medical sources in the province, 22 Houthi fighters were killed by coalition raids, while three pro-government fighters were killed in a rebel ambush south of Hodeida. The UAE armed forces said on Wednesday night that four Emirati soldiers were killed in Yemen, without specifying when and where. The city of Hodeida, home to 600,000 people, was captured by the insurgents in 2014 along with the capital Sanaa.—AFP

International

Macron 'never meant to offend' Italy with migrant comments

Accusing Rome of 'cynicism and irresponsibility'

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron sought to resolve tensions with Italy yesterday, saying he never meant to cause offence by criticizing its rejection of a migrant ship in remarks that sparked fury in Rome. Macron had on Tuesday ignited the worst Franco-Italian diplomatic spat in years by accusing Rome of "cynicism and irresponsibility" for refusing to take in 629 migrants left stranded on a rescue ship that was eventually welcomed by Spain.

Rome summoned the French ambassador and cancelled a meeting between the countries' economy ministers while threatening to call off talks between Macron and Italian premier Giuseppe Conte in Paris on Friday unless France issued an "official apology". But the tensions appeared to have ebbed after a telephone call Wednesday night between Macron and Conte.

"The president stressed that none of his comments were intended to offend Italy and the Italian people," Macron's office said in a statement, adding that Friday's lunch meeting with Conte would go ahead as planned. Conte told reporters in Rome that the exchange was "very cordial". Asked whether he thought the dispute was over, he said: "I very much think so, yes."

"But now we need to work on reform of the Dublin Agreement," he added in reference to controversial EU rules which require migrants to apply for asylum in the country where they first arrive. That has put pressure on Italy and Greece, the main entry points for people fleeing

war and poverty in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. The confirmation of Conte's Paris visit came minutes after Italy's deputy prime minister Luigi Di Maio said Rome would "not back down" without a French apology. "The day when people thought they could make a mockery of Italy is over," Di Maio, leader of the Five Star Movement that shares power with the far-right League, was quoted by the Agi news agency as saying.

'Axis of the willing'

The plight of the Aquarius rescue ship—which is en route to Spain—has again shone a light on the failure of EU members to band together in the face of an unprecedented influx of migrants across the Mediterranean since 2015.

An EU scheme to distribute migrants equitably around the bloc has failed miserably, with central European members flatly refusing the quotas and others, including France, falling far short of their allocated target. Charities have sounded the alarm over the toll the crisis is taking on migrant lives.

Yesterday four people were given 25-year jail sentences in Hungary over the gruesome deaths of 71 migrants who suffocated in a truck on an Austrian highway three years ago. Chancellor Sebastian Kurz of neighbouring Austria this week hailed the hardline stance on immigration taken by the interior ministers of his country, Italy and Germany—whose interior minister is openly feuding with Chancellor Angela Merkel



ROCHEFORT: French President Emmanuel Macron (L) speaks to the press yesterday after visiting Pierre Loti's house. — AFP

on the issue. "We believe an axis of the willing is needed to fight illegal migration," he said. Italy has received more than 700,000 migrants and refugees since 2013. Many West Africans try to continue on to France, where they speak the language and often have relatives, only to find the border shut to them. Thousands of those who manage to sneak across the Alps have been detained and sent back to Italy. In a swipe at France, Italy's government said it will not accept "hypocritical lessons from countries that have

preferred to look the other way on immigration".

'Europe must do more'

Macron, in his call with Conte, called for closer cooperation between Rome and Paris to try to check the migrant flows at their source—currently mainly in Africa. France had "always defended the need for greater European solidarity with the Italian people", he said. The issue of how to share the migrant burden is expected to dominate an EU summit at the end of June. — AFP

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International

Two stabbed to death in S Africa mosque, Somali attacker shot

'It's a great loss for us, as well as for the community'

MALMESBURY: A Somali man stabbed two worshippers to death and wounded two others in a rampage at a mosque in South Africa yesterday before being shot dead by police, officers said. Police quickly surrounded the building in Malmesbury near Cape Town outside which a body lay under a tree and a penknife was discarded nearby, according to an AFP correspondent at the scene. The motive of the attacker, who police said was Somali, remains unclear.

It comes just a month after a deadly stabbing at another South African mosque which police said had "elements of extremism" and left an Islamic leader dead. Police were alerted by early morning worshippers and arrived at Malmesbury's mosque to find two people had died of stab wounds, Western Cape police spokeswoman Noloyiso Rwexana, told AFP. "The suspect, believed to be in his thirties and armed with a knife, charged at the police who tried to persuade him to hand himself over," she said.

The man, who was seen at the Mosque for the first time on Wednesday according to police, "ignored the calls and tried to attack police. He was shot dead". Forensics officers are now conducting a finger-tip search of the area and the elite Hawks investigative unit has been drafted in to lead the inquiry.

'Murdered, slaughtered'

Zainab Bassa, the wife of 72-year-old Ismail Bassa who was killed in the attack, told AFP that her husband of more than 30 years was "slaughtered" as he prayed. "My husband talked to everybody, he loved kids, it's a great

loss for me, as well as for the community, to pass away in a masjid, murdered, slaughtered," said Bassa, 59. "That was his second house—you would always find him in the mosque. He left last night and said 'I'm going now, I'll buy you another Eid dress'."

The other victim was a member of South Africa's Somali community, according to police. Two other people were wounded and are being treated in hospital. The Muslim Judicial Council (MJC), which represents the Muslim community in South Africa, said it was "shocked to the core" over the incident, which came at the end of the holy month of Ramadan. The MJC appealed to the community not to speculate about the attacker's motives and said its top leadership would travel to the area to assist the community.

It comes a month after an attack at a mosque in the town of Verulam, on the outskirts of the eastern port city of Durban. Three unidentified assailants killed a mosque leader on May 10 by slitting his throat and injured two others after midday prayers. The assailants in that attack, who also set off a petrol bomb inside the mosque, escaped in a car and remain at large.

'Intolerance, killing and real conflict'

Their motive remains unclear, but a police spokesman said at the time that the attack had "elements of extremism. It shows hatred towards the worshippers". The Verulam attack was a watershed moment for South Africa, where about 1.5 percent of the country's 55 million people are Muslim. Asked if yesterday's attack was the first of its kind in the region, po-



MALMESBURY: Muslim clerics emerge after visiting the mosque following a stabbing attack that left two worshippers dead and the attacker shot by the police. —AFP

lice spokesman lieutenant colonel Andre Traut said: "I can't recall of another incident, but all possibilities are being investigated".

"It's way too soon to speculate as to a possible motive—or link with any other incident in the country," he told the eNCA broadcaster. Nick Piper, a director at the Signal Risk security consultancy, described both attacks as "very rudimentary". "Typically, if a transnational group was to conduct a coordinated, planned attack, it would be more sophisticated," he said.

South Africa prides itself on religious tolerance and has been spared the extremist attacks that have dogged other countries on the African continent. Ebrahim Rasool, a senior official of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party, said that President Cyril Ramaphosa "expresses condolences to the families and the community". "(He) expresses his concern about this plague that is infiltrating the Muslim community of intolerance, killing and real conflict," said Rasool. —AFP

Britain mourns victims of Grenfell fire tragedy

LONDON: Green scarves, white roses: the community surrounding Grenfell Tower, the west London building ravaged by fire, united around shared symbols yesterday as they held poignant commemorations for the tragedy that killed 71 people a year ago. Clutching flowers and placards bearing images of their lost loved ones, dozens of tearful survivors of Britain's deadliest domestic fire since World War II joined still-grieving relatives on an emotional walk through the area.

The procession—accompanied by a portable speaker playing a melancholic track on repeat—ended in the shadow of the burnt-out block just before 12:54 am, the time the London Fire Brigade received the first call about a fire in the tower. One by one, relatives announced the names of the deceased accompanied by a flurry from a bongo drum, before pinning their pictures at the "wall of truth" — a section of the fencing around the tower featuring messages and candles.

After a short trumpet blast and as light rain began to fall, the crowd assembled at the somber site then marked an eerie silence of 72 seconds—in memory of each of the people who perished, along with a stillborn baby. "I saw everything from the start of that night and I couldn't sleep for three weeks," recalled Farhiya Abdi, 42, a mother-of-two who was among the first to arrive at Grenfell from

her nearby home as the fire spread. "When I closed my eyes I would hear the screaming for help, see the children's faces at the window again. I saw people jump to their death," she said earlier in the evening, at a remembrance event on a closed-off nearby street.

Organizers unveiled banners and t-shirts emblazoned with slogans demanding justice, one of several such events taking place. Nearly everybody wore a green scarf—the adopted color of the tragedy—while the tower was illuminated in green, as was Prime Minister Theresa May's Downing Street office.

'Time hasn't done anything'

May told parliament on Wednesday that the "unimaginable tragedy remains at the forefront of our minds". In an interview with Grenfell Speaks, a social media news channel, she admitted that the immediate official response to the fire "wasn't good enough... from the beginning". "I don't know why it took so long," she said.

The local community is still traumatized by the tragedy. "I thought time would've healed us but time hasn't done anything," said Chris Imafidon, 50, who knew six different families bereaved by the blaze through a local education charity he works for. "This is reviving the memories of that night, because we're all out on the street again—I see the same faces," he added, surveying the other locals who had turned out in remembrance. Among the attendees were former tower residents Marcio and Andreia Gomes, whose son was stillborn hours after the fire, and local firefighters who responded that night.

On a row of tables in the street, more than 100 community members shared a meal of Mediterranean food—dubbed an iftar for Muslim residents breaking their fasts during Ramadan. The crowd



LONDON: London Mayor Sadiq Khan lays a wreath at the memorial wall by Grenfell Tower on the anniversary of the Grenfell fire. —AFP

cheered wildly when a London Underground train passing on tracks above stopped and sounded its horn, before the driver emerged from his cabin to unfurl a green flag. The commemorations will continue yesterday with church services, special prayers at a local mosque, wreath-laying and the unveiling of a community mosaic. A silent walk will also be held—similar to the ones that take place on the 14th of every month—while banners in memory of the victims have been unfurled over the top four floors of the tower. —AFP

International

Midnight market abuzz in Syria's divided Hasakeh

'But tonight, it's the opposite—the souk has flourished'

HASAKEH: Khaled beams at two late-night customers entering his sweet shop in Syria's Hasakeh. For the first time in years, the market is open past dusk ahead of the Eid Al-Fitr feast. For some, the resurgent holiday spirit is a sign that the tensions between the Syrian army and Kurdish forces that ruined the festive occasion in previous years are being worked out.

"In the past, we didn't have anything close to what you'd call a nighttime souk," says Khaled, standing behind a counter overflowing with bright, individually-wrapped nougats and nuts. "But tonight, it's the opposite—the souk has flourished," says the owner, his hair slicked back and wearing a clean-pressed checkered shirt. The difference, shopkeepers and customers say, is a major improvement in security in the northeastern Syrian city.

Hasakeh is split between Syrian regime forces, which hold roughly a quarter of the city, and the rival Kurdish security forces known as Asayish, which control the rest. The main souk running along Palestine Street was the site of frequent clashes between the groups in recent years, forcing traders to shutter storefronts before nightfall.

That crushed sales during the holy month of Ramadan, during which Muslims break a day-long fast at dusk and then set off to shop and socialize, and which ends with the Eid Al-Fitr holiday later this week. "This market is between two firepowers: the Asayish on one side and the Syrian army on the other," says Anas Al-Abbas.

Behind him are shelves of the mascara tubes, glittery watches, and dangly faux silver earrings he sells. "In the past, before Eid, there would be skirmishes between the two sides, but this year the situation is good," he says. Outside, shoppers of all ages—including young men in military camouflage stroll down the main thoroughfare, paus-

ing to peer into toy stores or examine perfume bottles.

Mediation efforts

The street is lit by glaring fluorescent bulbs, strings of colored lights hung on trees and the headlights of yellow taxis in bumper-to-bumper traffic. Just meters from each other are the two-star Syrian government flag and a portrait of Abdullah Ocalan, the jailed leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

The bustling market now stays open until well after midnight, and sometimes until suhur—the pre-dawn meal before fasting begins again. Some shoppers and traders say the newfound stability is thanks to an attempted rapprochement between regime forces and Kurdish units. A year after Syria's war erupted in 2011, government troops withdrew from many Kurdish-majority areas and local authorities set up their own autonomous institutions.

As the regime regains its footing across the war-torn country, it has come to see these areas as a challenge to its authority. President Bashar Al-Assad warned last month he could use force against Kurdish units if he was not able to retake their territory through talks. Since then, mediation efforts appear to have begun and the political arm of a powerful Kurdish-led militia has said it is ready for unconditional talks with the government.

Abu Khaled, a 45-year-old athletic coach, says the difference is palpable. "We're hearing of close negotiations between the Syrian army and Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), and we hope they reach a solution," he tells AFP as he shops for sunglasses on Palestine Street. The hazel-eyed trainer says he is more willing to come to the market knowing that tensions were no longer simmering. "This land is for everyone.



Women and children choose ornaments at a market in Syria's northeastern city of Hasakeh on June 11, 2018. — AFP

Our brothers in the YPG are Syrians and this is their land, too," he says.

'Things have changed'

Sami Al-Saleh has wandered into Khaled's store and is perusing the plastic containers of candies. "Over the past few days, we've felt like things have changed in Hasakeh. The souk is open at night, there's clearly economic activity," says the 38-year-old. "We hope there's a political solution (to the tensions), because the country can't handle things anymore considering the difficulties they lived in the past."

Syria's conflict has left more than 350,000 people dead and forced more than 11 million from their homes, nearly half of whom have left the country entirely. Years of fighting have ravaged Syria's economy and torn at its social fabric. Ahmad Antar, a 58-year-old Kurdish perfume peddler, hopes the detente in Hasakeh means he can finally find love. "My cousins are married to Arabs. I'll marry an Arab too," the shop owner says with a smile. "We want a political solution for the area. That's better and easier, because the military solution means destruction. There is no winner." — AFP

120 countries at UN condemn Israel over Gaza violence

UNITED NATIONS: The UN General Assembly on Wednesday adopted by a strong majority of 120 countries an Arab-backed resolution condemning Israel for Palestinian deaths in Gaza and rejected a US bid to blame Hamas for the violence. The resolution deplores Israel's use of "excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate force" against Palestinian civilians and calls for protection measures for Palestinians in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

At least 129 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire during protests near the border with Gaza that began at the end of March. No Israelis have died. Presented by Algeria and

Turkey on behalf of Arab and Muslim countries, the measure won a decisive 120 votes in the 193-member assembly, with 8 votes against and 45 abstentions. US Ambassador Nikki Haley dismissed the resolution as "one-sided" and accused Arab countries of trying to score political points at home by seeking to condemn Israel at the United Nations. "For some, attacking Israel is their favorite political sport. That's why we are here today," Haley told the assembly.

An amendment presented by the United States that condemned Hamas for "inciting violence" along the border with Gaza failed to garner the two-third majority needed for adoption. Arab countries backing the measure turned to the General Assembly after the United States used its veto in the Security Council to block the resolution on June 1. Unlike the Security Council, resolutions adopted by the assembly are non-binding and there is no veto.

UN chief to propose protection

The resolution tasks UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres with the drafting of proposals for an "international protection mechanism" for

the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. These could range from setting up an observer mission to a full-blown peacekeeping force, but action on any option would require backing from the Security Council, where the United States has veto power. "We are asking for a simple thing," Palestinian Ambassador Riyad Mansour told the assembly. "We want our civilian population to be protected."

Turkey's Ambassador Feridun Hadi Sinirlioglu defended the resolution, saying it was "about taking sides with international law" and showing the Palestinians that the world "does care about their suffering." Taking the podium, Israeli Ambassador Danny Danon assailed the measure as an "attempt to take away our basic right to self-defense." He warned ambassadors that by supporting the resolution "you are empowering Hamas."

France was among 12 EU countries that backed the resolution, but Britain abstained along with Italy, Poland and 13 other EU member-states. Russia and China voted in favor. Australia, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, the Solomon Islands and Togo joined

the United States and Israel in voting against the resolution. The US amendment condemning Hamas received 62 votes in favor, with 58 against and 42 abstentions. The United States sought to challenge the ruling requiring a two-thirds majority for approval but that was defeated in a separate vote. "We had more countries on the right side than the wrong side," Haley said in a statement. The General Assembly last held a similarly contentious vote on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in December, when it rejected President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and move the US embassy there.

Haley had warned at the time that Washington was "taking names" of countries that supported the resolution. That vote was 128 to 9, with 35 abstentions. Backed by Arab countries, the Palestinians had lobbied to win as many votes on the Gaza resolution as those cast in support of the measure condemning the US decision on Jerusalem. Israel and Hamas have fought three wars in Gaza and the United Nations has warned that a fourth conflict could be easily ignited. — AFP

International

Merkel under heavy pressure in escalating row over immigration

'In immigration, we must no longer do things by halves'

BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday faced a showdown within her conservative camp over the flashpoint issue of immigration that could threaten her political future. After late-night talks Wednesday failed to resolve the heated dispute, a parliamentary session was suspended yesterday to allow the rival camps to huddle for tense strategy meetings. Merkel is facing a rebellion from her hardline Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, who demands that German border police be given the right to turn back migrants without identity papers or who are already registered elsewhere in the European Union.

The veteran chancellor fears that such a move would be seen in the EU as Germany going it alone and hurt over-burdened front-line Mediterranean countries such as Italy and Greece, and has urged a negotiated EU response instead. Merkel, the longest-serving EU leader, called immigration "a litmus test for the future of Europe" on Wednesday—but the issue has now rapidly turned into a test of Merkel's own grip on power at home.

The top-selling Bild daily argued that "if no agreement is reached, Angela Merkel must face a vote of confidence and every lawmaker must decide ... Keep going with Merkel's way or face an adventure called fresh elections." Seehofer, from Bavaria state's CSU party, has long been harshly critical of Merkel's decision to open German borders in mid-2015 to a mass influx of over one million asylum seekers since.

At the height of the crisis, tens of thousands of people fleeing war and misery in Syria, Iraq and other countries crossed the Austrian border into Germany per day in the Alpine state of Bavaria. The mass arrivals, together with

some high-profile crimes committed by migrants since, sparked the rise of the far-right AfD party, which entered parliament last year, upending German politics. As positions in Merkel's latest domestic battle hardened, the CSU's Bavarian state premier Markus Soeder said that "in immigration, we must no longer do things by halves". "We must think about the local population, not just the rest of Europe."

'Need action now'

Merkel's CDU and the more conservative CSU are traditional sister parties, but the emotional immigration issue has opened a rift between them that is deepening as the CSU faces an electoral threat by the AfD in a state poll in October. In sharp contrast to Merkel, Seehofer has voiced open sympathies for right-wing populist governments that are tough on immigration, from Hungary to Austria and Italy.

When Seehofer met Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz on Wednesday, Kurz announced that the interior ministers in Vienna, Rome and Berlin had formed an "axis of the willing" to combat illegal immigration. The same day Seehofer boycotted Merkel's "integration summit", grouping volunteers and agencies that support refugees, first citing a calendar clash and then saying he objected to the presence of a critical journalist there.

For Merkel, the row within her conservative family is the worst crisis in her fourth-term government, which took half a year to build after the inconclusive elections last year and also includes the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD). After three-hour talks between Merkel and Seehofer late Wednesday failed to resolve



BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel arrives for a meeting with her conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party's leadership. — AFP

the border control issue, a session in the Bundestag was halted yesterday so the CDU and CSU camps could huddle separately, a highly unusual step.

Merkel's support on the border issue also appears weak within her own CDU ranks, with a Bild daily poll of MPs finding that just a handful were willing to publicly back her on the issue. One of the CDU lawmakers, Axel Fischer, said that "we've been discussing this topic since 2015. At some stage, we must reach a decision, if necessary with a vote of confidence."

The CDU yesterday offered a compromise to the CSU—giving border police the right to immediately turn back migrants who have previously been denied asylum in Germany. Merkel's party also said Berlin should quickly reach agreements with frontline states on returning migrants there, with the goal of "avoiding uncoordinated, unilateral steps at the expense of third parties" in the EU. But this approach did not appear to appease the CSU, whose lawmaker Alexander Dobrindt reiterated that "we have told the CDU that we see a need for action right now". — AFP

Sterilization of Brazilian woman sparks uproar

RIO DE JANEIRO: Claims that a drug-addicted Brazilian woman was subjected to forced sterilization are sparking accusations of a nightmarish "dystopia" in a country where a leading presidential candidate has stirred controversy with his own birth control proposals. The facts of the case not under dispute are that Janaina Aparecida Quirino, an addict with numerous children, had her tubes tied after a ruling by a judge in Mococa, near Sao Paulo.

But according to a report in Folha de S Paulo newspaper, the woman was homeless and the procedure was performed without her consent. By the time the judge's ruling came to appeal at a higher court, "the mutilation had already occurred," wrote the author of the report, the con-

stitutional law professor Oscar Vilhena Vieira. One advocacy group, the Institute of Penal Guarantees, said "Janaina K. woke under the custody of people she didn't know, named in a judicial case that she was not informed about."

"It evoked Kafka's 'The Trial,'" the institute said, referring to the hallucinatory novel about a man prosecuted without even being told what he is accused of having done. The judge, Djalma Moreira Gomes, pushed back after Vieira's article came out last weekend, insisting that Quirino, who had seven children, with one more on the way, wanted to be sterilized. "The family set-up was characterized by the parents' drug dependencies..., physical violence against the children by the current partner, and financial difficulties," the judge said in a statement, also denying that she was ever homeless. According to Gomes, the woman "fully expressed consciousness and agreement with the sterilization."

Eugenics or common sense?

Crucial details of the case, even the dates, remain unclear. The judge's order was dated October 2017, but the sterilization operation had to

wait until the woman had given birth a last time. Prosecutors say she did agree to the operation and some Brazilian media have published a redacted copy of what they say is a consent form signed back in 2015.

However, officials said that a psychologist's report in which Quirino again gave the green light is under seal and cannot now be verified. In addition, the woman reportedly did not have a lawyer, which, if true, would raise doubts over the validity of anything she signed. Whatever the truth, Quirino's story is stirring angry debate.

The leftist news site revistaforum.com.br said the incident illustrates the "dystopia of life" in Brazil. The Institute of Penal Guarantees noted that "compulsory sterilization is eugenics." "She was treated as an object, a thing," another legal rights group, the Brazilian Association of Lawyers for Democracy, said. But not everyone is complaining.

Janaina Paschoal, a prominent lawyer famous for her role in the 2016 impeachment case that brought down then president Dilma Rousseff, said sterilization was Quirino's best hope. "Acknowledging the difficulties around the topic, I

declare my support" for the judge, she tweeted. "If I were the judge, I would have decided as he decided. Someone has to look out for the children!" The debate is unlikely to go away given that a frontrunner in Brazil's October presidential election, hard-right former army officer Jair Bolsonaro, has previously called for limiting births among the poor.

"Only birth control can save us from chaos," the congressman said in 2008, according to Folha de S.Paulo. Bolsonaro has long campaigned in Congress to loosen laws around sterilization, for example by removing the requirements for the person to be over 25 and to have consent of their spouse. One of the candidate's sons, Rio de Janeiro city councilor Carlos Bolsonaro, made a video this week to defend his father against "ridiculous" media assertions that his promotion of sterilization targeted poor people specifically. "Jair Bolsonaro has a bill to make it easier to get tubal ligation or a vasectomy, because there are numerous bureaucratic hurdles today," he said. The presidential hopeful "wants to give this opportunity so that people can have family planning." — AFP

International

Nicaragua kicks off national strike as bishops move to reboot talks

Mad dash to gas stations and supermarkets to stockpile

MANAGUA: A national strike got underway yesterday in Nicaragua to protest the government's deadly crackdown on a two-month long popular uprising against President Daniel Ortega, hours after the Church moved towards rekindling talks to calm the crisis rights groups say has killed at least 152 people.

Anticipation of the "peaceful" nationwide 24-hour work stoppage that began at 12:00 am (0600 GMT) had meanwhile triggered a mad dash to gas stations and supermarkets to stockpile grain, milk and vegetables. Jorge Esquivel, 60, voiced support for the strike-to include all sectors besides those "related to the preservation of life and the coverage of basic services"-called by a coalition of student, business and other civic representatives, one of the main groups involved in the now-stalled talks.

He told AFP as he left a supermarket that "we have to make this sacrifice; in one day we will not die of hunger." Hours prior to the strike's opening bell Nicaragua's influential bishops announced they would convene opposing government and civil representatives on Friday in a bid to revive negotiations aimed at ending the sociopolitical chaos plaguing the country.

In a statement the Catholic clergy said they would present both their mediation offer to Ortega along with his answer, which the country has been anticipating for a week amid a sharp escalation in violence. The bishops said the proposal and response would go up for debate "to seek a consensus that responds to the people's longing for justice, democratization and peace."

The Church previously called off negotiations after a protest led by victims' mothers was met with violent repression last month. Since then the Central American country has seen an uptick in police and pro-government paramilitaries attacking activists armed with slingshots and homemade mortars in an attempt to trample the anti-Ortega unrest.

Economic upheaval

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights voiced "alarm and deep concern" over Nicaragua's "serious human rights crisis." "The IACHR strongly condemns the exacerbation of the excessive use of state force and the continuity of attacks by para-political actors and armed third parties, which the State has the obligation to

dismantle," the commission's statement read published late Wednesday.

Mario Arana, director of the country's Association of Producers and Exporters, estimated the strike would result in a \$25 to \$30 million economic loss. The private sector, once an Ortega ally, broke ties after the president unilaterally approved the ultimately scrapped bid to reform social security-which initially triggered the civil unrest that began April 18 and exploded into a mass effort to pressure the president's exit.

Mediating the crisis "has taken more time than the situation really justifies," Arana said. "The population is being repressed and this strike is to express discontent." Activists have erected blockades on more than two-thirds of the country's roads in a bid to fend off Ortega-backed forces. But the makeshift roadblocks have wreaked economic havoc: even in the unlikely scenario that the government "accepts an early negotiated exit" by the end of July, the Nicaraguan Foundation for Economic and Social Development (FUNIDES) estimates the country would post losses of \$404 million and bleed 20,000 jobs. FUNIDES anticipates Nicaragua would lose \$916 million in added value and 150,000 jobs by December if Ortega stubbornly stays in office and protests continue.

Facing violence from government-backed forces, some Nicaraguans appear ready to take up arms. "For me, what is happening is a staggered civil war," said a student leader known as "El Gato" who is among the hundreds who have occupied Managua university grounds in protest for more than a month. "Most of us don't want to see it like that, but personally I think there is going to have to be a moment in this story when we're going to have to arm ourselves to be on the same level as them," he said.

Ortega's Sandinista guerrilla army ousted the Somoza dictatorship in 1979, and the leftist leader has remained a major political force ever since. But even activists who had fought with Ortega are now turning on him and demanding he move up a presidential election slated for late 2021. "El Gato," who masked his identity with a bandana, said Nicaragua was nearing a breaking point before the protests. "For many years, I have been observing and keeping silent for fear of reprisals," the 25-year-old said. "I believe that this fight is just," he continued, vowing to continue his struggle "as long as it takes." —AFP



MANAGUA: A student sleeps in a hammock after a night of clashes with members of the Sandinista youth and police at the National University (UNAN), occupied by protesters for over a month. —AFP

Prevention key to dealing with spike in suicide rate

LOS ANGELES: The recent deaths of fashion designer Kate Spade and celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain have cast a spotlight on a jarring spike in suicides worldwide and on the importance of confronting the issue. More than 800,000 commit suicide annually around the world and suicide is listed as the second highest cause of death among people between the ages of 15 and 29, according to the World Health Organization.

In the United States, 45,000 people took their own lives in 2016, a worrisome increase of nearly 30 percent since 1999. "It is difficult to explain, but this may be due in part to the opioid epidemic and economic factors that may have a stronger impact in the US than other developed countries because we do not have as comprehensive a protective health and social safety net as most European countries," said David Brent, a psychiatry professor at the University of Pittsburgh.

Richard Friedman, a professor of clinical psychiatry, said in an op-ed piece in the New York Times that "the prevalence of suicide has fluctuated over time, often rising during periods of social strife" as was the case in 1932, during the Great Depression. "The real question is why our society has made so little progress in dealing with the public health crisis of suicide," he wrote. "In fact, the suicide rate last year - 13.7 per 100,000 people - was nearly the same as the rate a century earlier." "We should declare war on suicide - just as we've done with other public health threats like HIV and heart disease - and give it the research and clinical funding needed to beat it," he added.

Developing countries most affected

Countries riven by conflict, such as Sri Lanka, are among the most affected, while South Korea and Japan are on the top of the list of industrialized countries dealing with high suicide rates. Someone who has experienced war, a natural disaster, violence or sexual abuse has a higher likelihood of committing suicide, according to the World Health Organization. In France, the suicide rate has plunged by 26 percent over the last 15 years to 10,000 a year, but remains one of the highest in Europe.

While the recent deaths of Spade and Bourdain have cast the spotlight on suicide in developed countries, the WHO says that more than three quarters of suicides take place in developing countries. The majority of those who take their own life suffer from a mental health issue such as depression or anxiety, US health officials say, but other factors include loneliness, the loss of a job or a loved one and the breakup of a relationship.

All levels of society and age groups are affected, they add. Young people, who can be influenced, are more vulnerable to copycat suicides, especially after a celebrity takes his or her own life. People in certain professions, including the military and farming, are also more affected as are ethnic and racial minorities.

'Reached out for help'

Experts say that suicide is often not preceded by warnings and is a shock to families and loved ones who didn't see it coming. Bourdain belonged to a "strong man doesn't ask for help generation," the actress Rose McGowan, who was friends with the chef and his girlfriend Asia Argento, said in an open letter following his death. "I know before Anthony died he reached out for help, and yet he did not take the doctor's advice," she wrote. —AFP

International

Pakistan student stabbed 23 times fights to see her attacker jailed

'I am heartbroken, speechless, shattered'

LAHORE: A Pakistani law student has emerged as a women's rights crusader after she was stabbed 23 times in a busy street only to see her alleged attacker walk free, igniting outrage across the deeply patriarchal country. Khadija Siddiqui, 23, survived the frenzied attack in broad daylight outside her sister's school on a busy thoroughfare in the teeming eastern city of Lahore, Pakistan's cultural capital, in May 2016.

Her sister was also injured as she tried to defend her, and the brazen attack only ended when her driver managed to pull the assailant off and rush Siddiqui to hospital, where she was admitted to intensive care with her neck slashed, her arms wounded, and a deep injury to her back. Siddiqui named her attacker as Shah Hussain, a classmate whom she had rejected romantically. He was convicted and sentenced to seven years in prison in July 2017.

But Hussain, the son of a prominent Lahori lawyer, appealed the decision—and in a shock judgment released on June 4, the Lahore High Court acquitted him on all charges. The decision was greeted with an uproar in Pakistan, where hundreds of women are murdered and attacked by men each year, with many struggling to get justice in a sluggish court system that advocates say is often slanted against them.

"I was shocked," Siddiqui, who spent three weeks in hospital after the attack and whose back still pains her, told AFP. "But unfortunately it was true." Siddiqui's long struggle to put her attacker behind bars had already drawn attention from women's rights campaigners, but when Hussain walked free it unleashed a wave of anger.

"I am heartbroken, speechless, shattered after hearing what our judiciary system did to you @khadeecej751

- But do not give up, keep fighting, and we shall overcome this together," tweeted actress Urwa Hocane. Hamza Ali Abbasi, another TV personality and activist, commented: "We must all unite & be Khadija's voice & leave no stone unturned to get her justice against this barbarian! #WeAreWithKhadija".

The hashtag was trending in Pakistan within hours of the acquittal. The reaction intensified when the court's judgment was released, with critics accusing it of "victim-blaming" after it poked holes in Siddiqui's credibility. The judgment questioned why she did not name Hussain as her attacker immediately, despite testimony saying she had fallen unconscious; and noted that at one point prior to the assault she had written a letter proposing marriage to him. The outcry was so great that Pakistan's Supreme Court has now taken up the case and will hold hearings later in the summer, it announced Wednesday. Hashmi, Hussain's father, has told AFP that his child is innocent. "My son is a brilliant student," he said. "How can he be a criminal?"

'Prejudice against women'

Siddiqui's case highlights how Pakistan's judicial system fails women, says Hina Jilani, a leading lawyer and human rights activist. The young law student is lucky in that she received high-profile support and it came to the Supreme Court's attention, Jilani says—but that is rare. "There is a prejudice against women," she argues.

Pakistan is deeply conservative, and violence against women remained "pervasive and intractable" in 2017, according to a yearly report by the country's Human Rights Commission. It documented thousands of reported violent incidents including rapes, assaults, sexual harass-



LAHORE: In this picture taken on June 8, 2018, Khadeeja Siddiqui, 23, a Pakistani law student who was stabbed 23 times by a classmate after she had rejected him romantically, speaks during an interview. —AFP

ment, acid attacks, murders, and even four examples of "stove burning"—understood to be when a woman is taken into a kitchen, covered in kerosene and set alight; then the perpetrators claim she was burned by the stove.

The real figures, the commission said, are likely to be much higher. Many cases of violence against women are not reported to authorities. In rural areas such cases often bypass the formal justice system and are dealt with by village "jirgas" or councils, often in a manner that is punitive for women. But even for those cases which do enter the court system, the conviction rate is "below one per-

cent", says Rabeea Hadi, an activist with the Aurat Foundation, a women's rights watchdog.

In cases of domestic violence and sexual abuse, it is "almost zero", adds Anbreen Ajib, the executive director of another women's rights group, Bedari. Siddiqui says women, including herself, are often pressured to drop their cases, and can face blackmail and harassment. But she is determined to see hers through, and says the attention it has received has prompted many women to contact her to say they, too, are encouraged to stand up for themselves. —AFP

Firebrand Sri Lanka monk jailed for intimidation

COLOMBO: A firebrand Buddhist monk was sentenced to six months in jail by a Sri Lankan court yesterday for intimidating a woman whose cartoonist husband has been missing since his abduction by the military. The court in Homagama, near the capital Colombo, also fined Galagodaatte Gnanasara 1,500 rupees (\$10) and ordered him to pay 50,000 rupees in compensation to Sandya Eknaligoda for abusing her in January 2016.

He was found guilty on two counts of intimidation and given six months for each offence, both sentences to be served concurrently. This is the first time Gnanasara has been put behind bars although he has faced several previous cases on charges of hate crimes against minority Muslims in Buddhist-majority Sri Lanka. The saffron-robed monk tried to deliver a statement as the sentence was read out before a packed courtroom, but was stopped short by the judge.

But outside the courthouse he remained defiant.

"I have done my duty by my country," Gnanasara said as police led him to a prison bus. "I do not regret what I did." A spokesman for his Buddhist Force said it had already filed an appeal. Gnanasara was found guilty of criminally intimidating Eknaligoda during a hearing at the same court on the abduction of her cartoonist husband Prageeth, who went missing in January 2010. He had been there to voice his support for the military officers accused of abducting Prageeth, whose cartoons lampooned former strongman president Mahinda Rajapakse. In ugly scenes inside the courthouse, he accused Eknaligoda and her husband of supporting Tamil extremists and bringing the military into disrepute. He faces a separate contempt hearing at the Colombo High Court over the incident.

'Hope in judiciary'

Eknaligoda's perseverance in campaigning to find out what happened to her husband earned her an "International Women of Courage" award last year from US First Lady Melania Trump. After the verdict Eknaligoda said she was pleased with the outcome and hoped the punishment would deter others. "I am happy this turned out like this. Some people thought that the monk will get off lightly with a suspended sentence, but it did not happen," she told AFP. "We can still have hope in the judiciary." —AFP

Zimbabwe prepares for first post Mugabe election

HARARE: President Emmerson Mnangagwa registered yesterday for Zimbabwe's first national elections of the post-Mugabe era, with his main rival Nelson Chamisa hoping to rally younger voters against the generation that won independence. Western governments and investors will be closely watching the July 30 presidential and parliamentary ballots, for which monitors got clearance to deploy for the first time since 2002.

Mnangagwa and Chamisa, who also signed up yesterday, are both campaigning on a pledge to revive an economy crippled by a legacy of often violent seizures of land from white commercial farmers and a black economic empowerment drive that targeted foreign-owned businesses. Those policies were cornerstones of Robert Mugabe's near four-decade rule, which ended in November after a de facto military coup that transferred power to 75-year-old Mnangagwa, his loyal acolyte for nearly 50 years.

The ruling ZANU-PF says Zimbabwe is at a critical stage of transition requiring an experienced politician like Mnangagwa. Chamisa, the 40-year-old leader of the opposition Movement for Demo-

cratic Change (MDC), says the president is equally to blame for the country's economic troubles, since he served in each of Mugabe's governments since independence in 1980.

Both arguments appear to have struck chords among the 5.4 million-strong electorate, 60 percent of whom are under 40. While Zimbabwe lacks a reliable polling system, an unofficial survey released last week in its second city Bulawayo by the Mass Public Opinion Institute put Mnangagwa on 42 percent and Chamisa on 31 percent, while 25 percent declined to disclose a preference.

Crucially, Mnangagwa enjoys the backing of the army, which analysts say remains averse to any leader who lacks a pedigree from the liberation war against white rule. Chamisa faces the additional hurdle of a divided opposition vote. Joice Mujuru, a Mugabe deputy for 10 years before she was ousted from the ruling party in 2014, and Thokozani Khupe, who leads a splinter MDC faction after falling out with Chamisa, also entered the presidential race. Another four lesser-known candidates also registered.

"We have opened up the democratic space and everyone is excited, they feel they can enter the race and contest, which is good," said Justice Minister Ziyambi Ziyambai, after filing Mnangagwa's papers at the High Court. Attempts by Chamisa to have Mujuru and Khupe join the MDC and its alliance of smaller parties have so far failed.

"It is unfortunate that we are in a situation where other parties have not seen the light to say that it is important for opposition forces to unite and rally behind one candidate," said Jameson Timba, who presented Chamisa's nomination papers. —Reuters

International

UN rights chief calls for major probe into Kashmir abuses

Islamabad welcomed Zeid's request for a probe

GENEVA: The UN human rights chief yesterday called for a major investigation into abuses in Kashmir, as his office released its first-ever report on violations committed by both India and Pakistan in the disputed territory. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said he would urge the Human Rights Council, which opens a new session next week, "to consider establishing a Commission of Inquiry (COI) to conduct a comprehensive independent international investigation into allegations of human rights violations in Kashmir."

A COI is one of the UN's highest-level probes, generally reserved for major crises like the Syrian conflict.

The UN report, which is particularly critical of India, highlights "chronic impunity for violations committed by security forces". India's foreign ministry rejected the report, blasting it as "fallacious" and "tendentious".

However Islamabad welcomed Zeid's request for a probe, saying in a

statement that it was "consistent with Pakistan's several calls to this effect since 2016". The findings, described as the first-of-its-kind for Kashmir, come after months of deadly clashes along the border that divides Kashmir into zones of Indian and Pakistani control.

Zeid said he met with representatives of both governments following an upsurge of violence in July 2016, triggered by India's killing of 22-year-rebel commander Burhan Wani. Concerned by what the UN termed "large and unprecedented" protests after

Wani's death, Zeid asked for "unconditional access" to Kashmir, but neither government agreed.

His office then began remote monitoring of the region, producing a report covering alleged abuses between January 2016 and April of this year. Kashmir has been divided since the end of British colonial rule in 1947 and both New Delhi and Islamabad claim the former Himalayan kingdom in full. India has about 500,000 soldiers in the part of Kashmir it controls, where armed groups are fighting for independence or a merger with Pakistan.

'Unlawful' killings by India

The findings accused Indian troops of being responsible for some 145 unlawful killings, far surpassing the 20 people estimated to have been killed by militant groups during that period. Zeid said India needed "to take immediate and effective

'Unconditional access' to Kashmir

steps to avoid a repetition of the numerous examples of excessive use of force by security forces in Kashmir".

The rights office raised particular concern over the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, in place in Indian-administered Kashmir since 1990, which prevents soldiers from facing prosecution without the consent of the central government. The act has amounted to "virtual immunity" for troops in Kashmir, the UN said, noting that the government has not approved a single case against an armed forces

with a diameter of 10 micrometers-exceeded 900 per cubic meter in parts of Delhi on Thursday, according to the US embassy website. The WHO considers 50 the maximum safe level for PM10. Readings from India's own pollution monitor on Thursday detected PM10 closer to 1,300 — or 26 times safe exposure levels.

Summer winds have been especially violent this season, experts say, with hundreds killed by powerful dust storms and freak winds across India's north. The sand blowing into the capital is colliding with dust from open construction sites and car and factory exhaust, compounding the crisis. Usually during winter, smog chokes Delhi as cool air traps pollutants close to the ground. During these months it is PM2.5 — microscopic particles that can lodge deep into the lungs—that cause the most harm.

Ozone levels, usually a lesser concern given the magnitude of air pollution woes in Delhi, are also causing particular grief this summer, according to a recent report by the Centre for Science and Environment.

"The surprise this year is the number of days when the daily air quality index has shown ozone also as a dominant pollutant along with the particulate matter," said the centre's executive director Anumita Roychowdhury.

Arvind Kumar, a lung surgeon at a medical facility in New Delhi, said the smog threatened all, but children, the elderly and those with asthma were at particular risk. "If such a situation was seen in the western world, cities would have been evacuated but for us we just need to pray for rain and the dust to settle down," he said. —AFP



JAMMU: Indian Border Security Force (BSF) officers carry the coffin of slain soldiers during a wreath-laying ceremony at the BSF headquarters. —AFP

member. Zeid also called on India to ward off any further escalation in Srinagar, the capital of Indian-administered Kashmir.

Crackdown on dissent

Tensions have spiked there in recent weeks after police were accused of firing teargas and shotgun pellets inside the city's main mosque and two protesters died after being crushed by paramilitary vehicles. Amid fears of further unrest over the upcoming Eid holiday, the rights office urged Indian

troops "to exercise maximum restraint... when dealing with future protests, including ones that could well occur this coming weekend."

Turning to territory under Pakistan's control, the report identified "a range of human rights abuses," but noted they "are of a different caliber or magnitude and of a more structural nature." The rights office criticized restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly that made it difficult to obtain information about conditions in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. —AFP

Delhi reels as summer smog chokes capital

NEW DELHI: Air pollution soared in New Delhi yesterday to hazardous levels rarely seen outside winter months as sand blown from deserts enveloped the Indian capital in a once-in-a-decade phenomenon. Doctors warned the grit carried by hot summer winds posed serious health risks to the city of 20 million and there was little to do "but pray for rain".

Smog spikes during winter in Delhi, already one of the world's most polluted cities, where air quality eclipses the World Health Organization's safe levels on any given day. Pollution levels usually ease in summer, providing some relief from the smog as temperatures soar to mid-40 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit). But the city woke up to stifling heat and smog 20 times safe levels Thursday, as strong winds blew dust from deserts in western India and beyond across the plains where Delhi lies.

"It is a very unusual phenomenon seen once in a decade or so. The dust is not settling down and the sky is obscure," said Mahesh Palawat, vice president of meteorology and climate change at SkyMet Weather, a private forecaster. "It is quite different from winter pollution. It is the dust this time that is the culprit. It may cause breathing problems to many," he said.

Levels of PM10 — dust and larger particles

Eight killed by India lynch mobs

NEW DELHI: Eight people have been murdered by lynch mobs across India in less than a week, officials said yesterday, as law enforcement struggles to curb a recent spate of vigilante killings. Angry mobs turned on victims in five separate Indian states, many motivated by rumors of child kidnapping or allegations of thievery or sexual harassment.

In the capital New Delhi on Wednesday, a 32-year-old man was beaten to death by four men wielding iron bars who accused the victim of harassing a woman, police said. Three arrests have been made. On the same day in eastern Jharkhand state, two Muslims accused of stealing cattle were dragged from their car and killed by tribes people in the district of Godda.

Local police chief Rajiv Ranjan said four of the attackers—who were armed

with bows and arrows—had been arrested and a search was underway for the others. In neighboring West Bengal also on Wednesday, a homeless man accused of abducting children was tied to an electricity pylon and beaten to death with clubs. Police said three arrests have been made.

The rash of murders followed four lynchings on Friday, including a brutal assault caught on camera that prompted outrage and calls for tougher laws on vigilante assailants. The gruesome video shot in northeastern Assam state showed two men accused of kidnapping children pleading for their lives as they were dragged from their car and murdered.

That same day, two laborers were killed in Maharashtra state some 2,500 kilometers away after being accused of theft. Police have struggled to douse persistent rumors on social media about a child kidnapping ring that motivated six vigilante killings across India in May. Officials say no such trafficking network exists. Public awareness campaigns have been launched urging Indians to ignore videos circulating on Facebook and WhatsApp purporting to show children being abducted by men. —AFP

International

Pompeo warns N Korea peace goal faces 'risks', sanctions to be kept

'We believe that Kim Jong Un understands the urgency'

BEIJING: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said yesterday that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un understands that denuclearization must happen "quickly", but he warned there are still risks that peace will not be achieved and sanctions must be maintained for now. Washington remained committed to the "complete, verifiable and irreversible" denuclearization of North Korea, Pompeo said, after the historic US-North Korea summit in Singapore drew criticism for its vague wording on plans for Pyongyang to give up its nuclear weapons.

"We believe that Kim Jong Un understands the urgency... that we must do this quickly," he said of the effort to have North Korea abandon its atomic arsenal. Washington's top diplomat travelled to Seoul to brief his South Korean and Japanese counterparts about the summit, and later flew to Beijing to talk with Chinese officials.

"We truly believe that we have a path forward after so many years that can bring peace," Pompeo told Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. "There are still risks that we won't achieve that but I truly do believe that the world set the conditions properly" at the summit, he said, after Trump said his "deal" with Kim Jong Un had ended the North Korean nuclear threat. Any reduction in tensions on its doorstep is welcome for China, North Korea's closest ally, which accounts for around 90 percent of Pyongyang's trade. Beijing immediately hinted that the United Nations could consider lifting the punishing sanctions on North Korea that Trump credits with bringing Kim to the table.

Wang told Pompeo the summit "moved the peninsula's nuclear issue into the right track of peace and negotiation in line with all parties including the US and China as well as the hopes of international society". Earlier, Pompeo in-

sisted at a joint press conference with the South Korea and Japanese foreign ministers that there was no daylight among the allies on how to achieve the denuclearization of North Korea.

Contrasting the Trump policy with previous US administrations, Pompeo said: "In the past, they were providing economic and financial relief before... complete denuclearization had taken place." "That is not going to happen, President Trump made that clear." Pompeo's comments came after North Korean state media reported Wednesday that Trump had not only offered to stop military exercises during dialogue, but also lift sanctions imposed on Pyongyang, causing concern in Tokyo and Seoul. Trump said after his meeting with Kim—the first between sitting US and North Korean leaders—that Washington would halt its joint military exercises with South Korea, an announcement that caught Seoul, and apparently the Pentagon, by surprise. The US and South Korea conduct several large drills every year to maintain readiness for operations on the peninsula, a source of anger for Pyongyang, which considers them preparations for an invasion.

'Frank' discussions

South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha appeared to sidestep the issue at the joint press conference, saying the matter would be left to military authorities to discuss, and that the US-South Korea alliance remained "as robust as ever". Earlier, South Korean President Moon Jae-in acknowledged that "there may be very conflicting views" about the summit, but it had still helped mitigate fears of a nuclear war.

"In this way I believe it was very successful." He later said Seoul would carefully consider the future of the drills "if North Korea faithfully implements denuclearization measures and sin-

with Trump in the resort island of Sentosa.

Singapore said it spent S\$20 million (\$15 million) on the summit, a figure that drew the ire of some citizens. However, marketing experts say the coverage generated from the event could be worth more than 10 times that. "It places Singapore on the map for international audiences," said Oliver Chong, executive director, communications and marketing capability at Singapore Tourism Board.

Tourism contributes around 4 percent to Singapore's GDP per annum. Visitor arrivals hit a record 17.4 million last year boosted by China, its top market, and India. But just months ago, lifestyle magazine Time Out ranked Singapore among the world's least exciting cities. Andrew Darling, CEO and founder of communications agency West Pier Ventures, said it would cost more than S\$200 million to generate the kind of publicity Singapore has received so far by hosting the summit. Media intelligence firm Meltwater said the coverage over the three days around the summit equated to \$270 million of advertising, while the month leading up to it was worth \$767 million.—Reuters



PYONGYANG: North Koreans watch a television screen showing footage of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attending a summit in Singapore with US President Donald Trump.—AFP

cere dialogue continues", according to his office. While it is not directly involved, Japan also considers the exercises vital. The "deterrence based on them (plays) an essential role for security in northeast Asia", Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono said after the "frank" trilateral talks Thursday.

Kono said Japan understood the pause in the drills to be contingent on North Korean steps towards denuclearization, adding that "no security guarantees have been given yet". Pompeo said the suspension of the exercises depended on productive negotiations in "good faith". Trump had raised eyebrows Tuesday by describing his own country's drills on the Korean peninsula as "provocative", a term used by the

North for the exercises. Pyongyang describes its nuclear weapons and long-range missiles as a shield against US aggression, and has in the past linked denuclearization to the removal of US forces from the peninsula.

'Sleep well tonight!'

Despite some concerns among allies and analysts, the Trump administration continues to tout the summit as a success, and Pompeo said earlier that he hopes to see "major disarmament" of North Korea by 2020. A bullish Trump declared the nuclear threat from North Korea no longer exists, and tweeted Wednesday that people "can now feel much safer than the day I took office" and can "sleep well tonight!"—AFP

Trump-Kim summit a PR coup for Singapore

SINGAPORE: As images of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un strolling by revelers at a rooftop bar the night before an unprecedented meeting with President Donald Trump circulated around social media sites, US citizens started asking 'Where is Singapore?'. 'Singapore', the tiny Southeast Asian city-state that played host to nuclear talks earlier this week, was the most searched term on internet search engine Google in the United States on Monday with over 2 million hits.

Related searches during those 24 hours included 'Where is Singapore', 'Singapore summit' and 'time in Singapore'. Blanket media coverage on Monday included Kim's surprise tour of the iconic Marina Bay Sands hotel and its surrounding gardens, and the first hours of the meeting

Australia punish soldiers in Afghanistan

SYDNEY: Australian soldiers who flew a Nazi swastika flag over their fighting vehicle in Afghanistan more than a decade ago were "wrong" and punished at the time, Australia's prime minister said yesterday, after a picture of the incident emerged. The flag was attached to a military jeep in the photo taken during a patrol in Afghanistan in 2007, according to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), which published the picture.

"The flag obviously was removed and the

personnel involved were disciplined," Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull told reporters in the Tasmanian state capital of Hobart, without specifying their punishment. "It was absolutely wrong and their commanders took action at the time," he said. Australia, a staunch US ally, has had troops in Afghanistan for 17 years fighting against the Taliban and other Islamist militants.

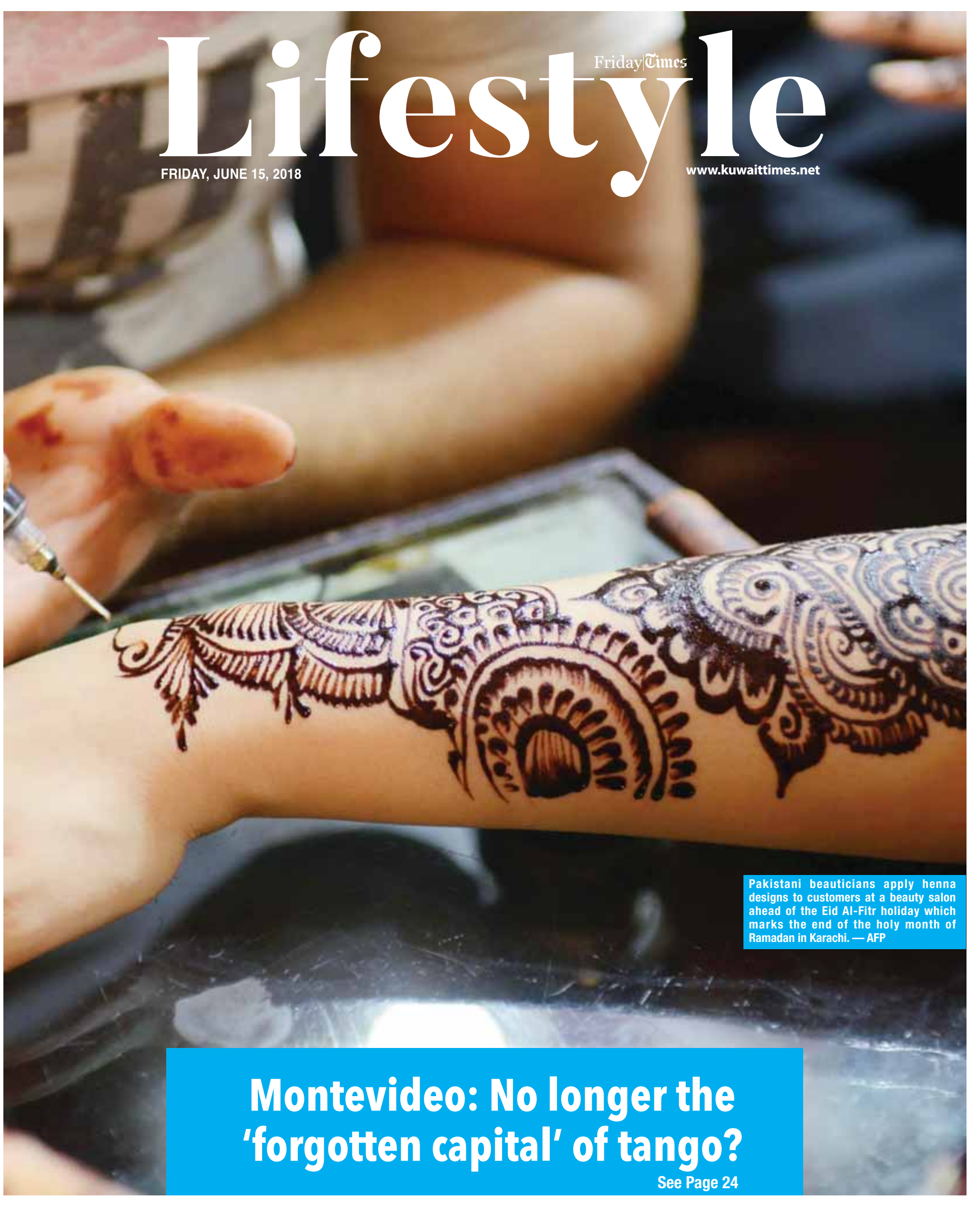
Their behavior between 2005 and 2016, including accusations that they used illegal force and showed a disregard for human life during missions, is being investigated by defense authorities. The swastika in the photo was the emblem of Germany's Nazi Party and later the country's national flag when millions of Jews were murdered by the state in the 1940s, a genocide known as the Holocaust, along with others deemed inferior. "It is completely unacceptable to use a flag of this nature," Australia's defense minister, Marise Payne, said in an emailed statement.—AFP

Lifestyle

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Pakistani beauticians apply henna designs to customers at a beauty salon ahead of the Eid Al-Fitr holiday which marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan in Karachi. — AFP

Montevideo: No longer the 'forgotten capital' of tango?
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Lifestyle | Music & Movies

Kurt Cobain's personal items to go on show in Ireland

An exhibition dedicated to late Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain opens in Ireland next month, showcasing a selection of the grunge rock singer's belongings curated by his family. From his sketches and drawings to clothing and a car, "Growing Up Kurt Cobain" will display dozens of Cobain's personal items, some of them never seen before by the public. His daughter, Frances Bean Cobain, and mother, Wendy O'Connor, will be among the singer's relatives attending the opening at the Museum of Style Icons in Newbridge, 50 km (30 miles) southwest of Dublin.

Cobain, who had Irish ancestry, died in 1994 at the age of 27 from a self-inflicted gunshot. "I have always been the most intimately informed of who my father was by my grandmother and aunts," Frances Bean Cobain said in a statement sent to Reuters. "I am so ecstatic that their view of who Kurt was gets to be celebrated with Nirvana fans the world over." Fans of Cobain, who popularized grunge rock in the early 1990s, will be able to see the striped green sweater he wore in the video for Nirvana's 1991 hit "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and his MTV Video award for the same song. The singer's childhood drawings of cartoon characters, handwritten lyrics and powder-blue 1965 Dodge

Dart car will also be on display.

"With this exhibition we hope to bring the focus back to Kurt's roots, vision and artistic genius, to inspire everyone not to lose their creativity and childlike wonder," Cobain's sister Kim Cobain said. The small museum in County Kildare has outfits worn by the likes of Audrey Hepburn, Elizabeth Taylor and Grace Kelly on display, and has previously hosted exhibitions dedicated to

Michael Jackson and Prince. The museum's owner, William Doyle, who is also chief executive of jewelry and homeware maker Newbridge Silverware, said the idea of a Kurt Cobain exhibition stemmed from his friendship with the singer's family. "The family have this feeling that they are bringing him back home," he said. "Growing Up Kurt Cobain" opens on July 19 and runs until end-September. — Reuters



Kurt Cobain is seen in 1986 in an image handed out by his family which will form part of an exhibition of his personal items which will be exhibited at Museum of Style Icons in Newbridge.



Kurt Cobain is seen on December 24, 1986 in an image handed out by his family which will form part of an exhibition of his personal items which will be exhibited at Museum of Style Icons in Newbridge, Ireland. —Reuters photos

Michael Jackson street naming scrapped



An honorary street naming in Detroit for the King of Pop was canceled Wednesday. Michael Jackson Avenue was supposed to be officially unveiled Friday in Motor City, just as the late artist's surviving brothers prepared to perform at a weekend concert. But the ceremony was called off, as members of the Jackson 5 — the family act where Michael Jackson got his start — wondered why the entire group wasn't being honored. Under city rules, honorary street names cannot be granted to groups or organizations, only persons, the Detroit Free Press newspaper reported.

A city official told the newspaper that the naming ceremony was called off while a solution is sought. "We're still working through the process," Stephen Grady told the Free Press. The street naming was announced in mid-May with much fanfare and two of the

Jackson 5 present at a news conference. The tribute was to come 50 years after the family group birthed their career with a successful recording contract audition in Detroit, which has a rich history of nurturing American artists. But Marlon and Jackie Jackson told reporters at the May event that they wanted the entire group to be honored. Michael Jackson, who started with the group, went on to become one of the most famous performers in pop music history. He died in 2009 at the age of 50 from a fatal dose of drugs, including the powerful anesthetic propofol. Had the street naming gone ahead, the King of Pop's honorary stretch of road would have been near the one named after the Queen of Soul Aretha Franklin. Her street naming was last year. — AFP



Colombian singer Shakira performs on stage at the Bercy Accorhotels Arena in Paris on June 13, 2018 at the Accor Arena Paris. —AFP

Beach Boys hits get a classical spin in orchestral collaboration



The timeless California sounds of the Beach Boys have been given a new spin thanks to Britain's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. The orchestra recorded arrangements of 17 of the Beach Boys best-known hits, including "Good Vibrations," "California Girls" and "Fun, Fun, Fun," and paired them with the original vocal performances for a new album "The Beach Boys with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra." The album is the first collaboration between the influential band, which found international fame in the 1960s with songs that captured California's fun-loving beach culture, and a full orchestra.

The album, recorded at London's Abbey Road Studios with the blessing of the four remaining members of the Beach Boys, was released on June 8. Beach Boys singer Bruce Johnston said the album was "like a gift from heaven." "The beautiful thing is they (producers Don Reedman and Nick Patrick) did all the work. We'd already done ours years ago because they are all the original vocal performances," Johnston told Reuters television in an interview on Wednesday. — Reuters

Protective order obtained for Marvel magnate Stan Lee

A temporary restraining order was issued on Wednesday against Stan Lee's caregiver, who is accused in court documents of subjecting the 95-year-old Marvel Comics magnate to elder abuse since taking charge of his affairs earlier this year. The petition for the restraining order was filed on Lee's behalf by attorney Tom Lallas, who said he was ousted as Lee's lawyer in February when memorabilia collector Keya Morgan "inserted himself into Mr. Lee's life" after his wife died last year.

According to Lallas' account in supporting court documents, Morgan seized control of Lee's home, hired security guards with orders to keep away family members and others Lee knew and trusted, and then moved Lee from his longtime family home to a condominium. "Petitioner, along with law enforcement and Adult Protective Serv-

ices, believes that Mr Morgan is unduly influencing Mr. Lee and isolating him," Lallas wrote in the petition.

During the last five decades, Lee has created and helped promote the likes of Spider-Man, Iron Man, The Hulk and a cavalcade of other Marvel Comics superheroes that have become mythic figures in pop culture with soaring success at the movie box office. Morgan was arrested on Monday on suspicion of making a false police report for placing an emergency 911 call for a burglary in progress at Lee's home. The call was made just after two police detectives and a social worker arrived to check on Lee's welfare, according to a police affidavit filed with Lallas' petition.

Earlier this week, Lee said in a video posted on his Twitter account that Morgan is the only person who represents him. A hearing on the

circumstances surrounding the restraining order granted for Lee was set for July 6 in Los Angeles County Superior Court. Morgan, who runs a high-profile memorabilia dealership in New York, was not immediately available for comment. An answering service operator told Reuters she did not know if he had a lawyer or other representative speaking for him at this time. In a declaration filed as part of his petition for an "elder abuse restraining order," Lallas described Lee as being in frail health.

It said Lee suffers from severe hearing and vision impairment, relies on round-the-clock nursing care and has "recently exhibited short-term memory impairment, impaired judgment, and an inability to resist undue influence." "Mr Lee has a large estate worth over \$50 million and therefore is vulnerable to financial predators," Lallas wrote in the declaration. —Reuters



Stan Lee

Comcast outbids Disney with \$65 bn offer for Fox assets

Comcast on Wednesday offered \$65 billion for key film and television assets of Rupert Murdoch's 21st Century Fox, topping an offer from Walt Disney Co. for a deal that could create a dominant media-entertainment power. The move by Comcast, which is the largest US cable provider and also owns the NBC Universal media group, opens up a new round of competition for the prized assets being shed by the Murdoch family empire. The deal, if approved, would merge Comcast-owned Universal Studios and the NBC television network with Hollywood rival 20th Century Fox, Fox's cable entertainment networks and international TV businesses.

"These are highly strategic and complementary businesses and we are in our minds the right buyer," said Comcast chairman and chief executive Brian Roberts in a conference call.

Roberts said Murdoch had built "one of the world's great media and entertainment companies," and that its history is similar to that of Comcast's. With the deal, Roberts said Comcast would stay on track "to build the entertainment company of the future." Roberts said the all-cash bid is nearly 20 percent richer than the \$52 billion stock offer from Disney, and said Comcast would match the Disney offer of a \$2.5 billion fee if the deal fails to win regulatory approval.

The new landscape

"We are highly confident in our ability to finance the transaction, and our offer includes no financing-related conditions," Comcast said in a letter to Rupert Murdoch and his sons Lachlan and James. The statement pointed out that Comcast and Fox had been in talks before the Murdochs reached the deal with Disney, which is being submitted for a shareholder vote July 10. The new offer is likely to prompt a response from Disney, and force the Murdochs to review their position on the tie-up with Disney, which owns the ABC television networks ESPN and is a major Hollywood player.

The news comes a day after a federal judge approved a massive \$85 billion takeover by telecom-



In this file photo a man stands near a gate near the Fox Studios in West Los Angeles, California. —AFP

broadband giant AT&T or media-entertainment conglomerate Time Warner that could reshape the media and communications landscape. The court approval ended a heated antitrust battle, and suggested Comcast would be able to clear any regulatory hurdles to a deal with Fox. Comcast said any antitrust concerns should be eased by Tuesday's court ruling on AT&T and that its offer "should be as or more likely to receive international approvals, given our relatively small presence outside the US."

"We believe yesterday's decision in the AT&T case supports our confidence," Comcast chief financial officer Mike Cavanagh said on the conference call. The deal became possible when Rupert Murdoch, 87, and his sons decided to slim down the media empire, leaving them with a "New Fox" that includes the Fox News Channel, the Fox broadcast network and sports cable operations. Comcast if successful would be able to expand beyond US borders to new markets in Europe and India. Included in the sale is Fox's 39 percent stake in the British pay TV operator Sky. Murdoch has sought full control of Sky but has faced opposition from regulators in Britain. —AFP

Comcast earlier this year made an offer of \$30.7

Animated film tries to solve dark riddle of Balkan wars

Anja Kofmel was only 10 when her cousin Chris, an adventurer who she hero-worshipped, was found shot in the head in a snow-fringed field in Croatia. As she grew up, the Swiss animator became fascinated by how an idealistic young reporter somehow ended up in a Croatian paramilitary unit accused of the ethnic cleansing of Serb villagers as the former Yugoslavia fell apart. Kofmel's new film about her cousin, "Chris the Swiss"—which is showing this week at the world's top animation festival in Annecy, France—has been hailed by the Hollywood Reporter as a "stirring suspenseful and moving elegy for doomed youth".

But it also raises uncomfortable questions about what exactly Christian Wurttemberg was up to and about the shadowy involvement of the Catholic group Opus Dei in the war. Kofmel's investigation into the strange and murky world in which her cousin died not only reopened old wounds for her family but also led her to the jailed terrorist "Carlos the Jackal"—Ilich Ramirez Sanchez—and ultimately on the trail of a hitman who tried to overthrow Bolivian President Evo Morales in 2009. Throbbing in the background was the knowledge that British photographer Paul Jenkins—who had also tried to find answers about her cousin's murder—ended up with a bullet in his head.

'He was my hero'

Kofmel begins the steadily darkening story from a child's point of view, using animation as well as interviews with war reporters and former mercenaries and volunteers who fought with Wurttemberg in the Croatian First Platoon of International Volunteers (PIV) near Osijek in the winter of 1991.

"I looked up to him, Chris was my hero," Kofmel told AFP. "He was my big cousin who was an adventurous exciting guy for a little girl like me. 'Later I realised he was not just black and white.' Using his



Anja Kofmel

diaries and notes, the film reconstructs her cousin's path from being a greenhorn journalist filing reports on the war for Swiss public radio to his fateful meeting with Eduardo Rozza Flores, aka "Chico", a former KGB trainee who set up the PIV with a motley crew of far-right activists drawn to defend "Catholic Croatia" from Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia.

Chico, a mysterious Hungarian-Bolivian whose father was a friend of Che Guevara, is the film's dark heart. Like Wurttemberg, he apparently came to Croatia to try his hand as a reporter before quickly realizing he preferred making war to covering it. Kofmel suspects her cousin was killed by Chico when he discovered that he had joined his unit to expose the atrocities it was committing. "Chris was trying to write a book. I can see it from his notes. We don't have his manuscript. I don't know if he was close to finding something, or if there was a huge story. 'I know certain things. Chico was a member of Opus Dei. I think this is why Christian died, I think he wanted to prove that they were being financed by Opus Dei,'" she said. —AFP

Coup plot

TURTLES CAN MAKE GREAT PETS, BUT DO YOUR HOMEWORK FIRST



Photo shows two Russian Tortoises in Galloway, NJ. — AP photos



Photo shows a Western Hermann's tortoise from Apulia, Italy after a rain showing its bright coloration in Galloway, NJ.

While turtles might seem like the perfect pet - less work than dogs and cats, more interactive than fish - there are a few things to keep in mind before buying one.

"They are definitely becoming more popular as pets. Some of them are very beautiful and they can be easily purchased over the internet. But there's no such thing as an easy pet," says Katrina Smith, adoptions coordinator for the Maryland-based Mid-Atlantic Turtle and Tortoise Society.

Consider the source

First, never take a wild turtle as a pet. "Chances are they won't do well in captivity,"

Smith says. "Look into adopting a turtle from your local turtle society or www.petfinder.com before buying one. And if you do buy, make absolutely sure it's been born in captivity."

The cute, tiny turtles often found at tourist shops across the country may be hard to resist, but turtle experts say you should. "Don't buy those tiny turtles you see for sale in Chinatown in New York, or in tourist shops in Daytona Beach on spring break," Smith says. "They're being sold illegally."

Some states, like New Jersey, require permits for pet turtles, largely due to concerns about already stressed populations of native turtles, Smith says. Be sure to check local laws before

deciding what kind of turtle to adopt, Smith says.

Health and safety

Because many turtles carry salmonella, young children, the elderly, pregnant women and others at risk should avoid contact with turtles or be extra careful to wash their hands thoroughly after touching them. Connected to this risk, federal law prohibits selling turtles less than 4 inches in size because of the risk of children putting them in their mouths.

Dave Pauli, a senior adviser for wildlife response and policy for the Humane Society of the United States, runs a large turtle and tortoise rescue and rehabilitation center in Billings, Montana.

He stresses the importance of "good hygiene protocol" when taking a turtle into a home. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urge people to treat all turtles as if they are contaminated with salmonella, because they probably are. Wash hands thoroughly after touching turtles, their cages or their feces, and do not touch your face, other people, or any surface until your hands have been washed. Also, turtles should be kept separate from food and kept away with people at high risk of infection, the center advises.



Photo shows a head close-up of a Russian Tortoise.

Picking the right variety

Some turtles that start out small can grow to the size of a garbage can lid, so do your homework ahead of time when selecting a type and gender of turtle to call your own. In many species, females grow to be much larger than their male counterparts, Smith says. The best varieties for beginners are male painted turtles, US mud and musk turtles, and male red-eared sliders, she says.

Caring for your animal

"Turtles require more maintenance and space than most people generally assume," Pauli says, "and they live for decades, so buyers should be aware that they are a pet that may well outlive them." Turtles require a varied and sometime messy diet, room to roam in an aquarium and strict temperature control. Their habitat needs to be cleaned more often than many people realize, although water turtles require less maintenance than box turtle or other varieties.



Photo shows a baby Sulcata turtle on top of a young adult sulcata.



Photo shows a Eastern Hermann's tortoise.



Photo shows a Western Hermann's tortoise from Apulia, Italy in a clover patch in Galloway.

Get to know your turtle

Turtles can be beautiful pets and "are really cool to have," Pauli says. "They're extremely interesting and have individual personalities. But they are exotic pets, and pet store owners are generally an extremely poor source of information about them." Experts advise seeking out a local turtle and tortoise society or club - there are dozens across the country - for information and animals.

Turtle societies can answer questions about caring for pets and promoting turtle welfare. If you have a turtle that is proving to be more than you can handle, contact a turtle society about what to do, and never release them into the wild. Certain types of turtle - red-eared sliders, for example - are so frequently released by pet owners into the wild that they have become an invasive species around the world, and are threatening native turtle populations. Turtles are hardy and can be wonderful pets, experts say. Just know what you're getting into, and how to care for them properly to ensure a healthy life for the turtle, its owner, and native species in your area. — AP



Photo shows a common musk turtle.



Photo shows an Eastern Box turtle.



Photo shows a baby red-eared slider turtle on top of an adult female red-eared slider.

Lifestyle | Feature



People take part in a tango seminar in Montevideo. — AFP photos



Stage tango world champion Maria Noel Sciuto (left), dances with Rodrigo Fleitas during an exhibition at Chamuyo milonga in Montevideo.

MONTEVIDEO: NO LONGER THE 'FORGOTTEN CAPITAL' OF TANGO?

Every night, 69-year-old Edinson chooses one of his 11 pairs of dance shoes, slips into a smart suit and heads out to dance tango in the clubs of Montevideo, a city that is looking to breathe new life into an old tradition, one that has long been eclipsed by its more famous neighbor, Buenos Aires. "I've been dancing for 10 years now," said Edinson, a retired soldier, and this stylized exit from his house has become a nightly ritual, "no matter what the weather is."

With a nod of his carefully coiffured-head, he invites a woman onto the parquet dance floor, where they skillfully glide past other couples in a club that is almost hidden behind a covered market. It is here that the Joventango ("Young tango") association organizes so-called "milongas" every week, evenings of dance that are open to initiates as well as to the merely curious and the passing tourist. Tango was born in the late 19th-cen-

tury, behind the closed doors of salons in Montevideo and Buenos Aires because the spectacle of dancers pressing passionately against each other was originally deemed to be too steamy to be performed in public.

It later gained popularity and then respectability after it spread to Paris. In an ironic twist of history, today in Uruguay tango is "relegated to something old people do," fumed Martin Borteiro, who like his wife Regina Chiappara is a former professional dancer. At the start of the year, Martin and Regina were called on by the mayor's office to come up with a diagnosis of what is ailing tango in Montevideo, with an eye to developing a strategic plan to revive the dance. The picture painted by the couple was bleak: fewer and fewer milongas, older dancers and less public support. In a sign of how far the decline has gone, only one local maker of tango shoes still exists in the Uruguayan

capital. "The current tango community is very fragile," said Martin. "Montevideo is the city where tango was born, so there is a danger of something vanishing which is part of our identity, part of our tradition."

'Liking losing football'

Esteban Cortez, a 43-year-old tango teacher, refuses to countenance it: losing this dance would be "like losing football for me, it'll never happen" in a nation in a country where soccer is almost like a religion. "If our tango disappears, we will disappear as a country," he said. His wife Virginia Arzuaga, 40, who is herself a teacher, noted that the dance had been named part of the world's cultural heritage by UNESCO in 2009. "And when something is named a cultural heritage, it's because it's about to die out," she said.



People follow the performance, as stage tango world champion Maria Noel Sciuto and Rodrigo Fleitas (out of frame) dance during an exhibition at Chamuyo milonga.



A man assists his wife to fasten her high-heeled shoes, as they prepare to dance tango at Mandinga milonga in Montevideo.



People dance tango at Joven Tango milonga in Montevideo.

“There are those who’ll tell you, ‘when the tango bug bites you, you are lost, it’s a voyage of no return,’” said Virginia, reflecting on the growing popularity of the dance overseas, in particular in countries like Turkey, Russia and France. “It’s a shame that here, in a city with so much tango in its history, it’s not appreciated, valued or cherished,” lamented Joselo Ferrando, 45, who runs one of the city’s main tango events, Chamuyo.

A far cry from Argentina

Uruguay’s tango aficionados gaze enviously across the waters of the Rio de Plata at the neighboring Argentinian capital, where tango is king, and its fame has spread around the world. “The most obvious comparison is with Buenos Aires, which has made it a question of their identity and worked to promote it both inside the country and abroad, as a selling point for tourism, which is an important source of revenue,” said Ferrando. In Montevideo, “we still have so much to do, including broadcasting the music in the media, teaching the dance in schools and training teachers,” he said.

But in recent months, the tide may have begun to turn: a tango museum has opened and a major new festival, dubbed “Montevideo Tango” is scheduled to take place on October 27. Pianist Alberto Magnone, 71, works in an area of the historic city center that is filled with statues and painted murals to remind locals and tourists alike of the capital’s role in the history of tango. It was here, in 1917, that “La Cumparista”—the most famous tango tune of all time—was composed. “Tango was a joint product of both Uruguay and Argentina, but it was we who didn’t give it the place it deserved,” he said.

The mayor’s office hopes to launch its plan in July, based on the diagnosis set out by Chiappara and Borteiro, the former pro dancers. “The strategic plan will be: ‘Montevideo, local tango, a far cry from the tango-spectacle, on the stage,’” said Jorge Navratil, director of the city’s cultural promotion campaign. The aim will be to “create new audiences, both on the local and international levels, and put Montevideo back on the world map” of tango, including the creation of a municipal orchestra dedicated to tango music, plus a public outreach to high schools, shows and a public works project to preserve the heritage. Because tango is “like a language: when you stop speaking it, it dies,” he said. — AFP



People take part in a tango seminar in Montevideo.



People take a tango class at Mandinga milonga.



People take a tango class at Mandinga milonga.

‘iPal’ robot companion for China’s lonely children

It speaks two languages, gives math lessons, tells jokes and interacts with children through the tablet screen in its chest—China’s latest robot is the babysitter every parent needs. The “iPal” was among a slew of new tech unveiled at the Consumer Electronics Show Asia in Shanghai this week, offering education and company for lonely children and peace of mind for adults. The humanoid device stands as tall as a five-year-old, moves and dances on wheels and its eyes keep track of its charges through facial recognition technology.

Parents can also remotely talk to and monitor the children through the iPal, which is linked to a smartphone app that allows them to see and hear everything. “The idea for this robot is to be a companion for children,” said Tingyu Huang, co-founder of AvatarMind Robot Technology. “When a child sees it, he or she will think of the robot as a friend, as another child in the family.” Their 9,000 yuan (\$1,400) did not dampen interest from buyers watching a performance of several iPals dancing in unison.

“They’re pretty cute. I was just thinking my own two-year-old daughter would love one,” Mike Stone, a buyer from Australia said. China’s young working parents often face the burden of taking care of children or elders without help from a large extended family, as the impact of the country’s decades-long one-child policy lingers. The limit was raised to two children in 2016. “I don’t think the robots can replace parents or teachers,” Huang said. “But iPal can be a complementary tool to relieve some of their burden.” China’s robot market is also catching onto needs from a growing population of elderly “empty nesters” who prefer to grow old at home rather than at a nursing home.

AvatarMind will soon launch another robot that can talk to seniors, remind them to take their pills and call the hospital when they fall. Beijing has invested money and manpower in developing AI as part of its “Made in China 2025” plan. A Chinese firm unveiled the country’s first human-like robot, which can hold simple conversations and make facial expressions, during the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas last year. The iPal is the latest humanoid robot to be marketed for family use, following in the footsteps of the diminutive, wisecracking “Pepper” companion released by Japan’s SoftBank in 2015. — AFP



In this picture iPal robots by Avatarmind are exhibited at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) Asia in Shanghai . — AFP

THE KEY TO MAKING **PASTA WITH SHELLFISH** THAT ISN'T FLAVORLESS

By America's Test Kitchen

For a recipe with a handful of ingredients, pasta with shellfish is awfully hard to get right. We love the combination of tender pasta and succulent shrimp or bite-size bay scallops, but all too often the shellfish is overcooked and tough and the pasta is boring and flavorless.

For an extraordinary but simple spaghetti dinner, we created a creamy vinaigrette packed with bright, lemony flavor and tossed it with tender shrimp, hot

pasta, butter and chopped basil. Grated Parmesan ensured that our vinaigrette was perfectly clingy and hung on to the pasta and shellfish. Because this recipe is so simple, it is important to use high-quality extra-virgin olive oil, fresh-squeezed lemon juice, and fresh basil.

SPAGHETTI WITH LEMON, BASIL AND SCALLOPS

Ingredients

Servings: 4-6
 Start to finish: 30 minutes
 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
 2 teaspoons grated lemon zest plus juice (2 lemons)
 1 small garlic clove, minced to paste
 Salt and pepper
 2 ounces Parmesan cheese, grated (1 cup)
 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
 1 pound small bay scallops
 1 pound spaghetti
 1/4 cup shredded fresh basil

Preparation

Whisk oil, lemon zest and juice, garlic, and 1/2 teaspoon salt together in small bowl, then stir in Parmesan until thick and creamy. Melt 2 tablespoons butter in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat. Pat scallops dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. Add scallops in single layer and cook until scallops are firm, about 3 minutes; transfer to bowl and cover.

Meanwhile, bring 4 quarts water to boil in large pot. Add pasta and 1 tablespoon salt and cook, stirring often, until al dente. Reserve 1/2 cup cooking water, then drain pasta and return it to pot. Stir in olive oil mixture, scallops with any accumulated juices, remaining 2 tablespoons butter, and basil and toss to combine. Add reserved cooking water as needed to adjust consistency and season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve.

Nutrition information per serving:

587 calories; 258 calories from fat; 29 g fat (8 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 37 mg cholesterol; 506 mg sodium; 61 g carbohydrate; 3 g fiber; 2 g sugar; 20 g protein.



Turn yellow squash or zucchini into ribbons for a fun side

By America's Test Kitchen

Quick-cooking and delicately flavored, yellow summer squash and zucchini are favorites in Mediterranean cuisines and perfect for a light side dish. To create a fresh, simple recipe, we started with very thinly sliced squash, using a peeler to make even "ribbons" and discarding the waterlogged seeds.

The ultrathin ribbons browned and cooked so quickly that they didn't have time to break down and release their liquid, eliminating the need to salt them before cooking. The cooked squash needed little embellishment: a quick, tangy vinaigrette of extra-virgin olive oil, garlic, and lemon and a sprinkle of fresh parsley rounded out the flavors.

We like a mix of yellow summer squash and zucchini, but you can use just one or the other. The thickness of the squash ribbons may vary depending on the peeler used; we developed this recipe with a peeler that produces ribbons that are 1/32 inch thick. Steeping the minced garlic in lemon juice mellows the garlic's bite; do not skip this step. To avoid overcooking the squash, start checking for doneness at the lower end of the cooking time.



SAUTEED ZUCCHINI RIBBONS

Ingredients

Preparation

and is translucent, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer squash to bowl with dressing, add parsley, and gently toss to coat. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve.

Nutrition information per serving:

132 calories; 83 calories from fat; 9 g fat (1 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 318 mg sodium; 11 g carbohydrate; 3 g fiber; 7 g sugar; 4 g protein.

Servings: 4-6

Start to finish: 20 minutes

1 small garlic clove, minced
1 teaspoon grated lemon zest plus 1 tablespoon juice
4 (6- to 8-ounce) zucchini or yellow summer squash, trimmed
2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper
1 1/2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

Combine garlic and lemon juice in large bowl and set aside for at least 10 minutes. Using vegetable peeler, shave off 3 ribbons from 1 side of summer squash, then turn squash 90 degrees and shave off 3 more ribbons. Continue to turn and shave ribbons until you reach seeds; discard core. Repeat with remaining squash. Whisk 2 tablespoons oil, 1/4 teaspoon salt, 1/8 teaspoon pepper, and lemon zest into garlic-lemon juice mixture.

Heat remaining 1 teaspoon oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add summer squash and cook, tossing occasionally with tongs, until squash has softened

ONCE MORE THE HYPE RISES: RECAPPING A GREAT E3 2018



By Aakash Bakaya

This year's E3 was a slightly more muted affair compared to previous years. There were some massive games announced but they were either slated for next year or not given a release date at all. There were also fewer duds than usual which improved the show overall. Here i'm only focusing on the main conferences (except Nintendo) and the few games that caught my interest. So let us get down to it.



EA GAMES

Anthem

One of the games with the highest buzz coming into E3, 'Anthem' ended up simply 'whelming' fans. Even Bioware enthusiasts couldn't help but shrug and nod during the almost muted presentation. It did show-off some gameplay, a rare sight during EA's conference, and it was exactly what you expected it to be. Having a highly vertical map with swimming and flying truly opens the world but the actual gameplay seemed very by-the-numbers. The classes didn't seem exciting enough and the loot and shoot system is going to be a grindy nightmare especially with how slow combat and travel looks. The world looks great and we got a release date so eager fans should be satisfied with more information in the coming months.

Fifa 19

Speaking about muted presentations, 'Fifa 19's stage showcase was so silent you could hear the sighs all the way through the stream. Hard to blame them, EA Sports barely even bothered this year with their proverbial 'golden goose'. I love the Fifa series as much as the next football fan, but the last three entries have been hard to distinguish from one another. The trailer was simply happy to showcase the new Champions League rights EA as acquired and promised to give players a true Champions League experience. No new features were spoken about, but does it matter? It's going to sell millions anyway.



Command & Conquer: Rivals

This is what 'Command & Conquer' has become. An insulting free-to-play clicker game disguised as a sort of parody of strategy games. The fact that EA brought in two "E-Sports phenomenon's" and made it seem like an actual game was even more infuriating. After the "match", the presenter said that this was EA bringing 'Command & Conquer' to the new generation. The new generation deserves better than this.



MICROSOFT

Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice

'Dark Souls' and 'Bloodborne' director Hidetaka Miyazaki likes nothing more than to see his loyal fanbase struggle. This time, they'll be struggling in a world heavily inspired by feudal, medieval Japan. All the From Software touches were there. The intense combat, the brutal enemies, giant snake monsters -the usual From Software ingredients. There are no bonfires to kindle and no unsuspecting low levels to invade as this is strictly a single player experience following a set protagonist. That makes 'Shadows Die Twice' quite the departure from the venerable 'Soulsbourne' series but there's going to be a large number of features added including a new death mechanic, branching story paths and a grappling hook - something every game must have. As a mega-fan of Miyazaki's work, I can hardly wait.



Halo Infinite

Surprisingly little was said about Microsoft's beloved cash cow except that it will be the franchise's return to PC and that the game will focus on Master Chief and continue his saga after the events of 'Halo 5'. X-Box unveiling their next Halo game may not be the most exciting of news but the fact that it's returning to PC points towards the possibility of the entire franchise making its way in due time which is amazing news for the PC community. Microsoft is gunning hard to make all of its exclusives available on Windows and the advent of the Halo series following suit is a step in the right direction.

Ori and the Will of the Wisps

2014's 'Ori and the Blind Forest' was a tremendous achievement. A grueling often hair-pulling game that mixed challenge and beauty seamlessly. It was a great platformer as well, staying true to the genre's roots and paving the way for the high-quality 'metroidvanias' that came out in the following years after its release. 'Will of the Wisps' is a direct continuation of the story and Moon Studios is ready to pull on your heartstrings yet again. The trailer showed off a handful of new mechanics and some gorgeous new locations that is sure to improve on the first game. But it will be the story that fans like myself will be most interested in.

**Dying Light 2**

Microsoft on the whole had one of their best E3 conferences in years. Ever since their disastrous announcement of the X-Box One, they have been struggling to find their footing again. Last year showed glimpses of the right attitude but it still had a few blemishes. 2018 on the other hand was a massive improvement and was pretty much on the money. One key example of that was their presentation on the new 'Dying Light'. Getting the narrative director on stage was genius as he straight-forwardly put across some of the most exciting new mechanics being added mainly the ability to alter the world and story through player choice. Nothing groundbreaking I know but it was explained in such a way you couldn't help but sit up and take notice. It was a great showcase and X-Box enthusiasts should be delighted at the line-up they had on display.

**BETHESDA****Fallout 76**

It's funny to think that a little over a month ago, the possibility of a new Fallout game was almost zero. Now not only do we have a brand-new entry into the legendary franchise, we have an all new take on it as well. The rumors that swirled around the inter-webs turned out to be true and the series is indeed bringing multi-player into the series for the very first time. A co-op, survival experience meant to be played with a bunch of friends, I am remaining on the fence until more gameplay footage comes out detailing how exactly Bethesda is transforming the Fallout franchise into a genre that is already very popular on Steam. I can't help but feel a little disappointed it's not a proper story driven spin-off like New Vegas as MP games like these aren't experiences I really seek out or enjoy but I am willing to keep an open mind on it. Who knows? It could turn out to be a lot of fun.

Doom Eternal

The sequel to DOOM (2016) is possibly the game I'm most excited about coming out of this E3. The first was a titanic beast in digital form coming out of the fiery gates of hell itself destroying everything it sees and leaving no (unpumped) survivors. Ok you can tell that just the very notion of taking control of the DOOM SLAYER again is getting me excited. We only got a tiny glimpse at 'Eternal' but it looks like it's Hell on Earth and will take inspiration from Doom 2 with the addition of new demons to slaughter and more tools to slaughter them with it. If it delivers another meaty, bombastic campaign like the first one then everyone will be more than satisfied. Also for those wondering, Mick Gordon is returning for the soundtrack so prepare your eardrums for another heavy dose of metal-infused carnage.

**Starfield**

Bethesda's conference ended on two huge notes with the announcement of 'Starfield' being the first. The studio's first original IP in 25+ years and the only information we were given is that we shouldn't worry - this is going to be a traditional Bethesda RPG only this time set in space. Planet travel? Sci-fi inspired character classes? A massive world and story foundation? Right now, nobody has the answers to those questions. But if the studio can roll up their sleeves and prove that they still got what it takes to entice players then they got another blockbuster on their hands.



Lifestyle | MixTape

**Elder Scrolls 6**

It was the final curtain call of the night for Bethesda and easily the biggest surprise of E3 2018. It might have been only a title screen but that didn't stop fans from going into a frenzy. The music, the atmosphere and the sweeping landscapes of the awe-inspiring world of the Elder Scrolls returns. I was just happy to see something other than Elder Scrolls Online or worst another Skyrim port. This is a long way-off and isn't even in a playable state yet (pre-production according to director Todd Howard) but this was an acknowledgement they are indeed working on the next entry in the franchise. Speaking about Elder Scrolls, they also unveiled 'Elder Scrolls: Blade' a free-to-play game for your phone. I have nothing to say about it except that it looked horrible.

**Death Stranding**

Another extraordinary trailer that will go down in E3 history regardless if the game lives up to ever-growing expectations. Hideo Kojima has been given free reign to do whatever he wants but even with all the weird test-tube babies and maggot eating - a fascinating tale somehow manages to shine through. We also got our first look at the game in action, but it consisted of just Norman Reedus strolling through the country side with the occasional corpse in his belongings. I have no idea what it's about, nobody really does. But Kojima has the world watching and that is already an achievement.

UBISOFT**For Honor/ Beyond Good & Evil 2**

I haven't played a Ubisoft game since 'Far Cry: Blood Dragon' so I can't really say much about the conference except 'Assassin's Creed: Odyssey' looks neat and that 'For Honor' is free to purchase and keep until June 18th so there's nothing really stopping you from picking it up and trying it out. I know I will. Also 'Beyond Good & Evil 2' showed yet another disjointed, middle-of-the-story trailer that teased us with returning characters and not much else. They later had Joseph Gordon-Levitt on stage to feature a new community-created content program that will be applying community created art and music to the game. This is something that's never been really done before but hopefully they can pull it off because it sounds amazing.

**SONY****Last of Us 2**

Somehow Naughty Dog keeps raising the bar. I have honestly never seen a video game with graphics of this quality. It was a fantastic trailer that expertly conveyed the emotions and atmosphere of the story through comprehensible cut-scenes and gameplay. The short segment showing Ellie facing off against insurmountable odds was harrowing and brutal. Every kill looked devastatingly realistic and I couldn't help but winch at the violence portrayed on screen. Some parts had such fluid body movements your brain almost refuses to believe you're watching a video game. I might be over-hyping it a bit but parts of me can't believe it and parts of me is sure it's completely scripted. No release date for this one which is a damn shame.

Spider Man

Jumping from the strange and confusing - Sony provided some comfort food with a more detailed presentation on the upcoming 'Spider Man' title by Insomniac Games. It was a moderately lengthy gameplay feature with all the web-swinging and high-flying combat you would expect. I was happy to see them continue expanding more on what made previous entries so fun by bringing in an old-school rogue gallery reminiscent of the PS1 Spidey games I grew up with. The demos showcased on the floor had people overflowing with excitement and thankfully we won't have to wait long to get our hands on it with the release set for this September.

**HIGHLIGHT OF THE SHOW****Cyberpunk 2077**

No I need did not forget about 'Cyberpunk 2077'. CD Project Red's brand new title has been eagerly anticipated for almost half a decade and the trailer was worth the wait. Beyond the trailer that was shown during Microsoft's conference, CPR had a demo showcased with a tremendous amount of information including the fact it will be a primary First-Person RPG filled with all the RPG elements you would come to expect. But just how well they tackle their next massive open-world after 'The Witcher 3' is still to be seen by the public. The demo had journalists going absolutely nuts with some claiming it to be the greatest thing they've ever seen (no seriously some said that). Next year E3 will surely have 'Cyberpunk' front and center and hopefully with a release date as well.

Comic

WORD SEARCH

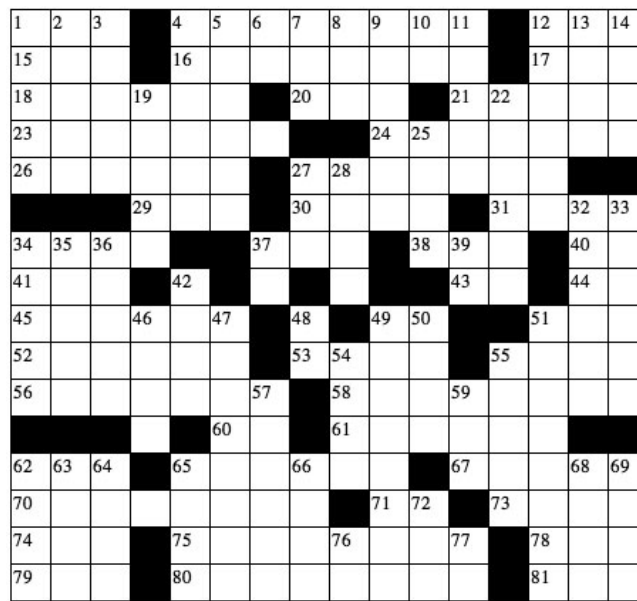
Public Library

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a Henry Ward Beecher quotation.

A C S E I V O M S E N I Z A G A M L I R B
R S H A V Y G O L O H C Y S P R W E N E R
Y A R E I R S N L I B R A R Y C A R D C E
G P B E C O E S E L B A T T Y A N I Y R I
O P L R P K S S O U A W O R R O B N H E P
L L S L A A O C E X N A U I R M T P A O
A I T R I N P U I R I N G T Y E U E O T C
T E R B I T C S T T O A A U N U S R S I O
A D A T Y A E H W I A M L C A T I N O O T
C S D P H R H R T E R M Y S E G C E L N O
O C U A P N E C A O N C E C C O E T I T H
E I E P A H I V F T L O H H M I E S H E P
S E D E R D I N O O U N F P T U E T P I B
L N A R G F I S P C O R U H D A E N N U O
E C T B O E I E T L D T E R C E M S C Q O
V E E A E S D N O E R E R E L I G I O N E K
O I T C G I I G E R O O R V A F I C T I O N S
N E S K A O Y F S S O Y L H C R A E S E R
S E V L E H S L A C I D O I R E P R E A D
I F L I B R A R I A N E B I O G R A P H Y

- | | | | |
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| APPLIED SCIENCE | ENCYCLOPEDIA | MAGAZINES | QUIET |
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CROSSWORD 1936



ACROSS

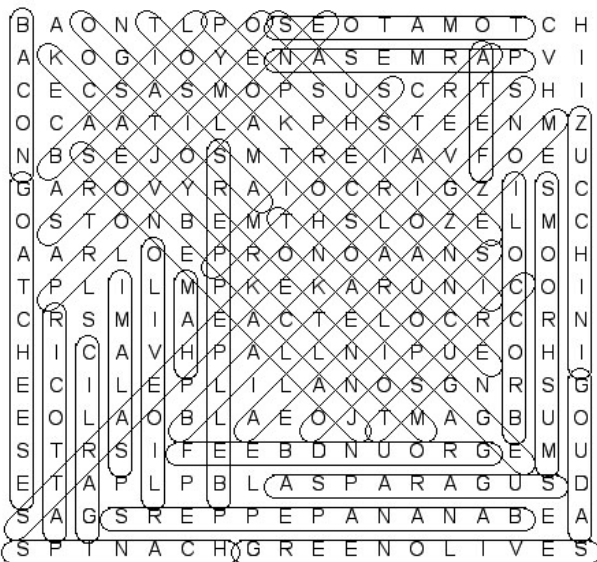
- A resource.
- A genus of herbs and shrubs belonging to the family Euphorbiaceae.
- A reproach for some lapse or misdeed.
- A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
- A large region between the Black and Caspian seas.
- A dark-skinned member of a race of people living in Australia when Europeans arrived.
- Of or relating to or characteristic of Afghanistan or its people.
- A usually soluble substance for staining or coloring e.g. fabrics or hair.
- Reconnaissance (by shortening).
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- The comprehensive theological doctrine created by Saint Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century and still taught by the Dominicans.
- Any of various plants of the genus Aralia.
- A local computer network for communication between computers.
- Using speech rather than writing.
- (Welsh) A warrior god.
- By bad luck.
- The law enforcement agency in the Justice Department.
- An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
- Flower arrangement consisting of a circular band of foliage or flowers for ornamental purposes.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- A hard brittle gray polyvalent metallic element that resembles iron but is not magnetic.
- (music) Characterized by avoidance of traditional Western tonality.
- Eurasian perennial bulbous herbs.
- An enclosure made of wire or metal bars in which birds or animals are kept.
- Outermost layer of the pericarp of fruits as the skin of a peach or grape.
- A bet that you can pick the first and second finishers in the right order.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
- Raised for its long silky hair which is the true mohair.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- A member of either of two Shoshonean peoples (Northern Paiute and Southern Paiute) related to the Aztecs and living in southwestern United States.
- Large hard-shelled oval nut with a fibrous husk containing thick white meat surrounding a central cavity filled (when fresh) with fluid or milk.
- A state in midwestern United States.
- English essayist (1775-1834).
- Devoid of warmth and cordiality.
- A genus of Mustelidae.
- Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
- A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
- A tooth having two cusps or points.
- An affirmative.

DOWN

- (Babylonian) A demigod or first man.
- Reason by deduction.
- (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
- Any of various spiny trees or shrubs of the genus Acacia.
- An ancient country is southwestern Asia on the east coast of the Mediterranean.
- A soft yellow malleable ductile (trivalent and univalent) metallic element.
- A digital display that uses liquid crystal cells that change reflectivity in an applied electric field.
- A branch of the Tai languages.
- A genus of Bothidae.
- An expression of greeting.
- American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
- Of or related to genetically distinguished groups of people.
- The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
- A composition written in metrical feet forming rhythmical lines.
- Hilly land.
- Tropical African herbs.
- Consisting of one of two equivalent parts in value or quantity.
- Having a toe or toes of a specified kind.
- A republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
- A member of the Finno-Ugric-speaking people living in eastern European Russia.
- A Chadic language spoken in Chad.
- A pause during which things are calm or activities are diminished.
- Garlic mayonnaise.
- One thousand periods per second.
- A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
- Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
- Pleasant or pleasing or agreeable in nature or appearance.
- A person who commits larceny.
- The district occupied entirely by the city of Washington.
- Of or relating to an agent or agency.
- A large mass of ice floating at sea.
- English historian noted for his history of England (1800-1859).
- South American armadillo with three bands of bony plates.
- Suggestive of the supernatural.
- A small inflamed elevation of skin that is nonsuppurative (as in chicken pox).
- A man who is much concerned with his dress and appearance.
- Strong dark beer brewed in the fall and aged through the winter for spring consumption.
- Any group or radical of the form RCO- where R is an organic group.
- Slightly wet.
- (physics and chemistry) The smallest component of an element having the chemical properties of the element.
- A flat thin rectangular slab (as of fired clay or rubber or linoleum) used to cover surfaces.
- Informal terms for a meal.
- A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
- Functioning correctly and ready for action.
- A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.

Yesterday's Solution

Pizza



- | | | | |
|------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| ARTICHOKE HEARTS | CRUST | JALAPENOS | PROVOLONE |
| ASIAGO | EGGPLANT | MONTEREY JACK | RICOTTA |
| ASPARAGUS | FETA | MOZZARELLA | SALAMI |
| BACON | GARLIC | MUSHROOMS | SAUSAGE |
| BANANA PEPPERS | GOAT CHEESE | OLIVE OIL | SHRIMP |
| BASIL | GOUDA | ONIONS | SPINACH |
| BELL PEPPERS | GREEN OLIVES | OYSTERS | TOMATO SAUCE |
| BLACK OLIVES | GROUND BEEF | PARMESAN | TOMATOES |
| BROCCOLI | HAM | PEPPERONI | ZUCCHINI |

The hidden words are: ANCHOVIES CHICKEN MEATBALLS PINEAPPLE

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku

	3		4					1
4		6	5					9
5	7							4
		4	6	5				3
6			2		3			7
		3		9	4	8		
8								9
3		7			9	1		5
9			7					4

Yesterday's Solution

6	7	9	2	1	8	4	5	3
2	5	3	7	4	9	6	8	1
1	4	8	6	3	5	7	2	9
3	1	7	5	9	2	8	6	4
9	8	5	4	6	3	1	7	2
4	2	6	8	7	1	3	9	5
5	9	4	1	8	7	2	3	6
7	6	2	3	5	4	9	1	8
8	3	1	9	2	6	5	4	7

Sheep graze streets of Paris suburb

AUBERVILLIERS, France: It's an idyllic scene: sheep nibble placidly on the grass as a gaggle of children laugh in delight. But this is a high-rise housing estate in the suburbs of Paris, not the tranquil countryside. Every month, enthusiastic shepherds from an urban farming project in Aubervilliers, just north of Paris, release their dozens-strong herd from their enclosure in a park for a wander in the streets. The goal is

two-fold: to give the animals access to plants that are good for them, and to bring a little rural peace to a neighborhood better known for dreary tower blocks and industrial sites.

"Each time it's done in good humor, they're very well behaved," Julie-Lou Dubreuilh, co-founder of the Urban Shepherds cooperative, said of her flock. "You can really feel that this helps the housing estates to unwind, for the

town to de-stress." The sheep make their way at a leisurely pace across zebra crossings, past cafes and petrol stations, stopping to graze at the base of graffitied public apartment blocks.

Dubreuilh said these outings were vital for the health of the sheep under the project's chemical-free farming methods. "We're based at the La Courneuve park which is about 400 hectares," she said. "There's lots to eat there,

but weirdly when you want to do livestock farming without using antibiotics or worming medication, you have to give the sheep the possibility to care for themselves," she explained. "Often that means plants which grow by paths and wasteland, and you can often find those in town. For example, just over there I can see a mugwort plant—that's perfect for de-worming."—AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

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Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
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Kuwait Times Classifieds

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Friday, June 15, 2018

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DAY: Thursday 14/06/2018 Valid From 7 PM To 7 AM

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h.

BY DAY: Hot with light to moderate northerly wind to north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 38 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 14/06/2018 1200 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	46 °C	33 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	45 °C	31 °C		
ABDALY	45 °C	30 °C		
BUBYAN	---- °C	---- °C		
JAHRA	46 °C	32 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	44 °C	30 °C		
SALMIYAH	41 °C	36 °C		
AHMADI	38 °C	35 °C		
NUWAISIB	42 °C	29 °C		
WAFRA	45 °C	28 °C		
SALMY	42 °C	27 °C	<small>MSL Analysis Dept Valid 1200 UTC 14 JUN 2018</small>	

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	06/15	Hot	45 °C	31 °C	N-NW	15 - 38 km/h
Saturday	06/16	Hot + rising dust	46 °C	32 °C	NW	15 - 45 km/h
Sunday	06/17	Dusty	47 °C	34 °C	NW	25 - 70 km/h
Monday	06/18	Dusty	47 °C	35 °C	NW	25 - 60 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:13
Sunrise	04:49
Zuhr	11:48
Asr	15:22
Sunset	18:49
Isha	20:21

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	42 °C
MIN. Temp.	32 °C
MAX. RH	30 %
MIN. RH	09 %
MAX. Wind	NE 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP.0 2018/06/14 14:38 UTC V1.00 T2.4 ق.ت.ع. 8-1



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

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Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
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I, **Inacinha Fernandes Barreto**, daughter of Angelo Fernandes, holder of Indian Passport No: M4642005 & Civil ID No: 25801200404, hereby change my name to Inacinha Fernandes hereafter in all my dealings and documents. (C 5401)
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KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493

Business

FRIDAY, JUNE 15, 2018

39 ECB to end bond buys but signals rate hike is distant



40 China urges US makes wise choice ahead of tariffs decision



41 British engine maker Rolls-Royce cuts 4,600 jobs



GAZA CITY, Palestinian Territories: Hani al-Laham, an employee of the Ramallah-based Palestinian government, sweeps the street outside a coffee kiosk near the beach in Gaza City.—AFP

Employees wait for politicians to allow them to return to jobs

In Gaza, unpaid govt salaries dampen Eid joy

GAZA CITY, Palestinian Territories: Hani al-Laham sits down to a family dinner after a long day of fasting, but he has little to celebrate as the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan approaches. Despite Laham having a monthly salary of 1,700 shekels (\$475), tied to a job in the security services, the Palestinian government has repeatedly failed to pay him. He is one of nearly 60,000 Palestinians in Gaza on the payroll of the internationally-recognized administration based in the West Bank.

More than a decade ago the Palestinian Authority (PA) ordered its employees in the enclave to stay at home, over a dispute with Gaza rulers Hamas, promising to continue paying their salaries. But now the money has been cut back. "This is a disaster, Gaza is collapsing," said Laham, whose financial woes have seen the family evicted from their rented home in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. They have now moved to a homemade

shack on the coast near Gaza City, but even that meager existence is threatened.

The local municipality is trying to demolish their temporary home, claiming it was built without the necessary permits. "If they give me back my salary, I will rent an apartment. I am tired of this life," the 55-year-old said. Last week Laham finally received a small sum of money, ahead of the Eid al-Fitr Muslim festival marking the end of Ramadan, but it doesn't cover the family's basic needs. "Where should we go? Burn ourselves?" his wife Noor, 33, asked.

West Bank protest

The family's situation—and that of thousands of other Gazans—is one of the idiosyncrasies of the bitter intra-Palestinian conflict. The Islamist Hamas movement seized control of Gaza in 2007, after a near civil war with the PA which is led by president Mahmud Abbas. Hamas argued it had won 2006

parliamentary elections and been deprived of the right to rule after the international community refused to accept the result.

The Gaza takeover was deemed a coup by Abbas, who eventually told his employees not to go to work until Hamas ceded power. The salaries of staff including judges, doctors and ministry workers continued to be paid while they waited for bickering politicians to allow them to return to jobs. But years later they are stuck, with Israel imposing a blockade on Gaza that has crippled the economy and no realistic employment opportunities under Hamas.

Recently, facing financial shortfalls and seeking to isolate Hamas, Abbas sought to make cuts to the Gaza salaries. Last year they were reduced by 30 percent, while in March the PA paid nothing at all—without explanation. The following month Abbas promised the salaries would be paid within a few days, but nothing happened. Fi-

nally 50 percent of one month's salary was paid on June 5, ahead of Eid which will likely be celebrated Friday.

The Ramallah government has said the lack of payment is a "technical" issue, but it has long had budgetary problems. Critics also argue that by cutting salaries the PA is seeking to sow discord among Gaza's two million residents, and make life difficult for Hamas. Hundreds of Palestinians in the West Bank took to the streets of Ramallah on Sunday and Wednesday to demand that salaries be paid in Gaza, a rare show of opposition in the city where Abbas's government is based.

The latter protest had been banned by the Palestinian administration and security forces dispersed demonstrators with tear gas and sound grenades. The United Nations warned last month that Gaza could be on the brink of war, after at least 129 Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire in border protests.—AFP

Business

Euro tumbles as ECB vows to keep rate down

Battered EM currencies enjoy relief

LONDON: The euro fell a full cent against the dollar and government borrowing costs dropped yesterday, after the European Central Bank vowed not to raise euro zone interest rates before the middle of next year. The bank said it was pulling the plug on its 2.55 trillion euro stimulus program but after the Federal Reserve raised US interest rates for the second time this year on Wednesday the ECB rate promise came as a relief. The pan-European STOXX 600 index raced back into positive territory after a morning in the red, though basic resources stocks stayed down more than 1 percent after weak data from big metals consumer China. Germany's DAX and France's CAC40 led the stocks rebound, while the euro tumbled back towards \$1.17 from well over \$1.18. Euro zone government borrowing costs slid too as traders recalibrated prices for a longer period of sub-zero ECB rates.

"The Governing Council expects the key ECB interest rates to remain at their present levels at least through the summer of 2019 and in any case for as long as necessary (to get inflation back to near 2 percent)," the ECB said. Germany's Bunds were offering 0.46 percent

compared with 0.49 percent before the ECB statement. US Treasuries meanwhile were down to 2.94 percent having briefly topped 3 percent overnight after the Federal Reserve had pushed up its interest rates.

"I think its pragmatic for the Fed to take these moves, because if you are not going to make them now, when are you going to take them?" Kully Samra, European managing director at \$3 trillion US asset manager Charles Schwab, said. The ECB had probably been too slow to reduce stimulus, Samra added, though recent weaker data showed Europe still had underlying issues. The bank's chief Mario Draghi holds a news conference at 1230 GMT to explain the decision. His biggest complication is the increasingly murky economic European outlook, a developing trade war with the United States, a populist challenge from Italy's new government and softening export demand.

Shares in S Korea fall over 1.8 percent



Also keeping investors in check were concern about US threats to impose tariffs on \$50 billion of Chinese goods. US President Donald

Trade tensions

Trump will meet with his trade advisers later to decide whether to activate the tariffs, a senior administration official said on Wednesday. In Asia, surprisingly soft Chinese retail sales and investment data had also hit sentiment. China's central bank then left its interest rates on hold, rather than follow the Fed as it sometimes does. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan lost 1 percent.

Wall St wants more female traders, but old perceptions die hard

NEW YORK: As a biomedical engineering student at Duke University, Priya Karani thought she did not have the right skills to break into the heavily male-dominated field of Wall Street trading. "I was never interested in a career in trading at a bank because I didn't know it was an option," Karani said. A decade later, Karani is a director at Barclays PLC in New York where she trades healthcare derivatives and helps the bank's effort to attract more women to trading by talking to female college students about her job.

Despite such efforts Karani still represents a small minority since few women apply for jobs in trading, deterred by its decades-old reputation as an "alpha-male territory" and misconceptions about skills it requires. "Trading is a hard one to crack," said Jon Regan, a head of global markets for executive search firm Sheffield Haworth. "I don't think it has changed

much, although firms are working hard to improve their gender ratios."

The firm, which works for many leading investment banks and conducts studies on behalf of its clients, found women generally account for 12 to 15 percent of trading roles, he said. There are no industry-wide data but the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, which oversees US brokerages, said women accounted for about 28 percent of individuals registered with it at the end of 2017. Those numbers include not just traders, but also investment advisers.

Banks' efforts to change that have intensified over the past year with the emergence of the #MeToo movement and growing shareholder calls for disclosures on workforce diversity. For example, Citigroup Inc and Bank of America Corp released information on diversity and gender pay gap for the first time this year in response to calls from an investment advisory firm. Since last year, major employers have also been obliged to report gender pay gap data for their British operations, which for banks showed women underrepresented in higher earning roles.

Coaching, networking and mentoring

Barclays' Sophomore Springboard program that Karani supports is one of several initiatives banks have introduced recently to make trading rooms more diverse. Citigroup Inc does college recruitment focused on informing young women about trading careers and offers them interview coaching, while JPMorgan Chase & Co has been running an internal program for the past two



HONG KONG: A pedestrian walks past a stocks display showing the Hang Seng Index at 30725.15, down 1.22 percent after the close of trading in Hong Kong.—AFP

years called Women Who Trade, which offers networking for female traders of all levels, including potential recruits.

"We are doing a better job at ensuring analyst classes have a better intake (of women)," said Claudia Jury, global co-head of currencies and emerging markets at JPMorgan and a senior sponsor for the program. The bank has hired around 30 women through the program since 2016, it said. Goldman Sachs Group Inc started its Trader Academy in London last year, offering eight months of mentoring, networking and job shadowing for 16 female college students. The bank plans to expand the program to the Americas this year and Asia soon after.

Goldman has said it wants women to eventually make up half of its overall workforce, but acknowledges trading is far from that goal. "Having women in particular from a trading perspective has always been a challenge for us," said Janine Glasenberg, the bank's head of graduate recruiting in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Banks are so keen to improve their diversity ratios that one declined to make young female traders available for interviews out of fear they might get poached by competitors.

Shareholder pressure aside, managers and some studies say hiring more women simply makes business sense. David Hesketh, chief executive of a London-based startup TradingHub said trading simulations the company ran in 2014 and 2015 for hundreds of interns as part of banks' recruitment programs showed women made fewer trades and took fewer risks. They would also break the rules less than half as often

Shares in South Korea and Taiwan fell over 1.8 and 1.4 percent, Japan's Nikkei dropped 1 percent while mainland China's Shanghai composite index hit a 20-month closing low. Another event markets were gearing up for was the start of soccer's World Cup in Russia. Russia's time-zones mean there will be more matches during European or US and Latin American trading hours than any previous tournament.—Reuters



Priya Karani

as men. In all, having more women on a team could translate into savings on brokerage fees, loss provisions and fines. "That is kind of nuts, if you think some firms are getting fines in the hundreds of millions of dollars," Hesketh said.

Boys club vibe

Yet former female traders interviewed by Reuters describe an industry, which has left behind discriminatory attitudes common only a decade ago, but where women remain heavily outnumbered and can sometimes feel like outsiders in a "boys' club." Simmy Grover, who worked as an equity trader at Morgan Stanley in London between 2006 and 2009, recalled how just over a decade ago one investment bank was ready to offer her a job, but just could not imagine her on the trading floor.—Reuters

Business

ECB to end bond buys but signals rate hike is distant

Rates steady until next summer

RIGA/FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank announced yesterday it would wrap up its unprecedented bond purchase scheme by the close of the year, its biggest step in dismantling crisis-era stimulus a decade after the start of the euro zone's economic downturn. But in a balanced announcement reflecting the uncertainties hanging over the region's economy, it also signaled the move would not mean a rapid policy tightening by adding that interest rates would stay at record lows "at least through the summer of 2019 and in any case for as long as necessary."

The new rates guidance prompted the euro to reverse initial gains to fall over one percent to \$1.1670, close to its biggest one-day loss since October. Markets had been anticipating a 10-basis-point hike in the ECB's benchmark deposit rate—currently at -0.4 percent—by June 2019. ECB President Mario Draghi declined to give more detail about the timing of rate moves in a news conference after the policy meeting, this time held away from the bank's Frankfurt headquarters in the Latvian capital Riga.

"We didn't discuss when to raise rates," he said. "This decision has been taken in the presence of a strong economy with increasing uncertainty," he said of a political landscape characterized notably by rising trade tensions between the United States, Europe and China. The ECB also downgraded its euro zone growth forecast for this year to 2.1 percent from 2.4 percent previously, while upgrading its inflation forecast to 1.7 percent from 1.4 percent, largely as a result of rising oil prices.

"This is a very fine balance—a bit more hawkish on QE, but rather dovish on rates—that Mario Draghi hopes will

keep the markets on an even keel and avoid a taper tantrum," said Neil Wilson, chief market analyst for Markets.com. Though full policy normalization will take years, investors are already braced for the end of easy money from the world's central banks. A hawkish US Federal Reserve dropped a crisis-era stimulus pledge on Wednesday while the ECB had already begun rolling back support after a five-year run of economic growth.

The ECB said the monthly pace of its net asset purchases would be halved to 15 billion euros from September until the end of December 2018, at which point purchases would end. By putting a specific end-date on its stimulus, the ECB is taking a more decisive step than when the US Federal Reserve started its own taper in December 2013. Then, it did not commit to a specific end or any subsequent steps.

The biggest complication could be a murky economic outlook, muddled by the developing trade war, a populist challenge from Italy's new government and softening export demand. But ECB policymakers have long argued that their mandate is to bring inflation back to target, not to prop up growth or fight off market turbulence in any particular country.

Italian bond yields rose sharply this month as a new government of anti-establishment parties promised higher spending. That threatens a clash with Brussels, which is pushing Rome to cut the euro zone's second-biggest debt pile. A broader slowdown could make it harder for the ECB to cut support if lower growth eases pressure on inflation, a threat to the bank's credibility as it has missed its inflation target of almost 2 percent for over five years.



ECB downgraded its euro zone growth forecast



RIGA: The President of the European Central Bank (ECB) Mario Draghi gives a press conference following the meeting of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank in Riga, Latvia. — AFP

Inflation

While inflation has remained weak, higher oil prices, increasingly evident wage pressures and record employment suggest that prices will be moving up in the coming years, even if more slowly than the ECB had originally hoped. ECB Chief Economist Peter Praet, a Draghi ally and one of the most dovish members of the rate-setting Governing Council, recently argued that progress has been made on the inflation criteria, a strong hint that stimulus would be pared back.

The euro's 5 percent fall against the dollar since April is also helping the ECB as the weaker currency is increasing the cost of imports and boosting inflation. While a rebound is likely, the US Fed's tightening stance will limit the potential for a big rise in the euro. — Reuters

Which child to school? Tough choice for Indian workers

BENGALURU, India: Hard-working Vasantamma Kumar had to pawn her jewelry and take out two loans to ensure her children were back in class when term began this week. The seamstress, who is paid little for the eight-hour day she spends cutting cuffs for branded shirts, was forced to call on money lenders to keep her children in school.

Now she is among tens of thousands of workers in India's \$40 billion-a-year textile and garment industry who are seeking higher wages from the factories that supply global brands. "May-June is the month that we regularly take a big loan to pay children's fees, buy new uniforms and books," said Kumar. "My daughter's college also asked for a donation. It all came from borrowed money. I want them to study but there are days it looks impossible."

Despite minimum wage laws, salaries continue to be "grossly low" for thousands of workers, many of whom are still not given pay slips or are only hired as apprentices, campaigners say. Kumar has a take-home salary of 7,000 Indian rupees (\$103) and has to repay loans worth more than 200,000 rupees (\$2,957). "Everyone

is indebted and it is a vicious cycle of never-ending loans," said Sujata Mody of Penn Thozhilalargal Sangam, a Chennai-based women workers' union.

"The women in this industry are constantly borrowing money from someone to pay back someone else." An estimated 45 million workers, mostly women, are employed in India's thriving garment industry, with major hubs in the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The clothes they stitch are exported around the world and sold by big brands, which have long promised better conditions in their supply chain.

Promises aside, campaigners say little has changed, with low wages, verbal and sexual harassment and long hours the norm. A year-long study of more than 500 workers in Cambodia, India and Bangladesh found women often work overtime or borrow money just to feed their families and pay rent. Despite earning the minimum wage and logging overtime, researchers found most were still short of money.

Which child?

It was a tough decision for Savita Rajesh to end her teenager's schooling this year. But with mounting debt and no increase in her wages or festival bonus, the seamstress said she had no choice. For 12 years, the 35-year-old has stitched shirts and blouses for leading fashion brands and takes home 8,500 Indian rupees (\$126) a month. "My elder daughter passed out of grade 10 but will not go back for further studies this session. It's not about whether I want it or not. It's about not being able

to afford it," Kumar said. "The garment factory my husband worked in closed without notice a few months back. He is still unemployed. We took a loan of 20,000 rupees for the younger daughter's fees and books. The interest is already mounting." The pressure to repay forces most workers to resign every few years so they can access their factory's employee saving fund, union leaders said.

"Then they rejoin the workforce but are treated as new employees and start at the bottom again, foregoing benefits of permanent workers," said Saroja Kannappa of the Garment Labor Union, which represents more than 4,000 workers. "There is no financial security at all, even for women who have spent 20 years stitching clothes for big brands." Unions and campaigners want a living wage, saying the minimum wage set by most Asian countries is inadequate to ward off poverty, they say.

More than 1,000 people joined a rally on May 1 in Bengaluru, carrying placards reminding brands of their promise to pay a living wage to all workers in their supply chain. In Chennai, workers are fighting lengthy court battles to get their dues, two years after the Madras High Court said they should receive a pay rise of up to 30 percent - the first minimum wage hike in 12 years.

"Everyday is a struggle," said Rukumini V. Puttaswamy, a tailor for 17 years and now head of the Garment Labour Union. "Cost of living for workers, many of whom are single mothers, in cities like Bengaluru is very high. Rents are high and education is very costly. There is no choice but to borrow money and constantly work to pay it off." —Reuters

Business

China urges US makes wise choice ahead of tariffs decision

Trump to unveil revised tariff list today

BEIJING: China urged the United States yesterday to make a “wise decision” on trade, saying it was ready to respond in case Washington chose confrontation, as US President Donald prepares to decide whether to activate tariffs on Chinese goods. Trump is due to unveil revisions to his initial tariff list targeting \$50 billion of Chinese goods today. People familiar with the revisions said the list would be slightly smaller than the original, with some goods deleted and others added, particularly in the technology sector.

Another administration official said a draft document showed the new list would still be close to \$50 billion, with about 1,300 product categories, but both the dollar amount and quantity of products were still subject to change. Speaking to reporters in Beijing, with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at his side, the Chinese government’s top diplomat State Councillor Wang Yi said there were two choices when it came to the trade issue.

“The first choice is cooperation and mutual benefit. The other choice is confrontation and mutual loss. China chooses the first,” Wang said. “We hope the US side can also make the same wise choice. Of course, we have also made preparations to respond to the second kind of choice.” The move toward activating US tariffs on Chinese goods follows negotiations between US and Chinese officials centered on increased purchases by Beijing of American farm and energy commodities and cutting the US trade deficit with China.

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross this month met Chinese officials in Beijing and brought back a Chinese proposal to buy around \$70 billion worth of additional commodities and manufactured goods. But that offer has not been accepted by Trump, people familiar with the matter said. Wang said a basic consensus reached by the two countries during the recent talks was a pact to use “constructive means” to handle disagreements.

“We hope the US side can meet China halfway and earnestly implement this important consensus, and promote the appropriate resolution of the relevant issue through a win-win and not lose-lose manner,” he said. “In this process, we hope the US side does not unilaterally take any non-constructive actions, and does not create new obstacles for the next phase of consultations.”

Pompeo said the US deficit with China was still too high, but that they had had good talks. “I stressed how important it is for President Trump to rectify that situation so that trade becomes more balanced, more recip-

rocal and more fair, with the opportunity to have American workers be treated fairly. We had good and constructive discussions.”

Move could come today

It remains unclear when Trump would activate the tariffs, if he decides to do so. Several industry lobbyists told Reuters they expected the move to come as early as today, with publication of a Federal Register notice, or it could be put off until next week. If Washington adopts tariffs, Beijing is expected to hit back with its own duties on US imports, including soybeans, cars, chemicals and planes, according to a list it released in early April.

Under the 1974 trade law that Trump invoked to pursue a tariff investigation into China’s intellectual property practices, he could delay the activation by 30 days. He can also delay the tariffs by another 180 days if the US Trade Representative’s office finds negotiations with China are yielding progress. “The president’s trade team has recommended tariffs.

If there are not tariffs, it will be because the president has decided that he’s not ready to implement tariffs,” a person familiar with the administration’s deliberations told Reuters.

But that recommendation came prior to Trump’s trip late last week to Canada for the G7 leaders’ summit and to Singapore for talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to defuse a nuclear standoff on the Korean peninsula. Trump returned to Washington early on Wednesday morning. In an interview aired on Wednesday, Trump told Fox News that he was “very strongly clamping down on trade” with China. Asked how strong, Trump said: “Well, I think very strongly. I mean you’ll see over the next couple of weeks. They understand what we are doing.” Trump did not specifically mention the tariffs and added that he had “a very good relationship with President Xi (Jinping) of China.”

The administration’s trade hawks, including US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and White House trade and manufacturing adviser Peter Navarro, have advocated a tougher approach to address US allegations that China has misappropriated American intellectual property through joint venture requirements, state-backed acquisitions of US technology firms and outright theft. Amid the rising trade tension, China’s commerce ministry spokesman Gao Feng said Chinese exporters have been front-loading their shipments due to changes in the international trade environment.—Reuters



SHANGHAI: Containers are seen at the Yangshan Deep Water Port in Shanghai, China.—Reuters

US Federal Reserve raises key interest rate

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve raised the benchmark lending rate on Wednesday for the second time this year, and signaled it will be more aggressive about rate increases in 2018 and 2019 amid “strong” economic growth. And although he acknowledged concern among businesses nationwide about the uncertainty created by President Donald Trump’s abrasive trade policies, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell stressed that “the US economy is in great shape.” The unanimous vote the Fed’s rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee brings the federal funds rate to a range of 1.75–2.0 percent, and indicated there would be two more rate increases this year and four next, one more than previously expected. Wall Street was not happy with the aggressive new stance, worried that it signaled concerns about rising prices. All three major indexes turned negative right after the announcement and closed even lower.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 0.5 percent and the broad-based S&P 500 shed 0.4 percent. However, Powell downplayed concerns about accelerating inflation, saying the central bank would not overreact to an expected uptick driven by the recent increase in oil prices and would aim for the rate to hold at around two percent for a “sustained” period. “We know inflation is going to bounce around,” he told reporters. “We didn’t overreact, I think, to inflation being under two percent. We won’t overreact to it being over two percent.” The Fed last raised the benchmark in March, the sixth increase since December 2015 as it tries to keep the economy growing at a sustainable pace without fueling inflation.

The FOMC statement stressed that rising rates were unlikely to derail economic growth—which the committee now characterizes as “strong” rather than



WASHINGTON: Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell speaks during a news conference in Washington DC.—AFP

“moderate.” In another slight change of language—something that always draws the scrutiny of Fed watchers—it said “further gradual increases” in the key rate “will be consistent with sustained expansion of economic activity, strong labor market conditions and inflation near the Committee’s symmetric two percent objective over the medium term.”

The use of the terms “symmetric” and “medium term” is a clear indication the Fed is not in a hurry to get inflation to two percent and will be comfortable if prices rise above that level for a short time—which Powell confirmed. Even so, Jim O’Sullivan of High Frequency Economics, summarized the Fed’s outlook as “a bit more hawkish than expected.” In its quarterly Summary of Economic Projections, officials projected the Fed’s preferred inflation measure would accelerate only slightly, ending this year at 2.1 percent rather than 1.9 percent, and holding at that level through 2020.—AFP

Business

British engine maker Rolls-Royce cuts 4,600 jobs

Latest update to result in largest cull since 2001

LONDON: Rolls-Royce plans to axe 4,600 mainly British management roles by 2020 to further slash costs, the UK maker of plane engines announced yesterday. "Rolls-Royce announces the next stage in our drive for pace and simplicity with a proposed restructuring that will deliver improved returns, higher margins and increased cash flow," the group said in a statement. The London-listed company, whose engines are used in Airbus and Boeing aircraft, said the latest cuts would produce £400 million of annual cost savings by the end of 2020.

Rolls has faced a tough trading environment in recent years on weak demand for its power systems, in particular ones used by the marine industry, resulting in the loss of about two thousand jobs alongside the creation of new posts. The latest update will result in the largest cull at the group since 2001, when it axed 5,000 jobs on a global economic downturn and following the September 11 attacks in the United States. "Our world-leading technology gives Rolls-Royce the potential to generate significant profitable growth," the company's chief executive Warren East said yesterday's announcement.

"The creation of a more streamlined organization with pace and simplicity at its heart will enable us to deliver on that promise, generating higher returns

“ Next stage in our drive for pace and simplicity ”

while being able to invest for the future," he added. Although Rolls roared back into profit last year, this was largely owing to a recovery in the pound. While the plunge in the value of the pound in the wake of Britain's 2016 vote in favor of Brexit helped many exporters, Rolls-Royce was forced to book a vast charge as it had not hedged against such a swing in the currency.

Rolls said the latest round of restructuring, leading to the loss of many corporate-supporting roles, was expected to cost the group £500 million, while about two-thirds of the job losses would be in the UK. East, who has implemented a group-wide restructuring since his appointment as chief executive in 2015, insisted that the latest cull was not linked to repairs it has been forced to carry out on Trent engines. Used by the Boeing 787 Dreamliner and Airbus A380 super-jumbo, the engines have seen some parts wear quicker than expected, forcing Rolls to carry out costly repairs.

Rolls employs about 55,000 staff worldwide, almost half of whom are in Britain. The company meanwhile has some 16,000 staff at its UK operational base in Derby, central England. "Most of these management and support functions (set to go) are in Derby and therefore, it will be most strongly felt in Derby," East said in an interview with BBC radio.

rounding some major UK retailers. Troubled UK budget chain Poundworld on Monday fell into administration, putting it closer to collapse with the loss of up to 5,100 jobs unless a last-ditch buyer can be found. Poundworld, which is battling against discounting in supermarkets, appointed financial group Deloitte to help it find a buyer and stave off store closures and job losses. The announcement came just days after House of Fraser, the Chinese-owned department store chain, said it is closing more than half its shops across Britain and Ireland, risking the loss of 6,000 jobs.

British retailers with large amounts of stores are suffering also from fierce online competition from the likes of US giant Amazon. The UK is experiencing also weak household spending generally amid Brexit uncertainty. Last month, British food-to-clothing retailer Marks and Spencer said it would shut more than 100 UK stores as it looks to shift at least one third of overall sales online. Emphasizing the fast-growing shift to online among British consumers, Amazon last week said it plans 2,500 new UK jobs by the end of the year.

"While the squeeze on household finances looks to have accelerated the demise of retailers not abreast with current consumer shopping habits, it has presented an opportunity to gain market share for those nimble enough," noted Christian Jaccarini, an economist at the Centre for Economics and Business Research. The latest retail figures are however likely to be "an aberration given the one-off drivers of growth, meaning tough trading conditions induced by weakened household finances are likely to persist", he added.—AFP



DERBY: This file photo shows a Rolls Royce Trent XWB engine on view on the assembly line at the Rolls-Royce factory in Derby, central England. —AFP

World-class

Rolls had in January announced a major overhaul of its operations, reducing the number of core units and basing the remainder around civil aerospace, defense and power systems. "We have world-class technology in Rolls-Royce, but... (not) a world-class business to go along with it," East said yesterday in a call with reporters. At the same time, the company has said it would consider selling its commercial marine business, while in April, Rolls sold German division LOrange for 700 million euros to US group Woodward.

Speaking to the BBC, East said he saw opportunities in China. "We look at China and we see an opportunity there for aircraft engine... that's where a lot of opportunities are." Shares in Rolls-Royce rose 2.5 percent to 849 pence in morning deals on London's benchmark FTSE 100 index, which was down 0.7 percent overall. "Reducing costs is typically applauded by shareholders as it tends, in the short-term at least, to boost the profit and cash flow of which they are part owners," noted AJ Bell investment director, Russ Mould. —AFP

UK retail sales jump on hot weather, royal wedding

LONDON: British retail sales soared unexpectedly in May as consumers basked in warm weather and enjoyed the royal wedding, official data showed yesterday. Sales rallied 1.3 percent last month after a jump of 1.6 percent in April, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement, adding that there was growth across all sectors. "Feedback from retailers suggested that a sustained period of good weather and royal wedding celebrations encouraged spending in food and household goods stores in May," the ONS said.

Market expectations had been for a more moderate 0.5-percent increase in May, according to economists polled by Bloomberg. Britain's Prince Harry and US actress Meghan Markle got married last month, with many Britons holding street parties to mark the occasion. Yesterday data "was well ahead of economists' forecasts, and sterling reacted positively, jumping almost half a cent against the dollar", said Ben Brettell, senior economist at Hargreaves Lansdown. "Some traders will be betting that a stronger retail performance strengthens the case for higher interest rates this summer," he added.

However Brettell pointed also to the gloom sur-

Lonely Planet founder wants to change the world - through business

LONDON: The man who brought backpacking to the masses is now banking on business to make the world a better place. Together with his wife Maureen, Tony Wheeler - founder of the iconic Lonely Planet travel guide - has set aside 10 million pounds to educate a new generation of leaders to lend their business skills to development issues.

"If you're pushing entrepreneurship, it's the developing world where we would particularly like to see it happening," he said of his financial support for the Wheeler Institute of Business and Development at the London Business School. It's worlds away from the hippie trail that made his name but it is driven by the same passion for far-flung places.

Since he first hit the open road in 1972, Wheeler has visited 170 countries - Nepal is his most visited, Iraq where he felt most uneasy - and has seen myriad changes down the decades.

"People are more aware of inequalities now. What's it all about in the end? It's about business and jobs and work and if we can do that in a good way it's a good thing," he said. The Wheeler Institute wants students to use their nascent boardroom skills in poorer countries, with an eye on creating jobs and growing businesses with a positive social impact.

Guest speakers from government and development agencies explain the concrete difference students can make. Then they go out in the field and apply their new skills on real businesses. Aside from backing business with a conscience, Wheeler said he wants to give back to his alma mater where he studied for free, in contrast to the steep debt run up by today's students. After graduating in 1972, he headed overland to Melbourne, which resulted in a first book "Across Asia on the Cheap".

Lonely Planet was born, offering advice on budget travel and growing into the world's biggest guide book publisher. Toted by travelers across the globe, Lonely Planet has printed more than 100 million books in nine languages, mapping out tourist trails from Austria to Antarctica. In 2007, the Wheelers sold Lonely Planet to the BBC and by his own reckoning, his net worth is now "over \$100 million". Wheeler said he plans to fund the institute for three years and assess its impact before committing further. —Reuters

Sports

Nationals edge Yankees 5-4; Soto hit a three-run homer

Marlins overpower Giants 5-4

WASHINGTON: Rookie Juan Soto blasted the tiebreaking homer with one out in the top of the seventh inning, recorded his first career multi-homer game and drove in four runs as the Washington Nationals recorded a 5-4 victory over the New York Yankees on Wednesday night at Yankee Stadium. Soto hit a three-run homer in the fourth off right-hander Sonny Gray and gave the Nationals a 5-4 lead when he lifted a 1-0 fastball from Chasen Shreve (2-1) over the right-center-field fence.

At 19 years, 231 days, Soto became the youngest player to homer in a regular-season game at any version of Yankee Stadium since Hall of Famer Ken Griffey Jr also homered twice for the Seattle Mariners on May 30, 1989. He is the third-youngest player to homer in any game against the Yankees. Additionally, Soto is the youngest player with a multi-homer game in the majors since Andruw Jones accomplished the feat on Aug. 22, 1996.

Red Sox 5, Orioles 1

Mookie Betts and JD Martinez both homered, and Chris Sale threw six-plus solid innings as Boston completed a three-game sweep at Baltimore. The Orioles lost their seventh game in a row. Sale (6-4) snapped his personal three-game losing streak with a solid performance. He went six-plus innings and allowed one run on two hits with nine strikeouts and four walks. However, as Sale was walking toward the Boston dugout after manager Alex Cora pulled him, the pitcher made an angry gesture. Plate umpire Brian Knight then ejected him.

Rays 1, Blue Jays 0

Matt Duffy singled with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning to complete Tampa Bay's three-game sweep of Toronto at St. Petersburg, Fla. The Blue Jays have lost 11 of their past 15 games at Tropicana Field. Mallex Smith doubled with one out in the bottom of the ninth against Ryan Tepera (3-2) and moved to third on a groundout by Wilson Ramos. Duffy won the game with his single to left field. Diego Castillo (1-0) allowed one hit in two innings to earn the victory, the first of his career.

Braves 2, Mets 0

Atlanta rookie Mike Soroka came off the disabled list and took a no-hitter into the seventh inning en route to a win over visiting New York. Soroka (2-1) had been sidelined for a month due to a sore right shoulder. He didn't allow a hit until Michael Conforto reached on an infield single to lead

off the seventh. Soroka wound up throwing 6 1/3 scoreless innings, yielding one hit and one walk. He struck out four. Arodis Vizcaino worked around a walk and a hit to toss a scoreless ninth inning and nail down his 12th save. Freddie Freeman homered for the Braves.

Brewers 1, Cubs 0

Jhoulys Chacin fired six shutout innings, and Lorenzo Cain hit a third-inning homer as Milwaukee blanked visiting Chicago for the second consecutive game. Chacin (6-1) permitted four hits and walked three while striking out seven in winning his sixth consecutive decision. Corey Knebel recorded the last three outs for his sixth save in eight chances. Mike Montgomery (2-2) ceded just two hits and a run over six innings, walking one and punching out four.

Pirates 5, Diamondbacks 4

Jordy Mercer homered, doubled and drove in three runs, and Jameson Taillon pitched seven innings of two-run ball as Pittsburgh held on to beat Arizona and salvage the finale of a three-game series at Phoenix. Mercer doubled home two runs to cap a four-run second inning off Zack Greinke and hit his fourth homer of the season in the fourth for the Pirates, who have lost eight straight series and 18 of their past 25 games. Arizona's Jon Jay hit a two-out, two-run single in the ninth inning before left-hander Felipe Vazquez struck out Jake Lamb with the bases loaded for his 12th save in 16 chances.

Mariners 8, Angels 6

Mitch Haniger hit a two-run homer with one out in the bottom of the ninth inning to give host Seattle a three-game sweep of Los Angeles. With one out in the ninth, Jean Segura singled to center field. That brought up Haniger, who lined a 1-0 pitch from Oliver Drake (1-1) over the left field wall. It was Haniger's 16th home run of the season. Nelson Cruz and Ryon Healy also homered for Seattle, which rallied from a 6-4 deficit by scoring in each of the final three innings. The Mariners have won four straight and 11 of their past 13 games.

Rockies 7, Phillies 2

Ian Desmond hit a two-run homer, and Trevor Story added three hits and two RBIs, leading Colorado to a win at Philadelphia. Charlie Blackmon also ripped two hits, and Carlos Gonzalez had two hits, two walks and two runs for the Rockies. Tyler Anderson (4-1) pitched seven strong innings, allowing six hits and one run while striking out six. He



NEW YORK: Pinch runner Michael Taylor #3 of the Washington Nationals is caught stealing second base in the eighth inning by Gleyber Torres #25 of the New York Yankees at Yankee Stadium on June 13, 2018 in the Bronx borough. —AFP

didn't issue a walk. Jorge Alfaro homered for the Phillies, and Jesmuel Valentin went 3-for-4 with his first career home run.

Marlins 5, Giants 4

Brian Anderson hit a walk-off, ninth-inning sacrifice fly as Miami rallied to defeat visiting San Francisco. It was the first career walk-off RBI for Anderson, and the last play of the game was the only time the Marlins led all night. Miami fell behind three times in the game and tied the score three times. Justin Bour went 2-for-4 with two score-tying RBIs.

Tigers 5, Twins 2

Victor Reyes drove in the go-ahead run with a two-out single during a four-run, eighth-inning uprising, and Detroit topped visiting Minnesota. The Tigers were playing their first game since Miguel Cabrera sustained a season-ending biceps injury in Tuesday's series opener. His replacement, John Hicks, had three hits. Detroit's Niko Goodrum had three hits, including a solo homer, and scored twice. Joe Jimenez (3-0) tossed an inning of scoreless relief, and Shane Greene got the last three outs for his 16th save.

White Sox 3, Indians 2

Chicago made its four hits count in a win over visiting Cleveland. Charlie Tilson hit an RBI triple in the fifth inning and scored on Trayce Thompson's sacrifice fly, and Kevan Smith hit a run-scoring single in the sixth.

The White Sox won the middle two games of the four-game series to assure themselves no worse than a split. The Indians lost consecutive games for the first time since a three-game skid from June 1-3. Dylan Covey (3-1) scattered 10 hits and allowed two runs while walking none and striking out five over seven-plus innings. He outduelled Trevor Bauer (5-5), who gave up three runs while striking out 12 in 7 2/3 innings.

Padres 4, Cardinals 2

Eric Lauer (3-4) allowed two runs on eight hits in 5 2/3 innings, and San Diego won the rubber match of a three-game series in St. Louis. The Padres won a fifth consecutive series for the first time since the 2010 season. Freddy Galvis gave the Padres a 2-0 lead in the first on a two-out, two-run double, and San Diego added two runs in the sixth. The Cardinals scored their two runs in the sixth on a home run by Marcell Ozuna. San Diego relievers retired nine of the 10 Cardinals they faced, with the sole runner eliminated by a double play.

Reds 7, Royals 0

Tyler Mahle tossed 6 1/3 scoreless innings as visiting Cincinnati swept a two-game series at Kansas City. The Reds turned a pitchers' duel into a rout, scoring two runs following two Kansas City errors runs in the seventh inning, another in the eighth and four in the ninth on a long grand slam by Adam Duvall. The Royals lost their third straight and 10th in their past 12. — Reuters

Sports

History-making Afghanistan get a rude welcome to Test cricket

Afghans defy heavy odds to emerge as a force in the game

BANGALORE: Afghanistan were handed a bruising introduction to Test cricket by India yesterday as the team capped their astonishing rise from war and refugee camps to joining the sport's elite. Afghan skipper Asghar Stanikzai called it a "very proud moment" as he strode onto the field at Bangalore's M Chinnaswamy stadium for the toss, won by opposite number Ajinkya Rahane.

"All the guys have first-class experience. Inshallah (God willing), we can do well," the 30-year-old batsman said. Afghanistan have become one of only 12 nations sanctioned to play Tests, the five-day format considered cricket's peak, after defying heavy odds to emerge as a force in the game. The hosts gave no quarter to the Afghan bowlers, however, reaching 264 for one when rain stopped play for the second time in the final session. Shikhar Dhawan smashed a merciless 107 and Murali Vijay was unbeaten on 99. The left-right opening combination of Dhawan and Vijay put together a 168-run stand to make the Afghanistan bowlers toil.

Dhawan galloped to his century in just 87 deliveries, becoming the first Indian batsman to reach three figures on the opening day before lunch. Dhawan hit 19 fours and three sixes as he set about the Afghan bowlers including spin sensation Rashid Khan, smashing three boundaries in the teenager's opening over to bring up his 50. But Dhawan also became Afghanistan's first Test wicket when paceman Yamin Ahmadzai had him caught by Mohammad Nabi in the slips early in the second session. Lokesh Rahul, batting on 44, then

England look to discipline to turn tide of defeats

BLOEMFONTEIN: It will be hard to replicate the drama of their epic first test when South Africa and England clash again in Bloemfontein on Saturday as the tourists seek to improve their discipline and accuracy to end a four-game losing streak. The Springboks rallied from 24-3 down after 17 minutes to claim a 42-39 victory in the opening game of the three-match series at Ellis Park last Saturday, prompting South African fans to wonder what is possible under new coach Rassie Erasmus. Yet for England it was another dismal loss, beset by the same problems they encountered in the Six Nations as they once again showed an inability to stay on the right side of the referee, with a penalty count of 17-4 against Eddie Jones' side.

"If you take that penalty count and it becomes eight-four we win the test match. Hopefully we will fix that this week," Jones told SkySports on Thursday. "The team has been very good. They are making more steps forward to have more ownership of the team which is what we want. "They are all big contests for us now. We want to win test

joined Vijay to continue India's momentum as they put on an unbeaten 96-run partnership for the second wicket.

Glued to the TV

Most cricket-loving Afghans were watching the match on TV back home as they prepared for a three-day public holiday for the Muslim festival of Eid. Afghans took to social media to celebrate the start of the Test, which comes amid a government ceasefire during the holy month of Ramadan. Nadir Danish in the eastern province of Khost wrote on Facebook: "I hope they (India) do not make history of us—they are piling up runs on Afghanistan."

The way their openers have batted has panicked the Afghanistan team! Earlier, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani sent his congratulations for what he called a "historic day". "I am proud of the men who championed cricket in Afghanistan in the dawn of the century and believed in themselves that one day Afghanistan will play against the best in the world," he said. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted: "May sports continue to bring our people closer and strengthen ties."

From camps to WCups

Afghan cricket grew out of refugee camps in Pakistan where many families were based after they fled conflict in the 1980s and 1990s. The national team have made giant strides against much richer and more stable countries, despite unrest at home which has forced them to train in India since 2015. Afghanistan last year achieved full member status of

matches and there is a lot of noise, a lot of pressure, but we have to find a way through this. We have a young bunch of players who are trying to do that."

With a little over a year to go until the next World Cup, Jones has handed a first start to New Zealand-born flank Brad Shields in place of one of his stalwarts, Chris Robshaw, a move he says is intended to counter the South African lineout. "Chris Robshaw has been outstanding for us but we just felt we needed another lineout (option)," Jones said. "Brad's lineout jumping will come in handy for us. He is a tough workrate player like Robbo is so we want to pick up what Robbo has been doing and take to another level plus his lineout jumping."

Jones could also give a first test runout in three years off the bench to flyhalf Danny Cipriani. "His desperation impresses me, he really wants to play. We know he has got nice skills and his attitude has been outstanding." Joe Launchbury also starts at lock after recovering from a calf injury. South Africa have made two changes to their starting side, with utility forward Pieter-Steph du Toit coming in at flank and Frans Malherbe taking over at tighthead prop. On the other side of the scrum, loosehead Tendai Mtawarira will become the sixth Bok to reach 100 test caps. "England is a powerful side and I know Eddie Jones will have his team super prepared for Saturday," Bok coach Rassie Erasmus said. —Reuters



BANGALORE: Afghanistan wicketkeeper Afsar Khan Zazai (right) stumps out Indian batsman Dinesh Karthik during the one-off India Vs Afghanistan Test cricket match at The M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore yesterday. —AFP

the International Cricket Council, making them one of only 12 Test teams. They gained one-day international status in 2009 and have qualified for their second 50-over World Cup to be held in England and Wales next year. They have also been part of four Twenty20 World Cups.

Last week they secured a T20 series sweep over Bangladesh helped by spin bowler Khan, 19, the stand-out star of this year's Indian Premier League. "The terror in our home area meant we did not have access to an education while growing up. My par-

ents even forbid my siblings and I to play cricket outside our home," Khan, one of 12 children, said in a recent interview with Afghan media. "But no amount of war stopped me from sneaking out to play cricket with my brothers." Only last month, an attack on a cricket match in Khan's home city of Jalalabad killed eight people and wounded 45. While Afghanistan's successes so far have come in short formats of cricket, they must now prove they can stand the physical and mental challenge of a five-day match. —AFP

Sexton, Healy return as Irish face do-or-die Wallabies clash

MELBOURNE: Six Nations champions Ireland turned to key men Johnny Sexton and Cian Healy yesterday as they look to salvage their series in the do-or-die second Test against Australia in Melbourne. The veterans watched on from the reserves bench last weekend as Australia won 18-9 in Brisbane to end the world number two team's unbeaten stretch of 12 internationals. Coach Joe Schmidt played understudy Joey Carbery at number 10 with an eye to his options for next year's World Cup in Japan, but has turned to 32-year-old Leinster ace Sexton to guide the Irish attack on Saturday.

Sexton will be making his 75th appearance for his country, while loose-head prop Healy lines up for his 80th cap as one of eight team changes for the second of three Tests. "It's not something I've done with Ireland for a long, long time so it needed a bit of getting used to," Sexton said of his rare role as a reserve. "It's a different type of game when you're on the bench. You have a lot of nervous energy. It's all

about starting for everybody really, that's why you want to get the starting place."

The Wallabies, under former Leinster boss Michael Cheika, were physical in Brisbane and they will be unchanged in Melbourne for the first time in the coach's four-year tenure. "We expected it (last week)," Sexton said. "Under Michael Cheika, they will bring that and we spoke about that; we know him better than anyone, really. "We knew it was coming, but we probably didn't deal with it as well as we could have in terms of allowing them to come out of the line and hit us like they did. "We'll learn from it and I'm sure they'll bring the same intensity this week. Michael is a pretty relentless character and he will demand the same of them this week."

'Scary pace'

Sexton, who is expected to probe for weaknesses in the Wallabies through his trademark kicking, paid tribute to Australia's backline in Brisbane. "They've got quality throughout the team. When you look at their backline, it's scary the amount of pace and ball players they have at the same time," he said. Schmidt is also looking to neutralize the impact of David Pocock and Michael Hooper over the Irish ball by naming Dan Leavy at openside flanker. —AFP

Sports

Emery's baptism of fire as Arsenal open against City

Liverpool open against West Ham

LONDON: Arsenal's new manager Unai Emery faces a baptism of fire after the Gunners were handed an opening day fixture at home to Premier League champions Manchester City. Emery, Arsenal's first new manager since Arsène Wenger took charge in 1996, will then travel to London rivals Chelsea on the second weekend of the season. Liverpool, who will look to build on their Champions League final appearance, open their campaign at home to West Ham United in what will be manager Manuel Pellegrini's first competitive game in charge of the London side.

Jose Mourinho's Manchester United, a distant runners-up to City last season, start at home to Leicester City while FA Cup winners Chelsea are

away to Huddersfield Town. Tottenham Hotspur, who finished third, have confirmed that their first home fixture on the second week of the season against newly-promoted Fulham will be held at Wembley. The north London club say their first game in their new stadium will be against Liverpool on the weekend of Sept 15-16.

Tottenham played all their home games at Wembley last season while their new 62,000-seater stadium was being constructed but work is still ongoing and the club has sought permission to return to the national stadium for one game. "As you will note there is a home fixture scheduled for the weekend of 18/19 August 2018 and this match will be played as a home fixture

at Wembley Stadium," the club's website said. "It was always our intention to seek permission to play the first few games away. In discussions with our coaching staff the preference was to break what would otherwise have been a continuous run of away games with one game at what was effectively our 'home' stadium last season."

Tottenham are away to Newcastle United on the opening weekend on Aug 11-12. Championship winners Wolverhampton Wanderers will mark their return to the top division for the first time since 2012 against Marco Silva's Everton at Molineux. Cardiff City, automatically promoted with Wolves, start away to Bournemouth while Fulham, who beat Aston Villa in the Champi-

onship playoff, host former manager Roy Hodgson's Crystal Palace in a London derby.

Southampton host Burnley on the opening day. The season's first Manchester derby will be at The Etihad on the weekend of Nov 10-11 while Arsenal host Tottenham and Liverpool greet Everton on the weekend of Dec 1-2. All eyes will be on former Paris St Germain manager Emery as he attempts to revive Arsenal's fortunes after they missed out on the Champions League for a second successive season. The Spaniard will come face to face with fellow Spaniard Pep Guardiola on the opening day and after a trip to Chelsea he has another London derby with West Ham United the visitors.— Reuters

Sky, Perform win Serie A broadcast rights in Italy

MILAN: Broadcaster Sky and sports media group Perform won the rights to screen top-flight Serie A football matches in Italy until 2021 for more than 973 million euros (\$1.2 billion) per season, Italy's soccer league chairman said. Sky and Perform outbid Mediaset, Italy's biggest commercial broadcaster, which had strained its finances to buy rights in the previous three-year tender. "The sale of TV rights has finally reached a conclusion," league Chairman Gaetano Micciche said. The league had been trying for a year to auction the rights for 2018-2021.

European pay-TV firm Sky said it had secured exclusive rights to broadcast live 266 matches in Italy every season, or seven out of 10 Serie A games being played on a given day. After buying the rights to show the remaining three matches from each round of fixtures, Perform Group will launch its DAZN streaming and on-demand service in Italy, offering subscriptions for 9.99 euros per month.

DAZN said it would also show highlights of the seven games being broadcast by Sky. UK-based Perform is owned by Access Industries, founded by billionaire Len Blavatnik. Under the terms of the sale, the league is entitled to a further 100 million euros each season based on results achieved by Sky and Perform in terms of subscriptions and revenue, Micciche said. The league kicked off a new bidding round for 2018-2021 rights this month after it cancelled a contract awarding them to Spanish multimedia group Mediapro. The decision was taken after Chinese-owned Mediapro failed to present the necessary bank guarantees.

Mediapro had been expected to auction the rights to other operators but its tender was also cancelled by a Milan judge in May on grounds that it breached antitrust rules. This followed a legal challenge from Sky's Italian subsidiary. Mediapro did not take part in Wednesday's auction for the rights of 400 matches, a source close to the league said on Wednesday. The 2017-18 season of Italy's Serie A, which ended in May, was aired by both Sky's Italian subsidiary and Mediaset's pay-TV arm Premium. Mediaset said in a statement it had offered a total of 600 million euros over three years and would now contact the winners of the tender to secure a deal in order to give its pay-TV customers access to matches.— Reuters



NEW YORK: Tiger Woods of the United States plays from a bunker on the practice chipping area during a practice round prior to the 2018 US Open at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club in Southampton.— AFP

All eyes tracking Tiger as 118th US Open tees off

SOUTHAMPTON: Tiger Woods's latest bid to end his 10-year major championship drought began yesterday at a US Open stacked with talent and packed with compelling story lines. By the time Woods was to tee off at Shinnecock Hills - alongside world number one Dustin Johnson and second ranked Justin Thomas - the powerhouse group of Phil Mickelson, Jordan Spieth and Rory McIlroy were set to be winding things up on the par-70 course on New York's Long Island.

Mickelson, who turns 48 tomorrow, is vying to become just the sixth man to claim the career Grand Slam, the US Open the only major missing from his resume. Mickelson, a six-time runner-up in the event, is paired with two other multiple major winners lacking just one leg of the Grand Slam—McIlroy, who has yet to win the Masters, and Spieth, who has yet to claim a PGA Championship. Northern Ireland's McIlroy isn't a fan of the so-called super-groups the US Golf Association likes to put together.

"At a major championship, you don't need (it)," McIlroy said. "I don't think the anticipation level can get any higher anyway." While all eyes will be on Woods, the 42-year-old star making the 10th start of his comeback after spinal fusion surgery

can't be considered the most likely man in his group to contend for the title. That has to be Johnson, who wrested the number one ranking back from Thomas on Sunday with a US PGA Tour victory in Memphis. Thomas, the reigning PGA Champion, is also a good bet, but Woods has shown enough good golf in an inevitably erratic comeback to have many wondering if he could make his first victory since 2013 a major. "I think everyone realizes it's different when he turns up," Australia's Jason Day said. "He definitely moves the needle. If he's on contention this Sunday, then it's going to be huge." With a chance of gusting winds in the forecast, USGA officials said they had reconsidered several planned hole locations for the first round. "We've changed some of the hole locations, just to make sure they're in areas that can handle this kind of wind," USGA chief executive Mike Davis said.

Closer to the edge

The USGA don't want any repeat of the scenes at the 2004 US Open at Shinnecock, when powerful winds dried out the greens, making some of them virtually unplayable in the final round. The recollection of that fiasco had Davis welcoming the gentle rain that fell on Wednesday, settling the dust and giving the greens moisture that will help see them through Sunday. England's world number three Justin Rose, who was due to tee off at 7:30 am in search of a second US Open title, was delighted with the rain, which wasn't expected to stick around through the tournament days. "I don't think the total amount of rainfall is going to be changing the nature of this golf course, but I think with my tee time I'm thinking this could be a good thing," he said.— AFP

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Salah 'almost 100%' certain to play for Egypt in opener

Egypt's Said set for 'Finnish first' at World Cup

YEKATERINBURG: Egypt coach Hector Cuper said that star striker Mohamed Salah has recovered from his shoulder injury and will almost certainly play against Uruguay in the sides' World Cup opener today. "We still have to see how training goes today, but I can almost assure you 100 percent that he'll play, we are all very optimistic that he will be on the pitch," Cuper announced yesterday. The 62-year-old Argentine added: "Salah is very good and he's recovered very quickly." Salah, who sustained the injury in Liverpool's Champions League final loss to Real Madrid on May 26, is one of the biggest names at the World Cup and crucial to the north African side's hopes of making it out of a weak-looking Group A also featuring the hosts and Saudi Arabia.

Egypt play Uruguay-tipped by some to be dark horses-in Yekaterinburg in just the second game of the tournament, following Russia against Saudi Arabia in the opening match later. Salah was one of the outstanding players in the world this season as he helped propel Liverpool to the Champions League final. Salah, who turns 26 on the day of the game, gave 100 million frantic Egyptians a massive boost on Wednesday when he joined a squad training session at their Grozny base. His World Cup dream was left on the brink when he exited the Champions League final in tears after Real Madrid skipper Sergio Ramos wrestled him to the ground nearly three weeks ago.

Meanwhile, Egypt midfielder Abdallah Said is

set to become the first player from Finland's Veikkausliiga to play at the World Cup when his side take on Uruguay in Ekaterinburg today. Finland have never qualified for the finals of a major tournament, but that did not stop Said from joining Kuopion Palloseura, known as KuPS, on loan when he was in need of playing time ahead of the finals. The 32-year-old playmaker showed enough in seven games at second-placed KuPS to retain his place in manager Hector Cuper's squad, much to the delight of both Egyptian and Finnish fans.

"It's a big thing for Veikkausliiga that a player from a Finnish club is selected for the World Cup, especially since the player in question is a high-profile player for the Egypt national team," Pyry Waltari, communications manager for the Veikkausliiga said. Though a key player for Egypt in qualifying, Said arrived in Finland as something of an unknown quantity. "Our players and I didn't see it at first, but he's really good in making penetrating passes through the line. You just need to run and he puts the ball there for you," KuPS coach Jani Honkavaara said. "As a player he is a fast thinker, he is always thinking about what was going to be his next move, and because of that he doesn't lose the ball," Honkavaara added.

Lowly ranked

Finland's Veikkausliiga may be ranked 38th of Europe's 55 leagues but it is still good enough to prepare for the biggest soccer stage of them all, the KuPS coach said. "I am proud that he got to

Marwijk gives him the nod from the substitutes' bench. Socceroos great Cahill is responsible for nearly half of Australia's 11 World Cup goals to date. And although he is expected to start all three Group C games-against France, Peru and Denmark-on the bench, Cahill's dream of becoming just the fourth player after Brazil's Pele and Germans Uwe Seeler and Miroslav Klose to score in four World Cups remains intact.

At 38 years old, time is against the Australian, who says he has "spent a whole year getting ready for three games". Cahill underlined his personal ambitions, and those of an Australia team hoping to stun Euro 2016 finalists France in



YEKATERINBURG: Egypt's forward Mohamed Salah (center) takes part in a training session at Ekaterinburg Stadium in Ekaterinburg yesterday, a day ahead the team's Russia 2018 World Cup Group A opening football match against Uruguay. — AFP

the World Cup team, and he also said it was really important for him to play. He was pleased and surprised about the level we have here." Said is unlikely to return to Finland following the World Cup, but he made a strong impression on Finnish fans during his short time there, and will

always be remembered as the first Veikkausliiga player to make it to the World Cup. "People in Finland are referring to him as the best foreign player to have ever played in the Veikkausliiga, so he impressed a lot of people," Honkavaara said. — Agencies

Kazan, on Saturday. Asked about his future plans, he said: "The factor is, we train today, we train the day after, then we play France and that's all that's on my mind. "For me, being here now just means so much to me. To get on the pitch is going to be one step, to score would just be amazing. To join the list of names that are on there now would just be priceless."

At Germany 2006, then fresh-faced Everton striker Cahill struck a late double to stun Japan, setting up a 3-1 win that was crucial to their march into the last 16. Four years later in South Africa, Cahill hit another against Serbia in their ultimately futile bid for a last-16 place. At Brazil

2014 Cahill struck again, reducing the team's arrears while 2-0 down to Chile, and then underlined his class with a stunning volley that clattered in off the crossbar to level against the Netherlands.

Millwall move

Cahill now has to hope his "calculated decision" to return to England-moving to Championship side Millwall in January in a bid for more playing time and to maintain the fitness levels demanded by the World Cup-pays off. "It would (have been) a massive heartache not to be here but it wouldn't have been for the lack of trying," —AFP

Cahill's World Cup dream still alive

KAZAN: Australia talisman Tim Cahill shot down talk of retirement yesterday as he targets becoming just the fourth player to score at four World Cups alongside luminaries such as Pele. But first he has to hope Australia's Dutch coach Bert van



SNIPPETS



A Saudi fan waves a national flag before the Russia 2018 World Cup Group A football match between Russia and Saudi Arabia at the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow yesterday. — AFP



English singer Robbie Williams (left) performs with Russian soprano Aida Garifullina as former Brazilian international player Ronaldo (right) applauds during the World Cup opening ceremony. — AFP



MOSCOW: Players from Russia (left) and Saudi Arabia line up before the Russia 2018 World Cup Group A football match between Russia and Saudi Arabia at the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow yesterday. — AFP

Russia defies critics to throw World Cup party

Defiant Russia welcomes boycott-free World Cup

MOSCOW: The World Cup kicks off in Russia yesterday as years of preparations dogged by diplomatic scandals give way to a month-long feast of action on the field. Russia get the ball rolling against Saudi Arabia at the completely refurbished 80,000-capacity Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow after an opening ceremony attended by President Vladimir Putin.

On the day of the curtainraiser, Russia freed the main opposition figure to Putin, Alexei Navalny, from jail after he served a 30-day sentence for organizing an illegal protest. Russia is spending more than \$13 billion (11 billion euros) on hosting football's showpiece, the most important event in the country since the 1980 Moscow Summer Olympics. Brazil and their superstar Neymar are seeking a sixth global crown while Germany, who won their fourth World Cup in Brazil four years ago, will be determined to draw level with the Brazilians when the final is played in Moscow on July 15. France boast possibly the most talented squad while Lionel Messi is desperate to make amends for Argentina's defeat in the 2014 final.

Putin was keen to attract the tournament to Russia to show its modern face, but in the run-up the country's problems—from racism and hooliganism to a foreign policy sharply at odds with the West—have been exposed and scrutinized. Britain and some eastern European states formerly under Soviet rule tried to organize a diplomatic boycott over the poisoning in England of a former Russian double agent. British royals and government members will not attend in protest but a wider boycott effort fizzled out. "We would like to underscore the validity of the FIFA principle of sport being outside politics," Putin told a meeting of football's governing body FIFA on Wednesday. "Russia has always adhered to this principle," he said.

Hearts and minds

The money lavished on the tournament will boost Putin's already sky-high prestige at home by giving many of the 11 host cities their first facelifts in generations. Cities such as Saransk were sleepy outposts with decaying buildings until the World Cup reconstruction put them firmly in the 21st century. The tournament

Ronaldo primed for likely last shot at World Cup glory

SOCHI: Cristiano Ronaldo will launch his latest and probably last attempt to crown his career with a World Cup winners medal when European champions Portugal face neighbors Spain in their opening World Cup game here today. The 33-year-old will lock horns with six of his Real Madrid team-mates as the Spaniards attempt to shrug off the shock sacking of coach Julen Lopetegui following the announcement that he will take over at the Bernabeu next month.

It is worth wondering what Ronaldo might have known of



MOSCOW: Bolivian President Evo Morales (3rd left), FIFA president Gianni Infantino (center left) and Russian President Vladimir Putin (center right) attend a gala-concert dedicated to the Russia 2018 World Cup football tournament at Red Square in Moscow on June 13, 2018. — AFP

also offers Putin a chance to project Russia as a global player that is accepted and respected even while being at odds with the United States.

He is attempting to do so despite Russia bearing the brunt of international sanctions that began after its invasion of Ukraine's Crimea in 2014. Moscow's military backing of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria and alleged meddling in the 2016 US election on President Donald Trump's behalf only deepened its worst rift with the West since the Cold War. Putin hopes the most-watched event on the planet provides Russia with the "soft power" needed to capture a skeptical world's hearts and minds. Navalny, who was barred from challenging Putin in March's presidential election, tweeted after his release: "I'm with you again after a 30-day business trip. I'm so happy to be free." — AFP

Lopetegui's imminent appointment at Real, given the relationship both have with Portuguese super-agent Jorge Mendes, at a time when the forward's own club future remains the source of speculation. But now, amid all that, Ronaldo's focus is on the World Cup, the one major honor still missing from his CV. It is a stretch to make Portugal one of the favorites to win the trophy, even with Ronaldo, but they are nevertheless in Russia as the reigning European champions after surprising France on home soil two years ago.

Ronaldo is 33 now, still in fantastic physical condition and the reigning Ballon d'Or winner. He can probably play on for as long as he wants, but it is hard to imagine him returning for a fifth World Cup in Qatar in 2022. If he is to cap his career with a World Cup winner's medal, then now is his time, and what better way to start than by inspiring Portugal to victory over their neighbors and put themselves in pole position in Group B. "Of course Cristiano Ronaldo is the best player in the world at the moment and he will be the top player at this World Cup. There are no words to describe him," said admiring team-mate Joao Mario at Portugal's base near Moscow this week. — AFP



SNIPPETS



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman speaks during a meeting with the Russian president at the Kremlin in Moscow yesterday. The Russian president meets the Saudi Crown Prince on the sidelines of the World Cup kick-off. — AFP



Saudi Arabia's goalkeeper Abdullah Al-Mayouf fails to stop a goal by Russia's midfielder Denis Cheryshev during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group A football match yesterday. — AFP



Saudi Arabia's forward Mohammed Al-Sahlawi (L) and Russia's defender Sergey Ignashevich compete for the ball during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group A football match between Russia and Saudi Arabia at the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow yesterday. — AFP

Host nation Russia thrash Saudi 5-0 in WCup opener

Cheryshev stars as Russia rout Saudi

MOSCOW: Denis Cheryshev struck twice for Russia as the World Cup hosts thumped Saudi Arabia 5-0 in the opening match of the tournament in Moscow yesterday. Yury Gazinsky scored after 12 minutes and Cheryshev added a second before the break after coming on as an injury replacement for Alan Dzagoev. Artem Dzyuba netted a third before terrific late efforts from Cheryshev and Aleksandr Golovin wrapped up Russia's first win since October to launch their Group A campaign in style.

Russia headed into the curtainraiser at the 80,000-capacity Luzhniki, the crucible of Russian and Soviet sport, without a victory in over eight months and ranked a lowly 70th in the world. For Saudi Arabia it was a return to the global showpiece for the first time in 12 years, with their only previous finals wins at the 1994 World Cup. Only South Africa, in 2010, have failed to advance from the group stage as the host nation and a seven-match winless run had ramped up the pressure on Stanislav Cherchesov's side.

A lack of an attacking threat in recent outings was a primary concern for Russia going into a group campaign in which they will also face Egypt and Uruguay. Those fears were soon washed away, at least for the time being, as Alexander Samedov and Fedor Smolov carved out early chances only to be denied by desperate sliding blocks. The opening goal came soon after, as Saudi Arabia failed to clear a corner and a curling cross in from the left by Golovin picked out an unmarked Gazinsky to head low into the far corner. It was a goal that prompted Russian President Vladimir Putin to turn to the Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman, seated alongside FIFA chief Gianni Infantino, and shake his hand. Russia lost Dzagoev to a hamstring injury midway through the first half, the CSKA Moscow midfielder clutching his hamstring as he crumpled to the turf. But his replacement, former Real Madrid winger Cheryshev, celebrated his recent recall to the national side with Russia's second goal two minutes before half-time.

Cheryshev was still left with plenty of work to do inside the area after a pass from Roman Zobnin, brilliantly flicking the ball past two closing defenders before rifling into the roof of the net. Saudi briefly



MOSCOW: Saudi Arabia's midfielder Salman Al-Faraj (right) and defender Yasser Al-Shahrani (2nd right) compete for the ball during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group A football match between Russia and Saudi Arabia at the Luzhniki Stadium yesterday. — AFP

threatened early in the second half when an inviting cross in from the right skipped just beyond the reach of Taiseer Al-Jassam. Russia then nearly grabbed a third when Abdullah Al-Muaiouf spilled a low drive from Roman Zobnin, the Saudi goalkeeper recovering just time in time to nudge the ball away from Smolov.

The forward was soon replaced by Dzyuba, who struck almost immediately by heading another Golovin cross beyond a helpless Muaiouf in the 71st minute. Cheryshev hammered in a fourth with the outside of his left in stoppage time and Golovin capped a magnificent performance by bending in a last-gasp free-kick. Russia meet Egypt in their next match on June 19 in Saint Petersburg, while Saudi Arabia will look to rebound against group favorites Rostov-on-Don a day later. — AFP

Female Saudi flag bearers miss World Cup opener v Russia

MOSCOW: Six Saudi female teenagers slated to serve as their country's flag bearers at the World Cup's opening match in Moscow yesterday was replaced by Russians after their trip was cancelled due to "logistical circumstances", organizers said. Named flag bearers as part of a program run by Coca-Cola, the girls, aged 13 to 17, were supposed to lead the Saudi national team onto the pitch at Moscow's Luzhniki stadium ahead of their match against Russia.

But the organizers said they could no longer make it. "Due to unforeseen logistical circumstances, the Saudi flag bearers' delegation will unfortunately no

longer be able to attend the opening of the 2018 FIFA World Cup," Coca-Cola said in a statement to Reuters. Omar Ben-nis, public affairs director at Coca-Cola Middle East, declined to disclose the nature of the logistical issues.

He said it was not related to their gender. It is "a mix of everything", he said, adding that the company was working with Saudi sports authorities to try to have the girls attend the country's other matches. "The chances are low, but we're still pushing," he said. The young Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, whose public appearances have dwindled recently, will attend the match. —Reuters



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

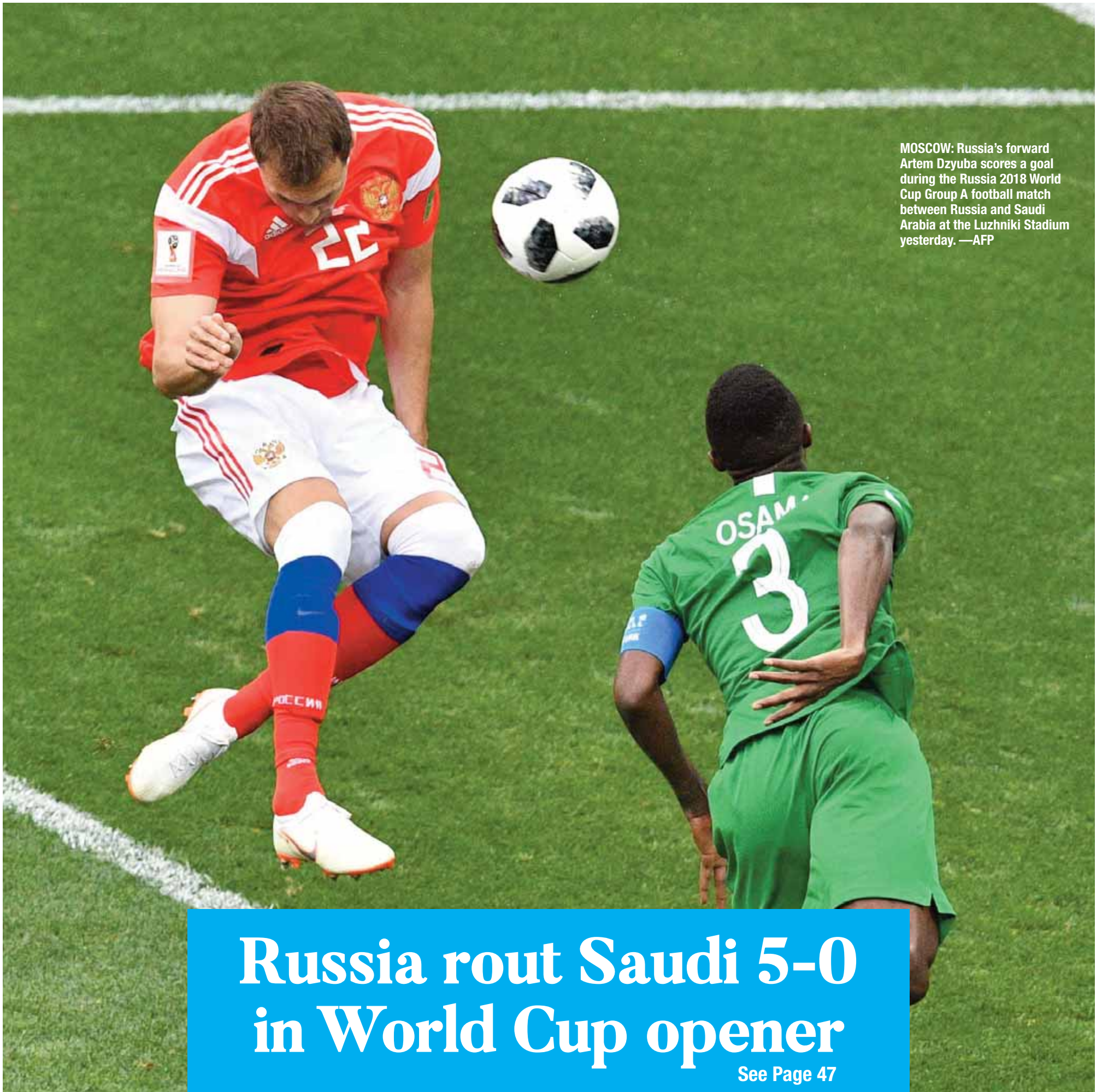
WORLD CUP 2018

Egypt v Uruguay beIN SPORTS HD 1 FR beIN SPORTS MAX 2 HD AR beIN SPORTS MAX 1 HD AR	15:00
Morocco v Iran beIN SPORTS HD 1 FR beIN SPORTS MAX 2 HD AR beIN SPORTS MAX 1 HD AR	18:00
Portugal v Spain beIN SPORTS HD 1 FR beIN SPORTS MAX 2 HD AR beIN SPORTS MAX 1 HD AR	21:00

Sport Times

FRIDAY, JUNE 15, 2018

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MOSCOW: Russia's forward Artem Dzyuba scores a goal during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group A football match between Russia and Saudi Arabia at the Luzhniki Stadium yesterday. —AFP

Russia rout Saudi 5-0 in World Cup opener

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