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US court upholds Trump's controversial 'travel ban'

Ban applies to travelers from 5 mainly Muslim nations

WASHINGTON: The US Supreme Court yesterday upheld Donald Trump's controversial travel ban restricting entry to people from five Muslim-majority countries, delivering the president a major victory in a tortuous legal battle. The win follows two embarrassing climbdowns for the administration's "zero tolerance" policy on migrants crossing the Mexico border and with Trump under mounting pressure to legislate a solution to the immigration crisis, one of the most polarizing debates in US politics.

Conservative jurists prevailed over liberals in yesterday's majority opinion from America's highest court. The 5-4 ruling validated the most recent version of the ban, which the Trump administration claims is driven by national security. Trump pounced on the decision as a victory for his authority to defend national security. "Wow!" he tweeted just minutes after the ruling.

"The proclamation does not exceed any textual limit on the president's authority," wrote Chief Justice John Roberts in the majority opinion, capping a battle that began just days after Trump took office in January 2017. "The government has set forth a sufficient national security justification to survive rational basis review. We express no view on the soundness of the policy."

In a statement, Trump called the ruling "a

moment of profound vindication following months of hysterical commentary from the media and Democratic politicians who refuse to do what it takes to secure our border and our country." The decision relates to Trump's third travel ban, which applies to travelers from North Korea and five mainly Muslim nations—Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen—or about 150 million people. A week into his presidency, Trump enacted a campaign promise and announced a 90-day ban on travelers from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

He had repeatedly questioned the loyalty of Muslim immigrants and after a 2015 terror attack in San Bernardino, California, used his campaign to propose a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States." Prepared in secret, the sudden order created chaos as hundreds of travelers were blocked at airports. Tens of thousands of visas were canceled and protesters took to the streets saying the president was banning Muslims in violation of the constitution's religious freedom protections.

Courts in several states ruled the measure illegal, and did so again in March 2017 after the administration slightly amended the original order, dropping Iraq from the list. The US president was angered, but was forced to recast the

ban again. Issued in September, the latest version was open-ended, dropped Sudan, and added North Korea and a selection of Venezuelan officials. Opponents—and the court's liberal-leaning justices—decried what they saw as a measure targeting Muslim countries, and referred back to Trump's anti-Muslim statements during his election campaign.

The worst attacks in the United States since the Al-Qaeda hijackings on September 11, 2001 have been committed either by Americans or immigrants from countries not affected by the travel ban. In a scathing dissenting opinion, Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote: "Based on the evidence in the record, a reasonable observer would conclude that the Proclamation was motivated by anti-Muslim animus." She accused her colleagues of "blindly accepting the government's misguided invitation to sanction a discriminatory policy motivated by animosity toward a disfavored group, all in the name of a superficial claim of national security."

The American Civil Liberties Union, which has been at the forefront of the fight against the ban, led an avalanche of criticism from liberals as activists rallied supporters for planned protests later on. "This is not the first time the court has been wrong, or has allowed official racism and xenophobia to continue rather than

Continued on Page 24



WASHINGTON: A woman participates in demonstration against US President Trump's travel ban as protesters gather outside the US Supreme Court following a court issued immigration ruling yesterday in Washington, DC. — AFP

News in brief

Minister undergoes surgery

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has undergone a successful lung surgery abroad, the Ministry of Defense said yesterday. The minister has yet to stay in hospital for a few days, followed by a period of convalescence before returning to the country, the ministry said in a press statement. The successful surgery was conducted in order to remove a lung tumor. Meanwhile, the government has been assured about health of Minister of Defense following the surgery. This was announced by Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh in a statement. Minister Al-Saleh implored His Almighty to bestow upon minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Ahmad good health and wellness so he may pursue his services for the homeland. — KUNA



UAE insists on rebel pullout

ABU DHABI: The UAE insisted yesterday that Houthi rebels pull out of Yemen's Red Sea city of Hodeida, a day before a UN envoy holds a new round of crisis talks in the war-torn country. "We are hopeful and we believe in the political process," said Reem Al-Hashimi, the United Arab Emirates minister of state for international cooperation. But "we cannot imagine a setup where the Houthis can be in the city" of Hodeida. The UN envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, is due in the southern city of Aden today for talks with President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, whose forces have battled for weeks to regain control of Hodeida. — AFP

South Sudan peace talks

KHARTOUM: South Sudan's President Salva Kiir and his arch-foe Riek Machar have "agreed on some points" at peace talks in Khartoum and a deal is to be signed, Sudanese officials said yesterday. Authorities in Khartoum said the deal would be signed today at the presidential palace in the Sudanese capital, but they did not give details and Machar's group said the opposition needed more time for a "framework agreement". After East African leaders stepped up calls for an end to a brutal civil war in the world's youngest country, a new round of Kiir-Machar talks opened Monday in Khartoum hosted by Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir. — AFP

MPs target expats in govt, oil sector; oil budget passed

KUWAIT: The National Assembly yesterday approved the 2018/2019 fiscal year budget for national oil company Kuwait Petroleum Corp (KPC) and its final accounts for the 2016/2017 year in which both showed healthy profits. But while debating the KPC and other budgets, MPs again targeted expatriates working in the government and the oil sector. MP Saleh Ashour said that there are 350,000 Kuwaiti employees working in the government and other state agencies which also employ as many as 84,000 expatriates. He wondered why the government employs those expatriates "because we don't

need them". Other lawmakers called for increasing the employment of Kuwaitis in the oil sector.

In a related development, KPC has instructed all oil companies to change the way they calculate the end of service indemnity for newly-appointed expatriates. At present, end of service indemnity is calculated on the basis of 30 days a year for the first five years and then 45 days annually thereafter. Now, they have decided to reduce it by applying the labor law in the private sector which stipulates 15 days each year for the first five years and then 30 days for each year thereafter.

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India 'most dangerous country for women'

LONDON: India is the world's most dangerous country for women due to the high risk of sexual violence and being forced into slave labor, according to a poll of global experts released on Tuesday. War-torn Afghanistan and Syria ranked second and third in the Thomson Reuters Foundation survey of about 550 experts on women's issues, followed by Somalia and Saudi Arabia. The only Western nation in the top 10 was the United States, which ranked joint third when respondents were asked where women were most at risk of sexual violence, harassment and being coerced into sex.

The poll was a repeat of a survey in 2011 that found experts saw Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Pakistan, India, and Somalia as the most dangerous countries for women. Experts said India moving to the top of poll showed not enough was being done to tackle the danger women faced, more than five years after the rape and murder of a student on a bus in Delhi made violence against women a national priority.

"India has shown utter disregard and disrespect for women ... rape, marital rapes, sexual assault and harassment,

female infanticide has gone unabated," said Manjunath Gangadhara, an official at the Karnataka state government. "The (world's) fastest growing economy and leader in space and technology is shamed for violence committed against women." Government data shows reported cases of crime against women rose by 83 percent between 2007 and 2016, when there were four cases of rape reported every hour.

The survey asked respondents which five of the 193 United Nations member states they thought were most dangerous for women and which country was worst in terms of healthcare, economic resources, cultural or traditional practices, sexual violence and harassment, non-sexual violence and human trafficking. Respondents also ranked India the most dangerous country for women in terms of human trafficking, including sex slavery and domestic servitude, and for customary practices such as forced marriage, stoning and female infanticide. India's Ministry of Women and Child Development declined to comment on the survey results.

Trapped by war

Afghanistan fared worst in four of the seven questions, with concerns over healthcare and conflict-related violence. Kimberly Otis, director of advancement at Women for Afghan Women, said women and girls faced severe gender-based violence, abuse, illiteracy, poverty, and other human rights offences. "The ongoing war and conflict are getting

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In Israel, Prince William tastes somber and lighter sides

TEL AVIV: Britain's Prince William paid a somber visit to Israel's Holocaust memorial yesterday then took part in a seaside soccer game, tasting two of the country's many faces. Wearing an open-necked shirt and sunglasses, he strolled along the sunny Mediterranean shoreline in Tel Aviv chatting with surfers about marine pollution. "Beautiful beach, I should have brought my swimsuit," he remarked.

In the mixed Jaffa neighborhood, he joined Arab and Jewish youngsters in a football kick-about organized by the Peres Centre for Peace in a program to encourage inter-communal understand-

ing, scoring penalties against a 13-year-old goalkeeper. He waved to a group of women outside the sports ground who called through the fence, "Prince William we love you, we love Diana," referring to his late mother.

Coming at the start of the first official trip by a British royal to both Israel and the Palestinian territories, it was in striking contrast to his earlier visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in western Jerusalem. There, he wore a dark suit and a black Jewish skullcap as he rekindled the eternal flame and laid a wreath at the memorial as a youth choir sang.

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Local

Kuwaiti Prime Minister sees 'bright future ahead' for Arab-German ties

Kuwaiti, German ministers' talks focus on closer economic ties



BERLIN: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Kuwait's Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan pose with participants in the 21st Arab-German Business Forum in Berlin. —KUNA photos

BERLIN: The total number of Kuwaiti investments in Germany have surged to 30 billion Euros in a key indicator reflecting the vigorous ties that both nations share on the economic front, the Gulf state's Prime Minister said yesterday. Kuwait was among the first nations in the wider Arab region to have invested in Germany, as their economic partnership is still thriving despite the passing of more than half a century. His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah told the 21st Arab-German Business Forum in the German capital. Germany's Minister of Economic Affairs and Energy Peter Altmaier, Chairman of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanem, in addition to key officials from Arab, German and other nations are taking part in the forum.

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak explained that Kuwaiti investments in the world's fourth largest economy run the gamut from the industrial and real estate sectors to the banking market, pointing out that "German-made goods are usually synonymous with sublime quality." Meanwhile, German exports to Kuwait were worth more than a billion and 300 million Euros last

year, where Kuwait's oil exports to Berlin are just as staggering, the Kuwaiti prime minister revealed.

Citing an "acute trade deficit" with Germany, he said that ratcheting up oil exports to Berlin could be the only remedy to this problem, while the increasingly business-friendly environment in Kuwait can help lure foreign investors. Addressing a packed audience, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak emphasized the core tenets of the Arab and German economic partnership, which include peace, justice and freedom.

On that note, he expressed his admiration for Germany's "hands-on and conscientious approach" to the most pressing issues facing the region, at a time where much of the international community has been largely apathetic. In its 21st edition, the German-Arab Business Forum examines the breadth of the Arab region's economic cooperation with Germany, in addition to how one of the world's leading economies can contribute to development in the Middle East.

Closer ties

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan and German Minister

Altmaier examined strategies to establish a better relationship in the wider economic arena. During the meeting, the Kuwaiti minister spoke of the increasingly business-friendly environment in his country, a key factor that could help transform Kuwait into a magnet for foreign investors, the statement said. He pointed out that Kuwait stands to gain from the success that Germany has attained in the realm of investment, in addition to matters such as the use of alternative energy, which Kuwait plans to fully embrace within the next decade. Roudhan went on to extend an invitation to Altmaier to visit Kuwait in order to be acquainted with the ample investment opportunities in the country, which the German minister accepted.

Total Kuwaiti exports to the world's fourth largest economy were worth KD 500 million in 2016, while the Gulf nation's investments in Germany have surged to \$30 billion. In addition to the Kuwaiti prime minister, the country's delegation to one of the world's most prominent business gatherings includes Roudhan and Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah, amongst other top officials.

Robust relations

Separately, Secretary General of the German-Arab Chamber of Industry and Commerce (GACIC) Abdulaziz Al-Mekhlafi underscored distinctive political and economic ties between Germany and Kuwait. Addressing the forum, Mekhlafi indicated that the gathering would pave way for robust economic relations between Kuwait and Germany, renowned for the largest European economy. Kuwait's economic status and its government's balanced policy render establishment of distinctive bonds with Germany possible and necessary, Mekhlafi added.

Meanwhile, Ghanem said that the forum, in its current edition, "is of special significance because Kuwait is serving as its umbrella and because Highness the Prime Minister responded to attendance invitation." The forum is attended by more than 100 Kuwaiti economic personalities and 400 German counterparts.

Dr Volker Treier, Manager of the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK), said in a statement that establishing a German economic representation office in Kuwait, this year, substantiates the desire to elevate level of the economic relations with the country. At a time global trade is affected with protectionism trends, Kuwait is seeking to build bridges for economic relations with Germany and other countries, Treier said.

Business environment

In the meantime, Minister Altmaier lauded Kuwait's investment environment which among other factors motivate Germany to develop economic cooperation with the country. Minister Altmaier, in a speech at the forum, said that the distinguished environment condi-



His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah speaks during the forum.

tions in the State of Kuwait, its stability, geographical location and balanced policy stimulate Germany to seek to upgrade its economic relations with it. The event hosting of His Highness the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait signaled sustainability of the German-Kuwait economies ties, Minister Altmaier added.

Moreover, German and Kuwaiti companies are attracted by the two countries' long-term economic-commercial relationship, Minister Altmaier said. The minister said the economic and commercial partnership with Kuwait is sustainable, significant and based on solid foundations. Therefore, German and Kuwaiti companies are motivated to enhance their investment potentials. Elaborating, he has noted the very distinctive bonds between Kuwait and Arab states.

Owing to the facts that Kuwait enjoys a special geographical location between Asia and Europe, "we in Germany are interested in developing the political and economic relations with it," Minister Altmaier stated. "We want to encourage German companies to launch more investments in Kuwait because we view it as the cornerstone for the regional stability."

Affirming the approach to solidify further the Kuwaiti-German relations, the minister expressed enthusiasm for elevating the bonds to higher level "for Kuwait has always been part of solutions and has never been part of problems." He was apparently alluding to the State of Kuwait sagacious and balanced foreign policy, largely peaceful and humanitarian at the regional and international levels. — KUNA

“
Kuwait
cornerstone for
regional stability”



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (center right) and Germany's Minister of Economic Affairs and Energy Peter Altmaier (center left) attend the forum.

Ministry officials visit navy base to review 'mines' survey

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Senior officials from the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) visited the Kuwait Navy Base in Julai'ah yesterday, where they were received by Admiral Khaled Ahmad Abdullah, the base

commander, and other top officers. The visit was dedicated to reviewing a survey conducted to detect any marine mines in the waters of Nuwaiseeb power plant and water distillation project, after marines removed ammunition left over by the 1990/91 Iraqi Invasion. A presentation was made showing the work done and recommendations for further caution on commencing the construction of the power plant project. Undersecretary Mohammad Boshherhi, assistant undersecretary for power plants Fuad Al-Oun, power plants projects' managers and other officials were among the MEW delegation.

Food bank

A high-ranking delegation from

Kuwait Food Bank (KFB) recently visited the president of Al-Azhar Mosque and the head of the Muslim Sages Council Professor Ahmad Al-Tayyeb at his office in Cairo, Egypt. The delegation was headed by KFB's deputy board chairman Meshaal Al-Ansari and general manager Salem Al-Hamar. Both sides discussed means of cooperation in charity, humanitarian and relief activities worldwide. Speaking on the occasion, Tayyeb hailed the efforts exerted by KFB, its projects and campaigns directed to needy people for the first time in Kuwait. Meanwhile, Ansari praised the role Tayyeb plays in promoting moderate Islam and urging people to participate in charity campaigns.



KUWAIT: Admiral Khaled Ahmad Abdullah (left) is seen with Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity and Water Mohammad Boshherhi.

Local

Minister referred to investigation for failure to implement court order

Municipal Council reviews 311 decisions made by temporary committee

By A Saleh and Agencies

KUWAIT: The public prosecution office yesterday referred a complaint filed against Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh to the cabinet's permanent investigations committee. The minister is accused of failure to implement a court order that overturned her decision to dissolve the Sabahiya Co-operative Society's board of directors, the plaintiffs' lawyer Mohammad Al-Ansari said yesterday.



Seven hours determined for MOE staff

Direct purchase

Inspection teams at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) will continue to follow up with co-op societies to make sure that they purchase local products directly from producers, assistant undersecretary for co-op societies' affairs Abdul Aziz Al-Shuaib said. Products' quality and prices had recently improved in some co-ops, Shuaib noted, adding that 94 percent of societies were fully committed to direct purchase of national products.

Private sector employees

Board chairman of the private sector employees' union Saud Al-Hujailan stressed the need to protect the rights of Kuwaiti employees in the private sector and called for avoiding laws that might do them any harm directly or indirectly. Hujailan also called for representing the union in

the Public Authority for Manpower's administration so that it can act as the sole legal representative of private sector employees.

Data update

The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) is currently coordinating with relevant state departments to develop its working systems and update its data regarding citizens waiting to receive their housing units. The data systems department at the authority is working on updating the information of citizens who are waiting for houses, using accurate and detailed information about various applications made to exclude those who do not match conditions. The update process will also include information of citizens unlawfully receiving monthly rent allowances despite changing their marital statuses and getting divorced without having any children - which disqualifies them from receiving the allowance.

Handling services

As the main contractor of the \$4.3 billion Kuwait International Airport's Terminal 2 project, Limak Constructions of Turkey is still reviewing the offers it received by the beginning of the year to provide handling services at Kuwait Airport. The final biddings were made last January, while Limak is still receiving offers for other parts of the project such as elevators and escalators.



Hind Al-Sabeeh

311 decisions

The Municipal Council recently approved forming a special committee to review 311 decisions made by the temporary committee that had run the council before the recent elections. Those decisions include ones related to land allocations, ownership deeds and projects that have already started. Al-Jarida daily reported yesterday. The council discussed whether those decisions were final or refutable.

In this regard, Municipal Council Member Ali Al-Azmi approved the formation of the committee, especially since the Fatwa and Legislation Department had called for rejecting those decisions. Meanwhile, Kuwait Municipality's legal affairs department's manager Mohammed Al-Jasser said that the council could approve or reject the decisions, but stressed that they would remain valid nonetheless. "What can be discussed is the decisions which are not final yet," he underlined.

Jasser's opinion was also seconded by Abdullah Al-Mehri, who reminded that, unless the concerned minister requests it, article 67 prevents discussions over a topic that had been already discussed by the council before one year.

In the meantime, Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmad Al-Manfouhi stressed that the decisions concerning approved land allocations, state property deeds and construction licenses have already become legal. He also called for putting into considerations that some lands had already been handed over, projects had been approved

and contracts had been signed. "We are talking about 311 decisions made by the committee and have become legal," member Humoud Al-Enezi said. "We must not impede them to avoid problems."

Seven hours

The Ministry of Education (MOE) recently urged all administrative employees to respect the official working hours set by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) at seven hours starting at 7:30 am until 2:30 pm. This decision covers all employees working at the ministry's headquarters and various educational zone administrations, and does not cover those working in schools and educational institutes. Al-Jarida daily reported yesterday.

In this regard, well-informed sources said that MOE's administrative sector issued a directive with the new timings and distributed it to various sectors and educational areas. The directive mentions the 30-minute grace period for all employees in the morning, in addition allowing female employees to leave fifteen minutes earlier in the afternoon, the sources added.

Further, the sources said that the directive excluded schools and institutes' staff and reminded that their timings are usually determined by resolution 'Number One' concerning work timings and exams in various public and private schools.

In addition, the sources highlighted that MOE had recently linked its biometric access control systems to those at CSC in order to follow up employees' commitment and punctuality, which would be an integral part of employees' annual evaluation upon which the excellent performance bonus, promotions and other incentives would be given.

Dear workers, welcome to Kuwait



By Talal Al-Ghannam

Local@kuwaittimes.net

Good morning, dear brothers and sisters. I wish you all a happy summer vacation. In this article, I would like to propose a scenario which I know everyone wishes that it would be implemented when it comes to hiring domestic helpers, whether male or female, or regardless of working in a house or a company. The scenario starts right at the airport when the domestic worker arrives, and his/her employer would warmly welcome them with a rose. The domestic helper would be amazed by that unexpected gesture, because they were expecting a frowned face or to be yelled at immediately to start the contract, but it turned out to be the opposite, Alhamdulillah.

The second scenario is taking the domestic helper in the car to go home, and during the journey, there will be an exchange of nice chatting and cordial talks between the employer and the worker to make him or her feel more welcome. "Am I dreaming? Please God, no," the helper would think to him or herself. And when they arrive home, the sponsor will take the hand of the worker to his or her nice room. "This is your palace sister/brother. Please, do not hesitate to call me if you find any difficulty. We are your family," the sponsor would say. Dazzled and breathless to experience this unforeseen situation, the worker asks Almighty Allah: "If I am dreaming, then please make this dream come true."

The next morning, the worker wakes up and is greeted by the entire family his or her first day. They would start work as usual but without excessive load or schedule given. Six hours of work, then a rest break from 2:00pm to 5:00 pm, with the privilege to use mobile device to reassure and talk to their families back home, with internet provided, of course. The family then decides to go shopping, and accompany the worker with them. The family would get the worker what he or she needs: clothes, hygiene products, mobile credit and other necessities. Once done, they would stop to eat something as a family. Usually, the workers will eat from a table far away. But in this scenario, the worker would be asked to join the family for dinner, to which the worker would be astonished.

The worker would be told that this is the appropriate behavior of a Muslim when dealing with his or her employees as stated in the Holy Quran and teachings of Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessing be upon him). The worker would also be told that Islam forbids the mistreatment of a worker and he or she must be paid before their sweat dries. A worker is considered part of the family, and he or she must be fed, dressed, and given attention like any other family member. They must be given rest time, and not to be yelled at in case of any mistake. A 'thank you' is very important; and so is being nice and polite to the workers. They would also be told that kids must also respect the worker, not to increase their burdens and to help them when needed as this is the real Islam.

The journey concludes with a big smile and a promise to the worker that he or she will never regret the day they decided to work in Kuwait for the sake of their loved ones. Imagine this kind of scenario would be implemented by everybody for the sake of the help-less workers, who leave everything in their home country just to come to make a decent life abroad for their loved ones. Let us be their second family. Let us extend a helping hand to them. Let us draw a smile on their faces. They are here to help, not destroy. Let us help them and wait for Allah's reward.

CBK's discount rate increased four times since 2015

KUWAIT: While the US Federal Reserve has increased interest rates seven times by a quarter of a percent each time since 2015, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) boosted its discount rates four times and maintained it on three other occasions. The current interest rate of the Federal Reserve is at two percent whereas the CBK's discount rate is at three percent.

The CBK indicated that it has recently decided to maintain the discount rate due to consolidation of economic growth in the country as the Kuwaiti Dinar was pegged with a basket of select-

ed currencies rather than the US Dollar alone. Though an increase in interest rates would have negative connotations on any national economy, Kuwait carried out a reasonable policy by unpegging Dinar from the US Dollar, which in turn allowed local economy to flourish.

On June 13, Governor of the CBK Mohammad Al-Hashel said that the decision to maintain the discount rate at three percent came to support recovering economic growth rates. In March, the CBK increased the discount rate by a quarter of a point from 2.75 to three percent.

Last year, the CBK issued three decisions, which ultimately kept the discount rate at 2.75 percent due to the consolidation of economic growth in the country. In early 2017, the Central Bank of Kuwait increased the discount rate from 2.50 to 2.75 percent after the US Federal Reserve increased interest rates. The step was similar to the December 14, 2016 decision by the CBK, which increased the discount rate from 2.25 to 2.50 percent. — KUNA



The Central Bank of Kuwait

Body of drowned youth recovered

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Marine rescue forces recently managed to retrieve the body of a 16-year-old citizen who drowned while swimming at Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City beach, said security sources, noting that the search operation took three hours before divers located the body, which was handed over to paramedics who confirmed his death. Commenting on the incident, the Interior Ministry's public relations and security media department urged swimmers to observe safety precautions and avoid swimming in deep waters. The department also urged swimmers to wear life-jackets to give them more time until rescue teams arrive in the event of an emergency, avoid swimming in waters with strong currents, avoid swimming for long distances away from beaches and never leave children unaccompanied.



KUWAIT: A fire engine is seen at Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City beach where a Kuwaiti teenager drowned.

Men caught with drugs, stolen goods

Ahmadi detectives recently arrested a gang consisting of seven Asian men who had illicit narcotics and stolen items in their possession, said security sources. Police patrol officers had suspected a gathering of people in an open yard in Riqqa, and when they approached them, the men tried to flee. On catching the suspects, police found a large quantity of copper cables, 31 mobile phones, KD 1,602 in cash, various electronics, ATVs and banned drugs. A case was filed and the suspects were referred to relevant authorities.

Interior denies report

The Interior Ministry's public relations department denied a report published in an Arabic newspaper yesterday and claiming that the ministry's undersecretary had made statements to the press. The department noted that the report in question carried a headline quoting the undersecretary as saying that demography would be given priority at the ministry. It added that the story also carried the byline of one of the newspaper's reporters and stressed that the whole story was not true. Further, the department underlined that statements made by any ministry official must go through the public relations department. It also urged all reporters to verify news before publishing them, especially since it is always ready to respond to any inquiries.

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Al-Shaab gate, one of five gates that were part of Kuwait City's wall which was built to fend off attacks from land. — Photo by Rami Saber (KUNA)

Campaign launched to mark Int'l Day Against Drug Abuse

Campaign organizers to be active in media, youths' gathering places



Officials pose in front of a board where visitors can sign their names in support of the anti-drugs campaign 'Weyakum' (with you).



Officials pose for a group picture in front of the aquarium at the Scientific Center.

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The National Anti-Drugs Media Project 'Ghiras' celebrated the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in cooperation with the Drug Control General Department, General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, and the United Nations Development Program. The event took place yesterday at the Scientific Center.

This celebration is part of the anti-drugs campaign 'Weyakum' (with you). "Kuwait is celebrating this Day through launching the campaign, where two divers went diving at the aquarium holding a poster with a message of 'Weyakum'", said Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti, Executive Director of 'Weyakum' project. "193 countries around the world are celebrating this day."

The event marked the launch of the campaign that will last for a couple of months, and will be active in different media and locations where young people gather. "Countries focus on different aspects such as drug dealing, drug trafficking, awareness against drug addictions and others. This problem is also connected to money laundering as there is huge money involved in this illegal business," Dr Shatti added.

Fighting drugs is a joint responsibility of all, including the public and private institutions, NGOs, family members, and the media, as this issue affects everyone. "Those targeted by drugs are usually young people," Dr Shatti said. "Gulf countries are the most targeted, so we should all cooperate in combating this negative phenomena in order to protect the future of the country."

"Drug addiction cannot be eliminated only by the efforts of security authorities, thus it needs support in



KUWAIT: Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti, Executive Director of 'Weyakum' project. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

the form of the prevention factor to protect the community. Awareness programs provide protection for individuals through explaining the dangers as well as political, economic and social negative effects of drugs," he pointed out.

'Weyakum' aims to drop demand on drugs through awareness and create social pressure on drug dealers to eliminate their business. It also aims to rehabilitate drug addicts, and improve the skills of those who work in this field. This campaign further aims to spread awareness to students and their parents as well, and give advices and consultations for other individuals.

"We aim to encourage families to report their addicted family members, as they should know that there is no legal responsibility on them or the addict," Dr Shatti explained. "Through this campaign, we also aim to build confidential and trustful relations with the addict who comes to seek

treatment, and to activate the role of educational and social organizations in combating drugs."

The event's organizers plan to use different ways to achieve the goals of this campaign. "We will send messages in different media, and build an active website and an application for both Apple and Android systems," Dr Shatti noted. "We will also conduct studies and surveys on

the targeted categories. Furthermore, we will print awareness flyers and have awareness messages on Kuwait Airways flights, at youth clubs, cinemas, magazines of universities and others. Moreover, we will hold an awareness week in all six governorates that includes exhibitions and competitions, in addition to holding lectures at schools and universities."



Two divers at the aquarium hold a poster marking the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

Local

Failure to resolve Palestinian cause threatens regional stability: Kuwait

Kuwait contributes \$8 million to support UNRWA

NEW YORK: Kuwait has cautioned that the lack of a viable solution to the decades-long Palestinian cause could have negative ramifications on the future and stability of the whole region. The long-standing Palestinian question remains the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and if it continued without a solution, it would have grave impacts on the security and the stability of the whole region, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi said Monday at a special UN Security Council meeting on 'Maintenance of international peace and security: comprehensive review of the situation in the Middle East and North Africa'.

He reiterated Kuwait's firm and principled stance in favor of a lasting and fair peaceful solution to the conflict on the basis of the relevant UN resolutions, the land-for-peace principle, the Middle East Roadmap, and Arab Peace Initiative to pave the way for an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab land and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. He argued that the fate of the Palestinian refugees should be determined through the measures stated in the UN General Assembly's resolution No. 194.



Kuwait backs efforts to end suffering

Failure to resolve the situation of regional organizations such as the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to put an end to the suffering of people of those countries, he said. He cautioned that the State of Kuwait believed that the continuity of these conflicts could increase people's frustration.

It was therefore necessary to redouble efforts to reach final and comprehensive solutions to these conflicts, to achieve national reconciliation and to meet the aspirations of people for security, stability and development, he asserted. He underlined that the UN Security Council must ensure the implementation of its resolutions.

Failure to enforce the resolution would result in prolonging and complicating the disputes, he suggested. He underscored that Kuwait is a deep believer in the importance of promoting the culture peace, tolerance and religious, sectarian, cultural and civilizational diversity. Kuwait was ranked first in the World Peace Index for 2018 in the Middle East and North Africa, he noted.

War on terror

On the war on terror, Ambassador Otaibi stressed that Kuwait was one of the key contributors to the international coalition to fight the so-called Islamic State group and the international efforts to combat terrorism, extremist ideology and drying up the financial resources of terrorist groups.

In order to coordinate the efforts of the international community in the fight against terrorism and to strengthen compliance with international treaties and relevant Security Council resolutions, Kuwait had hosted five meetings within the international coalition to

Crimes against the Syrian people

Kuwait strongly condemns the serious and repeated violations of human rights facing Syrian people, attacks on medical facilities and infrastructure, and indiscriminate use of heavy weapons and aerial bombardments targeting civilians. He explained Kuwait's efforts through its membership in the United Nations Security Council and in cooperation with the friendly Kingdom of Sweden to find a mechanism to improve the humanitarian situation in Syria through the adoption of Resolution (2401) by consensus on February 24.

Ambassador Ghunaim expressed Kuwait's 'disappointment' of not fully implementing the resolution, reiterating its call for the access of humanitarian agencies to all areas of Syria. He explained that the State of Kuwait was always aware of the human tragedy in Syria and believed in the importance of supporting the brotherly Syrian people and hosted three international donor conferences in 2013, 2014 and 2015, and co-chaired donor conferences in London and Brussels.

The total amount provided by Kuwait during these conferences amounted to \$1.6 billion, distributed through regional and international organizations. Kuwait allocated a sum of \$250 million to support the educational and health sectors and infrastructure of countries hosting Syrian refugees, especially in Lebanon and Jordan.

It appeals to all countries that have pledged their commitments in the six conferences held to support the Syrian people to fulfill their commitments. Ambassador Ghunaim referred to the call made by His

Kuwait urges response to Syria war crimes in line with int'l law

GENEVA: The State of Kuwait called yesterday for international laws to be applied in dealing with war crimes witnessed in Syria. This came during a speech delivered by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim, at the 38th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council to discuss independent Fact-Finding Commission in Syria.

Ambassador Ghunaim said that these demands came within the framework of Kuwait's commitments to international human rights mechanism, which punish the various criminal war acts such as obstructing access to humanitarian aids, disrupting medical evacuation, and preventing the siege of residential areas.

The State of Kuwait is concerned about the statement by the Chairman of the Commission, Judge Paolo Pinheiro, that all parties to the conflict continue to use all kinds of heavy and internationally prohibited weapons against innocent civilians in Syria, Ghunaim added. He stressed that these violations require a serious international action to stop the high rate of war



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi addresses a special UN Security Council meeting in New York on Monday. —KUNA photos

fight the IS over the past two years, he argued. He added that Kuwait would host next November a high-level international conference to review the guiding principles of Madrid, in line with the commitment to follow up the implementation of the Security Council resolution, in particular resolution No. 2396.

\$8 million

In other news, Kuwait announced a contribution of \$8 million as support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to face its severe financial shortages. This came in Kuwait's speech at the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to UNRWA, delivered by a member of Kuwait's permanent delegation to the UN Secretary-General Bashar Al-Duwaisan on Monday.

The failure to deal with the critical situation of the agency will lead to consequences that delay the



Member of Kuwait's permanent delegation to the UN Secretary-General Bashar Al-Duwaisan speaks during the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to UNRWA.

agency's activities and programs for the Palestinian refugee community in the occupied territories and the host countries, Duwaisan said. Kuwait has always supported the agency's educational, health and relief programs by providing voluntary contributions to the agency's general budget, he added.

Duwaisan called on the international community to continue its efforts to exert pressure on the Israeli occupiers to force them to implement all relevant resolutions of international legitimacy. Israel should respect its obligations under international law and human rights, and it should lift the siege on the Gaza Strip, remove all restrictions imposed on the movement of citizens and goods in the occupied territories, added the diplomat. He also called on Israel to continue supporting the agency to ensure the continuation of its services leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. —KUNA



DARAA: Displaced Syrians are seen leaving opposition held areas of Daraa yesterday. —AFP

Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to support and assist the children and youth of the displaced and Syrian refugees through the adoption of programs providing them with learning opportunities.

He stressed that Kuwait is against any military solution to solve the Syrian crisis and calls for stopping all forms of violence and fighting and, instead, reaching a peaceful settlement under the UN supervision and according to UNSC resolution (2254). Ghunaim concluded his speech by urging the support of UN Special Envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura in his efforts to push forward negotiations on the political track to resolve the Syrian crisis. —KUNA

EU lauds Kuwait's peace efforts in the region



BRUSSELS: EU High Representative Federica Mogherini speaks at a press conference in Luxembourg on Monday. —KUNA

BRUSSELS: The European Union's top-most diplomat heaped praise on Kuwait's efforts to bring peace to Yemen and in other parts in the region. "It is two years that there is no peace talks on Yemen. The EU was supporting very actively the last talks that took place in Kuwait," EU High Representative Federica Mogherini told a news conference after a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Luxembourg Monday evening.

"Let me take this opportunity to thank Kuwait for the leading role it has taken in the past on this file and in most recent times on other files in the region in a very constructive manner," she stressed. "We are ready to accompany the UN efforts also hopefully in the coming months to reconvene the parties for peace talks (on Yemen)," she added. Kuwait had hosted Yemeni parties for negotiations aimed at reaching a peace agreement.

The parties failed to conclude a deal despite UN efforts. Meanwhile, the EU ministers discussed and adopted conclusions on the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea. They highlighted the strategic importance of the region for the EU. They expressed their support for efforts aimed at the creation of an organized and inclusive regional forum for dialogue and cooperation around the Red Sea. "The stability of the Horn of Africa and the freedom of navigation from the Indian Ocean through the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, both crucial to Europe, are being put in jeopardy by developments in the Red Sea region," said the ministers in their conclusion. "Combined with the ongoing crisis in the Gulf, this has a potential direct effect in the security situation and long-term stability in and around the Red Sea," they said.

The EU encouraged all international partners, in particular the United Nations, the African Union and the League of Arab States, to make every effort to reinforce the stability and prosperity of the whole region. In a separate statement on Sahel, the EU said it will continue to support the stabilization efforts of the G5 Sahel countries as a basis for the development of the Sahel. The EU Foreign Affairs Council decided to put 11 individuals in Venezuela holding official positions under sanction. The persons listed are responsible for human rights violations and for undermining democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela. —KUNA

Kuwait eyes closer media ties with other countries: Official



SYDNEY: Members of the Kuwaiti media delegation meet with journalists from the ABC. —KUNA

SYDNEY: Kuwait Ministry of Information's Asia, Africa and Australia media department is seeking to expand media relations with other countries upon directives of assistant undersecretary for foreign media department Faisal Al-Moutlaqam, an official at the ministry said on Monday.

Head of Asia, Africa and Australia media department Mazen Al-Ansari made the statement while leading a delegation which is currently visiting Australia. The visit started late Sunday and runs until June 30. The visit is organized by the Kuwaiti Embassy to Australia and the Ministry of Information on one hand, and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs on the other.

Ansari said the promotion of media ties with other countries is in line with Kuwait's policy aiming to developing relations with other nations in all fields. He noted that the delegation seeks through the visit to shed light on Australian universities so as to encourage the Kuwaiti students to join them, and brief Kuwaiti investors on investment opportunities in Sydney.

Ansari said that he looks forward to signing some

media contracts with Australia to share expertise and benefit from developed techniques of Australian media institutions as well as organize training courses for Kuwait's media people. He referred that an Australian media delegation visited Kuwait in April, 2017 that included representatives from leading media institutions like Sky News, ABC, 9News and Sunday Times.

Ansari stressed that the visit contributed to promoting bilateral media cooperation. He pointed out that the Australian delegation was apprised of the most important political, economic, parliamentary and social aspects in Kuwait as well as issues pertaining to Kuwaiti women playing pioneering role in developing the society. He thanked Kuwaiti Ambassador to Australia Najeeb Al-Bader for being keen to organize and facilitate such visits which contribute to promoting relations between the two sides.

The Kuwaiti delegation made several visits to some media institutions like Sky News, ABC and SBS, and met with a number of officials to be briefed on their expertise, he elaborated. The delegation was also informed about the latest techniques of these media



Head of Asia, Africa and Australia media department at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information Mazen Al-Ansari (left) is seen during a live program on LSBS radio.



Members of the Kuwaiti media delegation are briefed about the workflow at Sky News.

bodies. It includes supervisor of the Asia, Africa and Australia media department Jassem Al-Khabaz, researcher at the department Khaled Al-Asfar, head of archives and photography department at KUNA Mohammad Abdulkhaleq. —KUNA



Civilian exodus as Syria troops advance in south

Spain's first Franco-era stolen babies trial begins

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LONDON: In this file photo an anti-Brexit demonstrator waves a Union flag alongside a European Union flag outside the Houses of Parliament in London. — AFP

Brexit bill becomes law, allows UK to leave EU

New law to ensure smooth and orderly exit

LONDON: A bill enacting Britain's decision to leave the European Union has become law after months of debate, the House of Commons speaker announced yesterday, to cheers from eurosceptic lawmakers. Speaker John Bercow said the EU (Withdrawal) Bill, which repeals the 1972 European Communities Act through which Britain became a member of the bloc, had been given the formal royal assent by Queen Elizabeth II.

The bill transfers decades of European law onto British statute books, and also enshrines Brexit day in British law as March 29, 2019 at 11:00 pm (2300 GMT) — midnight Brussels time. Prime Minister Theresa May said the

approval was a "historic moment for our country, and a significant step towards delivering on the will of the British people", who had voted in a June 2016 referendum to exit the EU. The bill has undergone more than 250 hours of acrimonious debate in the Houses of Parliament since it was introduced in July 2017.

Eurosceptics celebrated the passing of the bill through parliament last week as proof that, despite continuing uncertainty in the negotiations with Brussels, Brexit was happening. "Lest anyone is in any doubt, the chances of Britain not leaving the EU are now zero," International Trade Minister Liam Fox said. Conservative MP Jacob

Rees-Mogg, a staunch Brexit supporter, said: "The legal position is now so much stronger for a clean Brexit. 'Crucially this makes the prime minister's negotiating hand much stronger.'"

Another eurosceptic, Conservative MP Dominic Raab, said May would go to an EU summit later this week "with the wind in her sails". The government had a tough time getting the bill through parliament and was forced to concede some power to lawmakers over the final Brexit deal agreed with Brussels. The Brexit ministry said in a statement the new law would ensure "a smooth and orderly exit" by giving the government temporary powers to make

changes to legislation. The ministry said additional laws "will deliver the more significant policy changes needed as a result of our exit".

Further battles are expected in the House of Commons in the coming weeks, when MPs debate two bills on trade with pro-Europeans seeking to force the government to keep close ties with the bloc. May has yet to set out her plans for customs arrangements after Brexit, which have become a major stumbling block in talks with Brussels. She will gather her top ministers after the EU summit, which starts on Thursday, to thrash out their differences with the aim of publishing a Brexit blueprint shortly after. —AFP

UK, allies empower chemical arms watchdog to assign blame for attacks

THE HAGUE: Britain's Foreign Minister Boris Johnson called yesterday for all nations to vote to bolster the powers of the chemical weapons watchdog, saying it should be able to assign blame for attacks with banned poison munitions. The United States and European Union said they would support a draft proposal made by the British delegation at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), while Russia and several of its allies opposed it. "At present the OPCW's experts can say where and when an attack happened, but not who was responsible," Johnson told representatives of more than a hundred countries at a meeting in The Hague. "If we are serious about upholding the ban on chemical weapons that gap must be filled." A vote will be held on Wednesday. Decisions must win two-thirds of votes cast to be passed.

The British are seeking to re-galvanize support for an international ban on chemical weapons, which have been used repeatedly in the Syrian civil war. Banned chemicals have also been used by militants on the battlefield in Iraq in recent years, and are suspected in the poisoning of a half brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un last year in Malaysia and of a former KGB spy and his daughter in England this year.

Russia, Iran and Syria objected to the move and accused the British of breaking OPCW rules. The conference chairman said the British call for a vote was in line with procedures. Western countries blame Syria's government for using banned nerve gas in several attacks that killed large numbers of civilians. Russia and Iran are Syria's main battlefield allies.

Russian representative Georgy Kalamanov called the British proposal "a clear attempt here to manipulate the mandate of the

OPCW and to undermine the legal basis on which it stands, with which we fully disagree." "We should reflect very seriously on this proposal, and not allow it to undermine the fate of the OPCW," he said.

The 20-year-old OPCW, which oversees a 1997 treaty banning the use of toxins as weapons, is a technical, scientific body which determines whether chemical weapons were used. It does not have the authority to identify perpetrators.

The British-led proposal was to be debated by roughly 140 countries at a special session of the OPCW that started yesterday. The draft proposal, a copy of which was reviewed by Reuters, could thrust the OPCW to the front of a diplomatic confrontation between the West and Moscow which has seen relations deteriorate to their lowest point since the Cold War. Russia and Indonesia submitted rival proposals, but Western diplomats said they were not believed to have strong political backing. Johnson called for other countries to reject them.

Dozens killed

The meeting comes as OPCW inspectors prepare a report on an alleged poison attack in the Douma enclave near Damascus, Syria, in April that killed dozens and triggered retaliatory air strikes by the United States, France and Britain. From 2015-2017 a joint United Nations-OPCW team known as the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) had been empowered to identify individuals or institutions behind chemical weapons attacks in Syria. The JIM confirmed that Syrian government troops used the nerve agent sarin and chlorine barrel bombs on several occasions, while Islamic State militants were found to have used sulphur mustard. But at a deadlocked UN Security Council, the JIM was disbanded last year, after Moscow used its veto to block several resolutions seeking to renew its mandate beyond November 2017. "The widespread use of chemical weapons by Syria in particular threatens to undermine the treaty and the OPCW," said

Gregory Koblenz, a non-proliferation expert at George Mason University, in the United States. "Empowering the OPCW to identify perpetrators of chemical attacks is necessary to restoring the taboo against chemical weapons and the integrity of the chemical weapons disarmament regime." —Reuters

Hit by extreme weather, Zimbabwe rolls out triple climate policy

HARARE: With increasingly extreme weather taking a toll on farming and incomes, Zimbabwe has released a trio of climate change policies designed to make the country more resistant to climate pressures and help it meet its international carbon-cutting pledges. The Child Friendly Climate Policy is designed to educate school children about climate change and promote climate-friendly practices, such as protection of forests and wetlands and broader use of low-emissions technologies.

A new Climate Smart Agriculture Policy, meanwhile, focuses on ensuring farmers and agricultural advisers adopt climate-hardy farming practices. And the country's first overall National Climate Policy aims to help Zimbabwe put in place the legal structures needed to guide businesses on becoming greener to meet its emissions-cutting promises under the international Paris Agreement, said Washington Zhakata, climate change management director in the Ministry of Environment, Climate and Water. "The National Climate Policy is the first step towards achieving this," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview.

Adapting to less water

Tirivanhu Muhwati, a climate scientist with the Ministry of Environment, Climate and Water, said the national policy

will also focus heavily on adaptation to climate pressures, as most of the country's communities are rural and depend on agriculture even as droughts intensify. "The policy has a thrust towards promoting adaptation because, as a developing country, our scope for mitigation or reducing emissions is limited because we are not all that industrialized compared to the developed world," he said.

Approximately 80 percent of Zimbabwe's rural people depend on rainfed agriculture for a living, making them highly vulnerable to more extreme weather associated with climate change, said Environment, Water and Climate Minister Oppah Muchinguri Kashiri, at the launch of the policies this month. According to the country's submissions to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, most of Zimbabwe's climate-changing emissions come from burning fossil fuels for energy, from agricultural production, and from waste handling and industrial processes.

The new climate change policy aims to help cut emissions by industry, energy producers, agriculture, and deforestation, among other sources.

Muhwati described the Child Friendly Climate Policy as a version of the national climate change policy meant to help students understand climate change issues and also to promote climate friendly practices among young people.

The policy comes on top of other recent efforts to add climate change issues into the new national school curriculum, said Muhwati. The Climate Smart Agriculture Policy, meanwhile, aims to help university professors and agriculture extension advisers pass on up-to-date information on agricultural practices capable of standing up to climate threats, from worsening drought to flooding. "It aims to introduce a wholesome change in the way we do our agriculture. The best way to do this is through our agricultural colleges and universities," Muhwati said. — Reuters

International

Civilian exodus as Syria troops advance in south

Russia, Syria forces intensify offensive to retake territory

BEIRUT: Syrian troops have made strategic gains from rebels in the south, a monitor said Thursday, as they ramped up an offensive causing yet another wave of mass displacement. The United Nations said the latest fighting in Daraa province has forced 45,000 civilians to flee, describing it as the largest displacement in the area so far. Government forces intensified their offensive in the south last week, the latest phase in a Russian-backed campaign to retake territory lost since the start of the Syrian war seven years ago.

Overnight they recaptured two villages that allowed them to connect two of their front lines and cut off a rebel pocket, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. "The regime achieved its most significant advance since last Tuesday," the Britain-based monitoring group said. A military source cited by state television confirmed the army had seized both Basr al-Harir and Mlehat al-Atash. The Observatory said at least 15 rebels were killed in the latest battle, their bloodiest day since the government began ratcheting up its operations.

A total of 29 rebels and 24 pro-government fighters have been killed so far. At least 32 civilians have also lost their lives, the Observatory said. Rebel forces also control part of the neighboring province of Quneitra. Both provinces about the armistice line with Israeli forces in the annexed Golan Heights. The latest push by the government and its allies sparked another wave of civilian displacement of the kind that has seen more than half of the Syrian population flee their homes in seven years of conflict.



Largest displacement in the area

Massive displacement
The UN humanitarian coordination office (OCHA) in Syria said at least 45,000 people had fled the area in recent days. "Over the last couple of days we saw a very large number of people who fled because of the ongoing hostilities, because of the shelling and fighting in that area," spokeswoman Linda Tom said. "We haven't seen massive displacement in this scale in Daraa," Tom said. The regime has started bombarding the city of Daraa, the provincial capital which it partly controls, but has focused its ground offensive so far on rural areas in the east.

The UN had previously warned that fighting was putting 750,000 people in rebel-held areas of the south in harm's way. More than five million people have fled abroad since the Syrian conflict erupted in 2011. Another six million are displaced inside the country. Jordan said on Sunday it could not absorb a new wave of refugees across its border. The UN said it was preparing relief supplies to be sent to the south from both government-held areas and neighboring countries.

The World Health Organization said it had prepared more than 27 tons of medical supplies, including 2,100 trauma treatments, to be sent to Daraa from Damascus "once the green light is received from the Syrian authorities."

The World Food Program has provided food for 30,000 Syrians, and was readying monthly food rations for half a million people to be trucked in from



NAWAA, Syria: A man carries a child rescued from rubble after Syrian regime and Russian air strikes in the rebel-held town of Nawa, about 30 kilometers north of Daraa in southern Syria. —AFP

neighboring Jordan. Front lines had been relatively quiet for nearly a year under a "de-escalation" deal agreed by Russia, the United States and Jordan in July 2017.

But now, the regime and its Russian allies are pursuing a divide-and-conquer strategy against the rebels.

To avoid a bloody onslaught, Russia is leading talks with Syria, Jordan, Israel and the US to reach a negotiated settlement. A government reconquest of the area looks inevitable and would leave Idlib province in the northwest as the only part of Syria still hosting a significant rebel presence. —AFP

Relentless war puts Syria among most dangerous countries for women

LONDON: Seven years of war have turned Syria into one of the world's most dangerous countries for women, according to a global poll released yesterday, with experts sounding the alarm over rising child marriage, domestic abuse and sexual exploitation. Syria, which ranked third behind India and Afghanistan, did not feature in a similar poll conducted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation in 2011, the year the conflict broke out.

"I'm very afraid of being one of the last educated women in my country," said Maria Al Abdeh, executive director of Women Now For Development, which supports women's centers in Syria. "I'm witnessing a new generation who have no access to education, to economic opportunities, to law or to sexual health," added Al Abdeh, who has lost colleagues in the war. Half a million people have been killed in the conflict and half the population have fled their homes.

But bullets and barrel bombs are far from the only dangers. "Sexual violence

has been used with impunity," said Al Abdeh. "There is a complete absence of any rule of law." Laila Alodaat, of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, said while international attention was focused on the "horrific" crimes committed by Islamic State, the biggest threat to women was from the Syrian regime.

"Although various actors in the conflict have used sexual violence, regime forces have used it as a weapon of war both to torture women and to terrorize wider populations," said Alodaat who left Syria in 2011. UN investigators said in March that the use of rape and other sexual violence during ground operations, house raids, at checkpoints and in detention constituted war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Violence pervasive
Experts said women were also being sexually exploited by men delivering aid for local and international charities and higher numbers were abused at home as violence became more pervasive. The poll ranked Syria second worst behind Afghanistan for the risks women faced from non-sexual violence and for access to healthcare, and joint third worst on sexual violence. The poll asked 548 experts in women's issues which five of the 193 United Nations member states were most dangerous for women and which was



DERAA, Syria: An internally displaced woman from Daraa province in Syria holds blankets near the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. —Reuters

worst for healthcare, sexual and non-sexual abuse, economic resources, cultural practices, and trafficking.

"There's definitely a normalization of violence," said Jennifer Miquel of the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA) who coordinates humanitarian efforts to tackle gender based violence in Syria. "It's not just about the frontline, it's also

about how violence has entered the home." Aid workers said rising poverty and fears of sexual violence were fuelling a rise in child marriage with reports of girls as young as 11 being married but no official data on numbers. Struggling families were marrying off daughters early for financial reasons and hoping it would protect them. —Reuters

UN probe accuses DR Congo troops of crimes against humanity

GENEVA: UN investigators on Monday accused the security forces and militia fighters in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) of committing crimes against humanity in the country's restive Kasai region. The probe was established by the United Nations Human Rights Council last year to investigate abuses in Kasai, which was plunged into violence in September 2016 after government troops killed a local chieftain, Kamwina Nsapu.

The chieftain was opposed to the Kinshasa government and now rebels fighting in his name are battling government forces and a pro-government militia called the Bana Mura. "Some of the abuses committed by the defense and security forces, the Bana Mura militia and the Kamwina Nsapu militia constitute crimes against humanity (and) war crimes," the investigators said. The report will be presented to the rights council next month. It accused both government troops and militia members of targeting civilians in a "systematic or widespread manner," highlighting atrocities that include murder, mutilation, rape, sexual "enslavement" and other "inhuman acts." —AFP

Rouhani says Iran will not give in to pressure from Trump

LONDON: President Hassan Rouhani promised Iranians the government would be able to handle the economic pressure of new US sanctions, a day after traders massed outside parliament to protest against a sharp fall in the value of the national currency. Washington is to start reimposing economic penalties on Tehran in coming months after US President Donald Trump quit an agreement between major world powers and Iran in which sanctions were lifted in return for curbs on its nuclear program.

This may cut Iran's hard currency earnings from oil exports, and the prospect is triggering a panicked flight of Iranians' savings from the rial into dollars. On Monday, police patrolled Tehran's Grand Bazaar as security forces struggled to restore normalcy after clashes with protesters angered by the rial's collapse, which is disrupting business by driving up the cost of imports.

Defending his economic record, Rouhani said the government's income had not been affected in recent months, and the fall in the rial was the result of "foreign media propaganda". "Even in the worst case, I promise that the basic needs of Iranians will be provided. We have enough sugar, wheat, and cooking oil. We have enough foreign currency to inject into the market," Rouhani said in a speech broadcast live on state television.

The International Monetary Fund estimated in March that the government held \$112 billion of foreign assets and reserves, and that Iran was running a current account surplus. These figures suggested Iran might withstand the sanctions without an external payments crisis. Iran's judiciary chief warned on Tuesday that the "economic saboteurs", who he said were behind the fall of rial, would face severe punishment, including execution or 20 years in jail.

"The enemy is now trying to disrupt our economy through a psychological operation. In recent days some tried to shut down the Bazaar, but their plot was thwarted by the police," Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani was quoted as saying by Fars news agency. The Iranian government is implementing new plans to control rising prices, including banning imports of over 1,300 products, preparing its economy to resist threatened US sanctions. —Reuters

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International

Spain's first Franco-era stolen babies trial begins

Spanish doctor arrives in court, denies wrongdoing

MADRID: The first trial in Spain over thousands of suspected cases of babies stolen from their mothers during the Franco era opened in Madrid yesterday as an 85-year-old Spanish doctor appeared in the dock. About 50 demonstrators, many wearing yellow T-shirts with the slogan "Justice", protested outside the court as Eduardo Vela, who worked as a gynecologist at the now-defunct San Ramon clinic in Madrid, arrived in court. He is accused of having in 1969 taken Ines Madrigal, now aged 49, from her biological mother, and given her to another woman who raised her and was falsely certified as her birth mother.

Prosecutors are seeking an 11-year jail term for falsifying official documents, illegal adoption, unlawful detention and certifying a non-existent birth. Vela denied any wrongdoing as he took the stand. In a dark and often overlooked chapter of General Francisco Franco's 1939-75 dictatorship, the newborns of some left-wing opponents of the regime, or unmarried or poor couples, were removed from their mothers and adopted and the practice was later expanded. New mothers were frequently told their babies had died suddenly within hours of birth and the hospital had taken care of their burials when in fact they were given or sold to another family.

A mother can never forget her son Madrigal, a railway worker who heads the Murcia branch of the SOS Stolen Babies association, said she did not expect Vela to provide answers about her origins or apologize. But she hoped his two-day trial would mark a turning point that leads the authorities to reopen investigations into other "stolen babies" cases. "A mother can never forget her son," she told reporters outside the court. "Mothers want to tell their children that they did not abandon them... but above all they want to know that they are well."

“New mothers were told their babies had died”

She told the court she was "devastated emotionally" when she discovered she had been taken from her biological mother. Vela was interviewed briefly by police after a magazine in 1982 published interviews with several women who claimed they had been cheated of their babies after giving birth at San Ramon but the probe went nowhere. He told investigators in 2013 that as the director of the clinic he often signed papers without reading them but in court yesterday he said he could not recall basic information about the clinic and denied the signature on Madrigal's birth certificate was his.

"That is not mine," he said in a weak voice when asked to look at the signature. The practice began after Franco came to power after Spain's 1936-39 civil war pitting left-wing Republicans against conservative Nationalists loyal to the general, as part of an effort to purge Spain of Marxist influence. Beginning in the 1950s it was expanded to remove new newborns from poor families as well as illegitimate babies. The guiding principle was that the child would be better off raised by an affluent, conservative and devout Roman Catholic family.

Important day
The system—which allegedly involved a vast network of doctors, nurses, nuns and priests—outlived Franco's death in 1975 and carried on as an illegal baby trafficking network until 1987 when a new law that regulated adoption more tightly was introduced. Campaigners estimate tens of thousands of babies may have been stolen from their parents over the decades. The scandal has similarities with events in Argentina during its 1976-83 military dictatorship, when around 500 newborns were taken from their mothers and given to couples that supported the regime.

The system—which allegedly involved a vast network of doctors, nurses, nuns and priests—outlived Franco's death in 1975 and carried on as an illegal baby trafficking network until 1987 when a new law that regulated adoption more tightly was introduced. Campaigners estimate tens of thousands of babies may have been stolen from their parents over the decades. The scandal has similarities with events in Argentina during its 1976-83 military dictatorship, when around 500 newborns were taken from their mothers and given to couples that supported the regime.



MADRID: Demonstrators wearing yellow gloves stand outside a provincial court in Madrid. —AFP

Campaigners say at least 2,000 other complaints for similar cases have been filed but up until now none has gone to trial in a country still coming to terms with the dictator's legacy.

Cases have been shelved due to a lack of evidence or because the statute of limitations had passed. In 2013, an 87-year-old nun who worked with Vela and appeared in court for questioning as a suspect, died just before she

was due to go on trial.

Carmen Lorente, who came from the southern city of Seville to protest outside the court, said she was told her baby son suffocated in the womb in 1979 even though she recalls hearing him cry after giving birth in 1979. "It is a very important day for all those who are affected and for all mothers. Because a precedent is created by this man sitting in the dock," she said. —AFP

News in brief

Dutch senate enables burqa ban

AMSTERDAM: The Dutch Upper House of parliament yesterday passed a law banning the wearing of face-covering veils in public buildings, such as schools, government offices and hospitals. The Lower House approved the bill in 2016, after attempts to impose a more general ban on burqas and other face-covering veils failed. —Reuters

Police raid Paris university

SAINT-DENIS: Police moved in on a Paris university early yesterday to remove dozens of migrants and activists who had been living in the building since January, the latest move to clear out makeshift camps that regularly appear in the French capital. Authorities said 194 people were taken to a gym to have their asylum applications processed, while an additional 160 "illegal occupants" were removed from the Paris-8 university in Seine-Saint-Denis, just north of the capital. About 70 students and activists, alerted to the imminent operation, had slept on site and formed a human chain to try to keep out the police, who used tear gas to get inside. —AFP

Spanish police launch raids

MADRID: Hundreds of police officers carried out raids across Spain yesterday as part of an operation against an Armenian mafia ring which authorities said would result in the arrest of 142 suspects. Over a thousand agents took part in the raids in 73 buildings in six provinces, including Alicante, Barcelona and Valencia on Spain's Mediterranean coast, the interior ministry said in a statement. The operation, carried out with the aid of Interpol and Europol, targeted "one of the biggest organized crime groups of Armenian origin based in Europe", which is involved in drug trafficking, money laundering, arms trafficking, tobacco smuggling and illegal sports betting, the statement added. —AFP

Two Ukraine minors in custody over deadly Roma attack

LVIV: A Ukrainian court has ordered that two minors suspected in a deadly attack on a Roma camp be held in custody for 60 days, officials said yesterday, as concern grows over a wave of hate crimes. On Saturday, masked assailants attacked a Roma camp outside Lviv, in western Ukraine, with batons and knives, killing one man. The 24-year-old died from stab wounds while four more people were hospitalized, including a 10-year-old Roma boy and a woman aged 30.

The first fatal attack against Ukraine's Roma population in years came after rights groups earlier this month accused the Kiev government of turning a blind eye to a spate of hate crimes in the capital Kiev and the west. In an apparent attempt to show that West Ukraine was prepared to take a tougher stance, a court in the Lviv region on Monday ordered the two minors be held in pre-trial detention for 60 days.

Six other suspected attackers—five of them minors—were still awaiting a court ruling, officials said. Yulia Shevchenko, a spokeswoman for regional prosecutors, told AFP the ruling was expected later yesterday. —AFP

Migrant ship to dock in Malta

ROME: A rescue ship stranded in the Mediterranean with over 200 migrants on board may be allowed to dock in Malta, France said yesterday, as EU states remain at loggerheads over how to handle the influx of people trying to reach the continent. The German charity vessel Lifeline rescued the 234 migrants, including children and pregnant women, on Thursday but it is now moored in the Mediterranean after Malta and Italy refused to take it in.

"As I speak, a European solution seems to be emerging: (it) would be a docking in Malta," French government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux told RTL radio. However, a spokesman for the Maltese government said: "There is no decision yet but it is true there are ongoing discussions which started over the weekend. There are ongoing discussions among a number of EU member states to take a share of the migrants."

The decision by Italy and Malta to stop allowing migrant rescue vessels to dock has plunged Europe into a political crisis over how to collectively handle the hundreds of people fleeing war and misery in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Ready to help

Griveaux insisted there was no migrant "crisis" but urged leaders "to respond quickly to an urgent situation". "France is ready to send a team on site to process (asylum) requests on a case-by-case basis," as it did for migrants aboard the Aquarius vessel once it docked in Spain

after also being refused by Italy and Malta. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said Madrid would take part in a "joint response" over Lifeline, but "several countries must participate".

"Spain is united, a country of solidarity, as we have shown with the Aquarius," he said. Nationalist Corsica leader Jean-Guy Talamoni said Monday it was "ready to help" but that it needed the agreement of French state. Italy and Malta say they are unfairly bearing the brunt of the new arrivals, while other European countries are urging more forceful policies to block their entry.

Italy's far-right Interior Minister Matteo Salvini—who has vowed an uncompromising stance on the issue—paid a surprise visit on Monday to Libya. He called for processing centers to be set up in various unnamed African countries to deal with potential migrants in a move "to help Libya as well as Italy block migration". Similarly, France has proposed setting up EU asylum processing centers in Africa aimed at discouraging people to attempt dangerous trips.

Libya is a key departure point for thousands of refugees and migrants hoping to reach Europe, although hundreds drown each year attempting the perilous crossing over the Mediterranean in often rickety boats. Its coastguard said it had rescued nearly 1,000 people on Sunday, and Spanish authorities said they had picked up more than 600 others off their coast on Monday.

Moment of great responsibility

Salvini's visit came a day after emergency talks in Brussels between 16 EU leaders in a bid to break a longstanding deadlock over who should take in the migrants, the bulk of whom have been



MALTA: The Dutch search and rescue vessel Seefuchs lies berthed in a dock in Marsa, Malta, after being called back to port. —AFP

landing in Italy and Greece. A full summit is scheduled for Thursday and Friday. EU Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos on Monday urged European nations to work together, saying: "It's a moment of great responsibility."

EU deals with Turkey and Libya, the main transit countries, have sharply cut, at least for now, the flow of migrants to Europe since a 2015 peak of over one million. The current row came to a head earlier this month when Italy's new populist government turned away the Aquarius with 630 people on board. Salvini warned foreign charities to stop rescuing migrants off Libya, accusing them of "causing trouble"

and saying Italian ports "are and will be closed to those who aid human traffickers".

The war of words saw French President Emmanuel Macron accuse Rome of "irresponsibility" for turning away the boats, while Italy denounced Paris for its hypocrisy in pushing migrants back across their shared border. The issue was expected to be raised during a meeting at the Vatican yesterday between Macron and Pope Francis, who has called for "solidarity" with migrants. In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel is facing an ultimatum from her hardline interior minister who has given her until the end of June to find a European deal to curb new arrivals. —AFP

French couple sentenced to life for murdering au-pair in London

LONDON: A French couple living in London who murdered their au-pair and tried to dispose of the body by burning it in their back garden have been sentenced to life in prison with a minimum of 30 years. The Old Bailey court in London sentenced Sabrina Kouider, who is undergoing psychiatric treatment, and Ouissem Medouni for the September 2017 killing of 21-year-old Sophie Lionnet. "She died as a result of purposeful and sustained violence, and not by accident," state prosecutor Aisling Hosenin said when they were convicted last month.

"They were both jointly involved and came up with a plan to try and destroy her body and escape responsibility for this horrendous crime," she added. The jurors deliberated for a week before unanimously convicting Kouider and ruling by a majority decision of 10 to 2 on May 24 that her partner Medouni was guilty as well. Both had denied murdering Lionnet, from Troyes in eastern France, although they had admitted during the two-month trial to burning her body.

The court heard how the couple had interrogated and tortured Lionnet over their belief she was conspiring with one of Kouider's former boyfriends—Mark Walton, a former member of Irish band Boyzone—who they claimed sexually abused members of their family. Kouider, who has two children,



LONDON: In this combination file photo released by the British Metropolitan Police Service in London show Sabrina Kouider, left, and her partner Ouissem Medouni, right. —AFP

told London's Old Bailey court that she hit the au pair "really bad" with an electrical cable. The victim's mother called the guilty pair "monsters" in a statement read to court earlier.

Catherine Devallonne said she "fell into shock and was hospitalised" after police broke the news that her daughter, whom she described as a "reserved young girl", had been killed. "I've been living this nightmare ever since," she added, explaining that the victim's brother was suffering from "mental trauma", and had been placed with a foster family. "Those monsters beat her to death," she said. "They left her hungry. They took away her dignity and eventually her life." —AFP

French Muslims on edge as police probe suspected far-right plot

PARIS: French police yesterday continued questioning 10 suspected far-right extremists over an alleged plot to attack Muslims that has fuelled safety concerns in Europe's biggest Muslim community. Nine men and one woman aged 32 to 69 were arrested in raids across France on Saturday. The suspects, whose detention was extended late Monday for a further 48 hours, had an "ill-defined plan to commit a violent act targeting people of the Muslim faith," a source close to the inquiry said.

Police have linked the ten to a little-known group called Action des Forces Operationnelles (Operational Forces Action), which urges French people to combat Muslims, or what it calls "the enemy within". Rifles, handguns and homemade grenades were found during searches in the Paris area, the Mediterranean island of Corsica and the western Charentes-Maritimes region.

The group's suspected leader, identified as Guy S., was a monitor for the far-right National Front during last year's presidential and legislative elections, according to the mayor of the western town of Tonny-Charente. But a local official for the party, since re-baptized the National Rally, said the man, a retired police officer, did not figure on party membership lists and was not among the party's known "supporters". Party leader Marine Le Pen welcomed the arrests, saying "any terrorist attack targeting people must obviously be repelled with the utmost force." —AFP

International

Laos officials torch narcotics stockpile on World Drug Day

Laos, key transit route for Myanmar-made meth

XAM NEUA, Laos: Laos drug officials torched around 40 kilograms of heroin and tens of thousands of "yaba" pills yesterday, a small but significant fraction of the narcotics burned on World Drug Day in a region awash with illegal substances. The ceremony was among several destruction events that took place across Southeast Asia, home to the infamous "Golden Triangle"—a zone bisecting Thailand, Myanmar, China and Laos that is the world's second-largest drug producing area. Record amounts of methamphetamine pills and "ice"—the highly addictive crystallized version—are pushed out across the region and as far as Japan and Australia, prompting massive seizures this year.

Sharing borders with five countries, poor and landlocked Laos is a key transit route for Myanmar-made meth as well as a producer of opium, the raw ingredient of heroin. Yesterday, AFP was given rare access to the ceremony in the reclusive communist country, held to mark the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, as it ramps up efforts to tackle the multi-billion dollar trade.

Bricks of grey-colored heroin and piles of vanilla-scented yaba pills—which contain caffeine and methamphetamine—were torched in Xam Neua, a small northeastern town that is a gateway to Vietnam and a popular trafficking route. "Here in Southeast Asia, methamphetamine markets continue to expand," said Erlend Falch of the UN

Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). "Increasing amounts are being trafficked within-and-from-the region. Several countries in the region have reported record seizures in a few months of 2018."

Mountainous, sparsely populated and with porous borders, Laos is a well-used route for drug traffickers.

Authorities have had some success in stemming the trade but say increasing cross-border cooperation is the only way to combat the drug manufacturers in Myanmar's lawless Wa State and the crime gangs that distribute their product. Myanmar marked World Drug Day with its own dramatic torching ceremonies, setting a huge stockpile of pills, cannabis, heroin and opium on fire in the former capital Yangon.

The country also hosted ceremonies in Mandalay and Taunggyi, destroying narcotics worth \$187 million in total, officials said. Thailand began its torching of drugs earlier, destroying more than six tons of narcotics on Monday, the bulk of which was methamphetamine. Major seizures worth tens of millions of dollars have shattered records across the region this year, including a \$45-million of yaba and crystal meth from Myanmar discovered in Bangkok last month. UNODC has urged governments in the Golden Triangle to tackle corruption to stamp out the illicit drug trade in the region, estimated to be worth \$40 billion.—AFP

“Several countries report record seizures”



YANGON: Myanmar law enforcement authorities burn seized illegal drugs worth 187 million USD marking the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking during a ceremony in Yangon.—AFP

Court lets trees live to fight in India's polluted capital



NEW DELHI: A woman hugs a tree during 'Save The Tree Campaign' in New Delhi, India.—Reuters

NEW DELHI: Thousands of trees in New Delhi were given a reprieve following protests by residents and angry editorials, as a court put a temporary block on plans to cut them down in order to redevelop government housing estates. The Indian capital is one of the most polluted cities in the world, although many neighborhoods remain pleasantly leafy, with trees providing shade, and helping air quality by releasing oxygen, while absorbing carbon dioxide, and harmful gases.

On Monday, the Delhi High Court ordered the state-owned company running the redevelopment project to stop felling trees until July 4, when it is scheduled to hear a public interest petition calling for the plan to be shelved. "Can Delhi afford cutting down of so many trees for a housing complex?" the two-judge bench asked after issuing the order.

In Sarojini Nagar, one of seven housing estates earmarked for redevelopment, residents protesting to protect trees have regularly gathered, linking arms around the trunks and holding candles and banners. According to the petition filed at the court by a neighborhood doctor, the housing plan will lead to the felling of 16,500 trees in the capital.

The managing director of NBCC (India) Ltd, the state-owned firm in charge of the housing project, told media that the trees have to be felled to create underground parking space for 70,000 vehicles. Other government agencies have said new trees will be planted. Diya Deb, campaign director for Greenpeace India, called the project "ridiculous," given the capital's air pollution levels. "It is an unsustainable choice that will have a massive impact on the health of the citizens of Delhi," Deb said.

A report by the World Health Organization last month said India was home to the world's 14 most polluted cities, with Delhi ranked the sixth most polluted. Calling the move an "insane project", columnist Rudroneel Ghosh wrote in The Times of India daily: "It is shocking that felling of such a large number of trees - many of which are decades old - was even conceived in a place like Delhi which over recent years has become a veritable gas chamber."—Reuters

Koreas hold talks on connecting railways

SEOUL: North and South Korea held talks yesterday on connecting the railways that run across their border, a physical link that would transform the relationship between the two sides of the divided peninsula. The discussions, the first on the issue for 10 years, took place in the truce village of Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone that divides the two countries. The two sides agreed to conduct a joint-study "at an early date" on modernizing the railways that run through their border. Yonhap reported the South's Unification Ministry as saying.

A rail line already exists from Seoul to Pyongyang and on to Sinuiju on the Chinese border, originally built by Japan in the early 20th century, long before the Korean War and decades of division. Linking the two systems and modernizing the North's ageing rail infrastructure would give trade-dependent South Korea a land route to the markets of China, Russia and on to Europe. But doing so would represent a fundamental change on the peninsula: there has been no direct civilian communication between the two Koreas since their division was sealed by the 1953 armistice that ended the Korean War—not even post.

Despite the diplomatic warming on the peninsula, with summits between the North's leader Kim Jong Un and both the South's President Moon Jae-in and Donald Trump of the US, Pyongyang remains under heavy sanctions over its nuclear and missile programs. Any practical steps would only become possible after such measures are eased. South Korea's chief delegate Kim Jeong-ryeol acknowledged as he set off for the meeting.

"But we can thoroughly research and study various projects we can pursue after the sanctions are lifted," he added.

During an earlier period of rapprochement, the South built a gleaming station at Dorasan, just south of the Demilitarized Zone, with platforms marked for non-existent services to the North's capital. On the eastern side of the peninsula, railways could connect South Korea's port city of Busan to Europe via the North and Russia. Kim and Moon agreed to "adopt practical steps towards the connection" of the railways at their first summit in April.

Moon has also shared his vision of linking the inter-Korean lines to trans-Siberian railways, offering a route to Europe, saying it would bring "huge economic benefits" to Seoul and Pyongyang as well as Russia.

But freedom of movement for North Korean civilians could threaten the grip on power of the ruling Workers' Party, which imposes tight controls on the population. The rapprochement on the Korean peninsula was triggered earlier this year when Kim decided to send athletes, cheerleaders and his sister as an envoy to the Winter Olympics in the South.—AFP

News in brief



HA GIANG: In this picture, a Vietnamese man looking at the debris of his house destroyed by flash floods in northern Ha Giang province.—AFP

15 dead in Vietnam floods

HANOI: Flash floods and landslides killed 15 people in Vietnam's mountainous north, officials said yesterday, after storms ravaged homes and wiped out crops and infrastructure. At least 12 people are still missing after the weekend floods, and hundreds of police and soldiers have been deployed to help clean-up efforts. Vietnam is frequently lashed by harsh weather in the rainy season between June and November. The latest storm hit several northern provinces, littering the area with piles of rubble and trees as residents scrambled to clean up their destroyed homes.—AFP

Two killed in fire in S Korea

SEOUL: A fire swept through an under-construction apartment building in the South Korean city of Sejong yesterday, leaving two dead, one missing and 37 others injured, fire authorities said. Fourteen Chinese workers were among the casualties but it remains unclear whether any of the dead were Chinese, a spokesman from the National Fire Agency said. Of the injured, three were listed as being in a serious condition, he added. The fire in the 24-storey building apparently started in the underground parking garage, the spokesman said.—AFP

One killed in Hong Kong shooting

HONG KONG: A brazen daylight shooting at a park in Hong Kong yesterday left a woman dead and three others wounded, a rare firearms attack in a city with a reputation for safety. Police said a 44-year-old woman fired at four people inside a harbor front park near a largely residential neighborhood for middle-income families in eastern Hong Kong Island. Investigators said the attack was motivated by a "family conflict", not organized crime. Local TV footage showed an injured man sitting on the ground with a bloodied arm while another was carried into an ambulance.—AFP

Pilots killed in fighter crash

ISLAMABAD: Two Pakistan Air Force pilots were killed yesterday when an F-7 fighter jet crashed during a training mission at a base outside the northwestern city of Peshawar, officials said. The aircraft was landing after the routine flight when it crashed, the air force said in a statement. It did not give further details but said a "board of inquiry has been ordered by air headquarters to determine the cause of accident". The F-7, a Chinese variant of the Russian MiG-21, has been in the Pakistan Air Force fleet for decades. It plans to replace the ageing jets by 2020 with JF-17s, which are co-produced with China.—AFP

US defense chief visits China as tensions simmer

BEIJING: US Defense Secretary James Mattis arrived in Beijing on his first ever visit to China yesterday, aiming to find room for military cooperation as security tensions between the two superpowers edge higher. With Washington and Beijing locked in an escalating trade war, and the Pentagon alarmed over China's placement of weapons on disputed islands in the South China Sea, Mattis said he would seek areas where the two sides share interests, including persuading North Korea to give up its nuclear arsenal.

Mattis is scheduled to meet his Chinese counterpart, Defense Minister Wei Fenghe, for the first time as well as other top officials, to "take measure" of their views. The last time a US defense secretary visited China was four years ago, and communications between the two militaries need strengthening, Mattis said. "I think the way to address issues between our two nations is to first establish a transparent strategic dialogue: how do the Chinese see the relationship with us developing, how we see it developing," he said.

In a statement ahead of the visit, Chinese defense ministry spokesman Ren Guoqiang said they should "work together to make the bilateral military relationship an important stabilizing factor in the relationship between the two countries." But China's state-run Global Times newspaper, warned in an editorial on Tuesday that "Mattis should listen rather than criticise".

"If the US fails to understand China's sense of insecurity, or misinterprets the necessity of the actions that China has taken to alleviate this sense of insecurity, tensions will be inevitable in Sino-US ties," the nationalist tabloid wrote.

Focus on military relations

The Pentagon chief, who will also visit South Korea and Japan on a four-day visit to the region, arrives as the trade threats between Washington and Beijing intensified, with tariffs looming next week. But he made clear that his talks



BEIJING: US Secretary of Defense James Mattis arrives at a hotel in Beijing.—AFP

would be limited to military-to-military relations and the North Korea nuclear negotiations. US defense strategists are broadly concerned by China's rapid advances in military technology and its increasing ability to project its offensive military might far into the Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, where the United States has been uncontented since World War II.

Mattis said in a speech to Naval War College graduates last week that China harbors "long-term designs to rewrite the existing global order". He also said recently that Chinese President Xi Jinping reneged on his promise three years ago to then president Barack Obama to never militarize the South China Sea.

At a strategic forum in Singapore three weeks ago, Mattis said Beijing's deployment of high end weapons sys-

tems in the South China Sea was for the purposes of "intimidation and coercion".

The Chinese retorted that Mattis' comments were "irresponsible". US officials are also concerned over Beijing's stepped-up campaign to pressure Taiwan, a longtime ally of the United States despite the lack of official diplomatic relations. On the eve of Mattis' trip, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen said in an interview that the global community needs to work together to "constrain China and also minimize the expansion of their hegemonic influence".

Mattis was confident the two sides could find some areas to work together on, including North Korea. A senior Pentagon official said they see China as continuing to enforce sanctions on Pyongyang as negotiations on a denuclearization plan continue.—AFP

Analysis

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A softer Erdogan? Unlikely: Analysts

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's election triumph, winning a new mandate with even stronger powers, is likely to embolden the Turkish strongman to take a tougher line on issues ranging from the fight against Kurdish militants to foreign policy, analysts say. He will enjoy the greatest powers of any Turkish elected leader in over half a century under a new constitution which he argues will usher in efficient top-down governance.

Opponents, however, fear a new autocracy. The president's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) also controls a majority in parliament with the help of its election pact allies the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), a hard-right group likely to insist on uncompromising stances. And Erdogan can remind anyone who doubts his authority or urges compromise that he won the election outright with 52.6 percent of the vote in Sunday's first round, an even better score than in 2014. "With his new political legitimacy, Erdogan will finally establish a presidential regime and engage in an assertive policy at national and international levels," said Jana Jabbour, professor of political science at Sciences Po university in Paris.

'Beholden to MHP'

In the first years of his rule after coming to power in 2003, Erdogan actively sought to accelerate Turkey's EU membership bid and also, in a stunning reversal from previous Turkish administrations, began negotiations with Kurdish militants on a peace deal. But mass protests and a corruption scandal in 2013 saw the emergence of a more uncompromising leader, with his tough stances increasing after the 2016 failed coup blamed on a former ally.

The post-coup crackdown has been the most intense in Turkey's modern history, with tens of thousands arrested including journalists and activists, and the strength of the purge leading to a crisis in relations with the EU. Concerned about greater polarisation, Erdogan's defeated rival from the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), Muharrem Ince, called on him to be "the president for 81 million Turks." "Now is the time to work, set aside tensions from the election period and focus on the country's future," Erdogan said after declaring victory. But Jabbour predicted the purges will take on a "new magnitude." "The judicial system will be controlled by Erdogan, civil and individual liberties will be limited," she said.



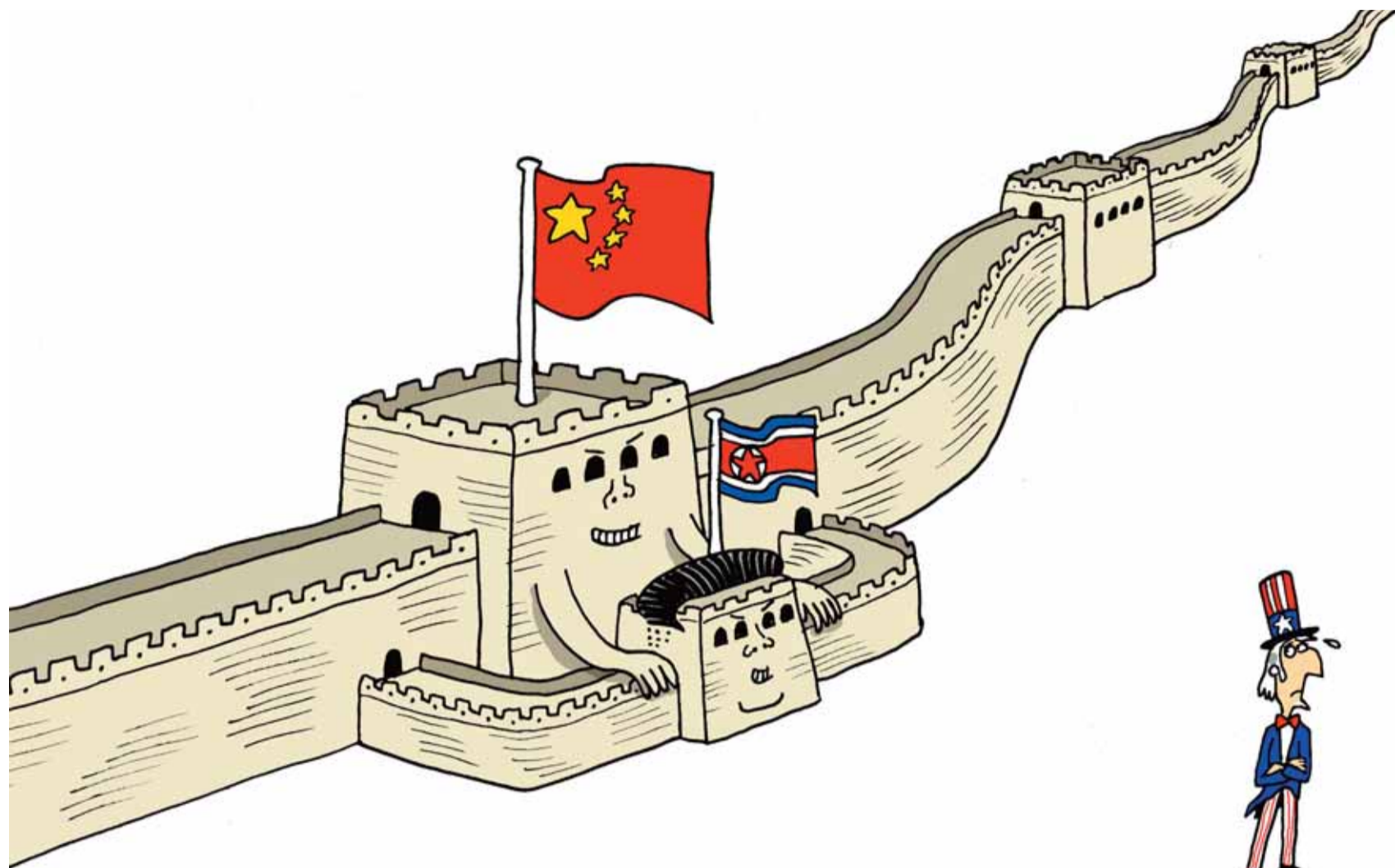
Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan waves to supporters as they celebrate Erdogan winning five more years in office with sweeping new powers after a decisive election victory. — AFP

Analysts also fear that the alliance with the MHP will push Erdogan to adopt a tougher line, in particular on the Kurdish issue, with the peace process already frozen since the collapse of a ceasefire in 2015. "Because he is so beholden to MHP in parliament, it will be difficult for him to... extend freedom of expression or take a softer stance on the Kurdish issue," Asli Aydintasbas, fellow with the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), told AFP. According to nearly complete results, AKP won 295 seats in the 600-member parliament, but will need the MHP's 49 lawmakers to have a majority. During the election campaign, pushed by the promises of his opponents, Erdogan pledged to lift shortly after his inauguration the state of emergency in force since the 2016 attempted putsch. But opponents will only be convinced if the pledge is fulfilled.

'Less room to maneuver'

Erdogan will begin his new mandate with a host of foreign policy dilemmas in his in-tray, including Syria, Turkey's bid to join the EU and years of frosty ties with Washington. "The new alignment, with the hard Turkish nationalist MHP... will create problems for US policy," especially on disputes over the Syrian Kurds, warned Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish Research Program at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

"In the short term at least, Erdogan will have even less room to manoeuvre on these issues than before," he said. But there has been a softening in Turkey's tone on relations with the West this year, with far less anti-Western rhetoric from Erdogan during the campaign than the fractious 2017 referendum on the new constitution. Aydintasbas said Erdogan "now has the power to normalize if he wants to", but questioned whether he would be "flexible enough" to embark on this process. — AFP



KIM JONG-UN MADE ANOTHER TRIP TO CHINA

Malaysia's belt-tightening resurrects age-old dispute with Singapore

For over half a century, island-state Singapore has been getting half its fresh water from northern neighbor Malaysia - a deal that could be up for review as the new prime minister in Kuala Lumpur seeks to cut down on the country's ballooning debt. Singapore was once part of Malaysia but they separated acrimoniously in 1965, clouding diplomatic and economic dealings for years. Relations remain volatile.

In his first few weeks back in office, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has put the brakes on projects and cut ministers' salaries to tackle about 1 trillion ringgit (\$249.19 billion) of national debt he blames on past corruption. Now, he has his guns trained on the price of water sold to Singapore. "I think it is manifestly ridiculous," Mahathir said in an interview with Channel NewsAsia published on Monday, referring to the water deal. "That was okay way back in the 1990s or 1930s," he added, saying he wanted to renegotiate the terms. Asked about the water issue at a news conference later on Monday, Mahathir brushed it aside saying it "was not pressing". Singapore's foreign ministry said in an e-mailed statement on Monday that "both sides must comply fully with all the provisions of these agreements." Tensions between Singapore and Malaysia were high during Mahathir's previous tenure from 1981 to 2003, and the water row contributed to the difficult ties. Since returning to power in May, the 92-year-old has said he will halt a high-speed rail project linking Kuala Lumpur with Singapore and would develop some offshore rocks that were the subject of a territorial dispute.

Some analysts say Mahathir's revival of the water dispute could be posturing. Malaysia faces financial pen-

alties from Singapore if it pulls out of the high-speed rail agreement as Mahathir has suggested it will. "It is not just about money. He (Mahathir) is a very canny statesman," said Nicholas Fang, director of security and global affairs at think tank the Singapore Institute of International Affairs. "He knows how to put into place different levers that he can then pull to effect certain things."

Back and forth

Under a deal penned in 1962, Singapore can import up to 250 million gallons of water from the Johor River every day from Malaysia - around 58 percent of its current daily water needs - at a cost of 0.03 ringgit per 1,000 gallons. It is obliged to sell a small portion of treated water back to Malaysia at preferential rates. If fully drawn, that imported water would cost Singapore around 2.7 million ringgit (\$670,000) annually. The water agreement was guaranteed by both governments when they separated in 1965, and Singapore has said it equates the sanctity of the deal with its survival as a nation state.

"Every other policy had to bend at the knees for our water survival," Singapore's founding father Lee Kuan Yew once said. Lee died in 2015 and his son, Lee Hsien Loong, is the current Singapore prime minister. Mahathir, who had a famously testy relationship with Lee Kuan Yew, has previously pointed to Hong Kong's agreement with China as evidence it is getting a raw deal. Hong Kong paid a fixed sum of HK\$4.78 billion (\$608 million) to import more than two thirds of its fresh water needs - around 480 million gallons a day - from China last year, official data shows. However, Singapore says the relatively low price it pays for Malaysian water is because it has

to bear the full cost of treating the water as well as building, operating and maintaining the pumps and pipelines from Malaysia. Malaysia previously asked for a price revision in 2000 and Singapore countered with a request to fix water supply rates beyond 2061. After a series of exchanges, the talks disbanded with Malaysia saying Singapore was being unreasonable and legalistic.

Singapore blamed Malaysia for the collapse, saying it was looking for a 200-fold increase in current water prices and that it became clear it had "no intention of striking a deal on future water after 2061." In 2011, a separate deal for Singapore to draw some water from elsewhere in Malaysia expired. Singapore has recently been building up its domestic water sources - which include rain catchment and desalination - and pushing water recycling initiatives to become more self-reliant by the time the 2061 deal expires. But the resurgence of the water dispute with Malaysia comes at an awkward time for the city-state.

Hyflux, a private company which has built desalination plants supplying up to a quarter of Singapore's water, is in dire financial straits and to keep creditors at bay it is looking to sell its Tuaspring plant in the west of the city-state. Singapore's national water agency PUB said it is "monitoring the developments closely and there are measures in place to keep the Tuaspring plant in continued operation".

Water prices have become a spiky issue in Singapore, which is due to hold elections by early 2021. A price hike last year - the first in nearly two decades - led to a rare public protest against a government that enjoys strong popular support. — Reuters

Ethiopia and Eritrea: Decades of dispute

Ethiopia and Eritrea have been bitter enemies for decades, fighting a border war in 1998-2000 that cost nearly 80,000 lives and remains a flashpoint today. As the two sides hold a historic meeting in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, here is an overview of their long and troubled relationship.

Eritrea breaks away

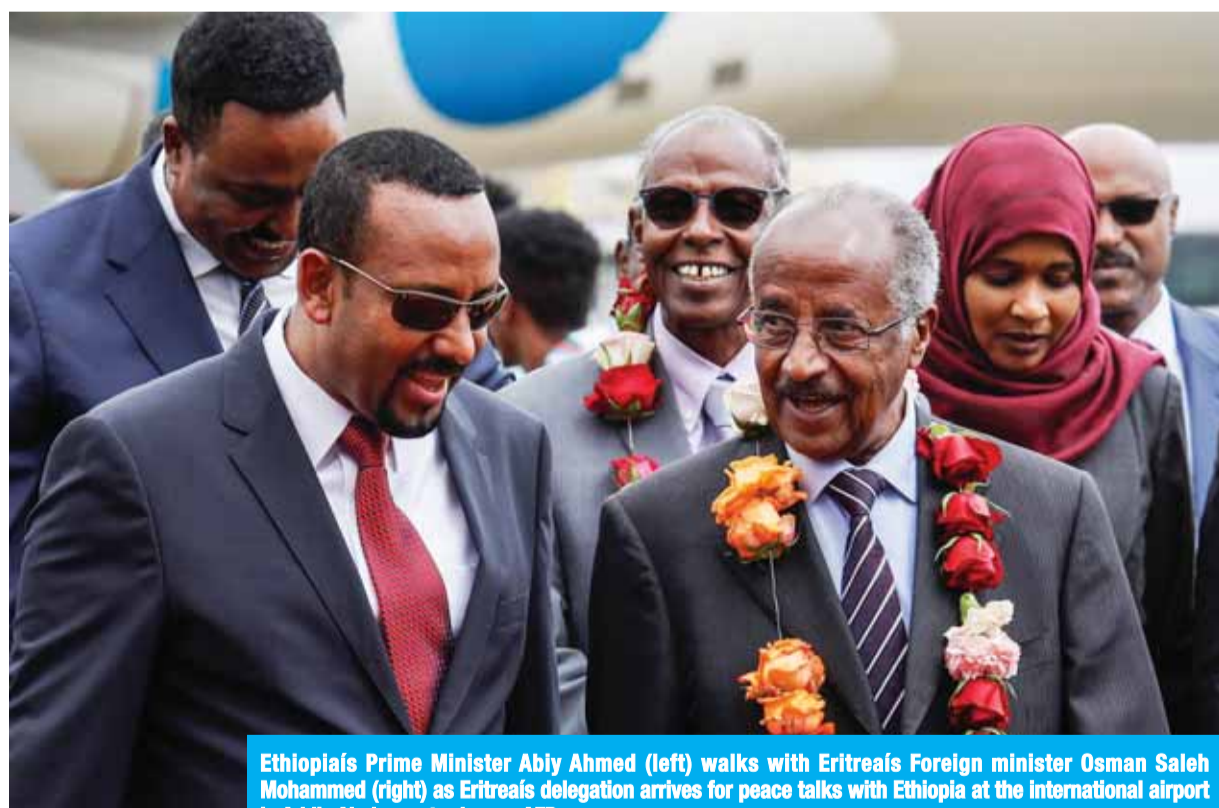
In 1962, Ethiopia's last emperor, Haile Selassie, proclaims the annexation of Eritrea, abolishing its autonomous status and effectively making it a province. Eritrea launches a war for independence that lasts nearly 30 years. In 1991, Eritrean rebels, who help overthrow the military-Marxist Ethiopian regime of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, seize Asmara, the Eritrean capital. They install a government, gaining de facto independence. Eritrea gains full independence in May 1993, a secession blessed by Addis Ababa. However, the 1,000-kilometre (620-mile) border between the neighbors is not properly defined and the move deprives Ethiopia of its only entry point to the Red Sea.

War erupts

In May 1998, the first skirmishes erupt between the Eritrean and Ethiopian forces. Eritrean forces enter the area around the town of Badme, claiming it is part of its territory according to borders dating to Italian colonial rule. Fighting spreads and in June the warring sides carry out air strikes. The ensuing conflict is marked by trench warfare and large-scale pitched battles, punctuated by long periods of calm. Attempts at mediation fail. Fighting flares anew in May 2000. A fierce bombardment of Eritrea turns the conflict in favor of Ethiopia, while indirect negotiations resume in Algiers.

Peace deal reached

In June 2000 the two sides reach an initial peace accord brokered by the Organization of African Unity (OAU). It allows for the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force in a buffer zone along the border and calls for the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from areas deep inside Eritrea. The leaders of the neighbors sign an official peace pact in December 2000. It establishes a



Ethiopians Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (left) walks with Eritrean Foreign minister Osman Saleh Mohammed (right) as Eritrean delegation arrives for peace talks with Ethiopia at the international airport in Addis Ababa yesterday. — AFP

Boundary Commission, an international body that sits at the International Court of Arbitration in The Hague, to officially demarcate the disputed frontier. Its ruling is to be "final and binding".

Border decision

In April 2002 the commission delivers its decision, notably attributing to Eritrea the contested town of Badme, a particular hotspot even though it lies in sparsely populated, rocky terrain and has no strategic or economic significance. Ethiopia rejects the ruling as "illegal, unjust and irresponsible" and requests an "interpretation, correction and consultation". The commission refuses. The standoff holds up the physical demarcation of the border in terms of the commission's ruling. Tensions rise between the two sides with gunfire, landmines and troop movements near the border. In December 2005, the Eritrea Ethiopia Claims Commission (EECC) rules mean-

while that Eritrea violated international law when it invaded Badme in 1998, at the start of the conflict. Eritrea reluctantly accepts.

Stalemate

In May 2006, amid fears of a new all-out war, talks are held in London on resuming the demarcation of the border but fail, the neighbors accusing each other of holding to longstanding inflexible positions. In June Ethiopia claims to have killed more than 110 rebels allegedly sent by Eritrea to destabilize the country, a claim denied by Eritrea. There are meanwhile fears the feuding neighbors may be using Somalia as a proxy battleground. As the dispute drags on, there are regular attacks and incidents in border regions. One of the worst is in June 2016 when fighting reportedly involving heavy artillery erupts, causing "significant" casualties although no death toll is immediately released. — AFP

Business

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12 China's plastic recyclers go abroad as import ban bites**13** Europe claws higher after China enters bear territory**15** For French Tech, Macron's global appeal is a double-edged sword

SHANGHAI: Tourists flock to the promenade on the Bund along the Huangpu River, seen against the skyline of the Lujiazui Financial District in Shanghai on a hazy and polluted day. —AFP

Who is making money from US malls?

New lease on life after struggling against rise of e-commerce

CHICAGO/NEW YORK: With its lonely hallways, half-shut food court and out-of-order restrooms, the River Oaks Center mall in suburban Chicago seems like an unlikely place to make money. But that is exactly what two little-known, family-owned investment firms - Namdar Realty Group and Mason Asset Management - are doing here and across the country.

With about 100 malls from New York to Utah now under their ownership, the two funds have climbed quietly from anonymity to being among the country's top-twenty mall landlords - thanks in large part to an aggressive low-investment business strategy at many of the distressed malls they have acquired over the past five years. The approach has been aided by a slew of retail bankruptcies, and the fast-changing consumer tastes in favor of e-commerce firms such as Amazon.com Inc. offering these two investment firms brick and mortar assets at bargain prices.

There has definitely been a decline

About half the malls Namdar and Mason have acquired are similar to River Oaks: properties with relatively low sales, sometimes in need of redevelopment and typically located in underdeveloped neighborhoods. More recently, the rest of their mall

mix has consisted of healthier, but not high-end, properties as the funds have been trying to improve the quality of their assets.

A source with direct knowledge of Mason and Namdar's strategy said the funds invest as little as possible on many of their properties, adding the aim is to hold the assets, not redevelop them. The approach is not without its detractors, namely mall tenants and some government officials who were hoping to see more investment in their malls once Namdar and Mason took control of the property. But in locations like River Oaks, that investment has not come. "There has definitely been a decline in traffic," said Vickie Bass, manager of the Ashley Stewart clothing store at the mall. In interviews with Reuters, Namdar and Mason said the upkeep was adequate and that they do not flip malls, preferring to hold onto them. On occasion, they have sold their least profitable properties to redevelopers.

"When you own 100 retail properties, of course you're going to have people having complaints... if there are issues, we deal with them," Namdar President Igal Namdar said. "We have a very high retention rate for our tenants, which shows us we are doing a good job." The low rent Namdar and Mason ask for - sometimes only a couple of thousand dollars a month - has helped keep down vacancies at their malls, according to store managers and sources

familiar with Mason and Namdar's strategy. In order to improve the caliber of their tenants and portfolio, Namdar and Mason told Reuters that they have increasingly been buying healthier malls. "We now want better quality assets, malls that are occupied, with healthy ratios and diverse tenants," Igal Namdar said.

Buying cheap

Igal Namdar, 48, and his wife's cousin, Elliot Nassim, 36, the respective founders of Namdar and Mason, said they developed their investment strategy after they started buying malls together in 2012. Namdar, who got his start in real estate using money from his family's jewelry business, said he clinched his first mall deal that year with Nassim by acquiring Desoto Square Mall for \$24.6 million from Simon Property Group Inc. after it defaulted on a \$62 million loan.

A key aspect of Namdar and Mason's strategy is snapping up malls at very low prices. Namdar and Mason told Reuters they have spent an average of \$15 million to \$20 million to acquire retail properties in the past three years, a fraction of what many of the malls cost to develop. According to real estate data firm Trepp, Namdar and Mason bought 22 properties that were being sold in bankruptcy auctions between the start of 2015 and

the end of 2017, paying an average of \$5.3 million for each mall. This reflects a 92 percent discount to the value of the malls when they secured their loans, according to Reuters calculations.

Namdar and Mason typically spend 20 to 50 cents per square foot on maintenance. This compares to an average of about 60 cents per square foot that U.S. mall owners spent on mall upkeep in the first quarter of 2018 among malls that reported square feet for the period, according to National Council of Real Estate Investment Fiduciaries. Namdar and Mason have spent so little on the malls they have acquired, they often yield a 10 to 16 percent capitalization rate, a gauge of the investment's rate of return, according to real estate services firm Cushman & Wakefield's head of capital markets Mark Gilbert.

This tops last year's average US mall capitalization rate of 5.4 percent, and even the 9 percent rate mall owners enjoyed on average in their 1990s heyday, according to real estate research firm GreenStreet. But Mason and Namdar's high-return strategy comes at the risk of friction with local officials, retailers and shoppers. "Over time, you do become what you're perceived. I think that in many respects if they don't define what they're going to do with these malls in general, then they may get defined by the bad ones," Gilbert said. —Reuters

Harley-Davidson using trade war as an excuse: Trump

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump yesterday renewed his attacks on Harley-Davidson, accusing the motorcycle manufacturer of using the trade war as an "excuse" to move production for the European market out of the United States.

"Early this year Harley-Davidson said they would move much of their plant operations in Kansas City to Thailand. That was long before Tariffs were announced. Hence, they were just using Tariffs/Trade War as an excuse," he said in a tweetstorm about the company. "When I had Harley-Davidson officials over to the White House, I chided them about tariffs in other countries, like India, being too high ... Harley must know that they won't be able to sell back into US without paying a big tax!"

In the wake of sluggish sales in the United States, Harley-Davidson announced in January it would close its Kansas City, Missouri assembly plant and consolidate jobs in York, Pennsylvania. Yesterday, it said it plans to shift some manufacturing overseas to avoid European tariffs imposed last week. The EU targeted the US vehicles as part of its rebuttal to Trump's tariffs on imported aluminum and steel. Harley-Davidson currently has overseas manufacturing plants in Australia, Brazil and India.

Last year, it also announced it would build a plant in Thailand after Trump pulled out of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal, which would have abolished tariffs on their motorcycles across 40 percent of the world's economy.



NEW YORK: A man drives away on his Harley-Davidson motorcycle after picking it up from the service garage of the Harley-Davidson of New York City showroom store, June 25, 2018 in the Queens borough. —AFP

The company has not specified where the additional manufacturing will go. However, local US media reported in May that a labor union for Harley-Davidson suggested some Kansas City jobs would move to Thailand—a move the company denied.

Trump has also threatened fresh tariffs on European auto imports, which would especially punish Germany, home of Volkswagen, BMW and Daimler. "We are finishing our study of Tariffs on cars from the EU in that

they have long taken advantage of the US in the form of Trade Barriers and Tariffs. In the end it will all even out - and it won't take very long!" he said. The Republican leader said a Harley-Davidson "should never be built in another country-never! Their employees and customers are already very angry at them." He then warned: "If they move, watch, it will be the beginning of the end - they surrendered, they quit! The Aura will be gone and they will be taxed like never before!" —AFP

Auto industry warns May: Avert a Brexit car crash

LONDON: Uncertainty over Brexit has halved new investment in the British car industry and Prime Minister Theresa May should urgently change tack to keep the world's fifth largest economy in the EU's customs union, the country's main car lobby group said. Public announcements of fresh investments into new plant, machinery, models and model development fell to 347.3 million pounds (\$461.1 million) between January and June 21, down from 647.4 million pounds in the first half of 2017.

"There is growing frustration in global boardrooms at the slow pace of (Brexit) negotiations," said Mike Hawes, head of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT). "Government must rethink its position on the customs union," Hawes said, referring to May's position that Britain will leave the customs union which groups EU members in a duty-free area where there is a common import tariff for non-EU goods.

With only nine months left until Britain is due to leave the EU, there is little clarity

about how trade will flow as May, who is grappling with a rebellion in her party, is still trying to strike a deal with the bloc. In a sign of just how worried big business is getting, Siemens, Airbus and BMW have publicly cautioned Britain in the past week that their businesses will be hurt by a disorderly Brexit. When asked about business worries by ambassadors, British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson was reported by The Daily Telegraph newspaper to have quipped: "F*** business". A spokesman disputed that he had used bad language.

Cliff edge Brexit?

Under the current timetable, both London and Brussels hope to get a final Brexit deal in October to give enough time to ratify it by Brexit day in March 2019, though few diplomats expect the deal to be struck until months later. The nature of the future relationship with the world's biggest trading bloc remains unclear and there is deep concern in boardrooms about the prospect of Britain crashing out of the bloc without a deal, or with a deal that would silt up the arteries of trade.

That could be highly damaging for an industry which is dependent on the speedy movement of huge numbers of parts across borders. The average car, for example, has about 30,000 parts. BMW's Mini plant in Oxford brings in five million components a day and the company is increasingly frustrated about the lack of clarity around how it will be able to do that in future. —Reuters

Business

China's plastic recyclers go abroad as import ban bites

Over 1,000 Chinese recyclers already investing in SE Asia

TAICANG: In a smoke-filled plant about 50 miles northwest of Shanghai, masked workers feed sacks of plastic scrap into shuddering old machines that transform them into pellets used to make a range of manufactured goods. But while the factory, operated by Taicang Jinhui Recycling Co, remains a hive of activity, the company has been moving much of its capacity to Malaysia following Chinese restrictions on recycled plastic imports that came into effect this year.

The curbs on imported trash have deprived recyclers of about half of what they need to produce the plastic pellets they sell to manufacturers of products ranging from office furniture to sheaths for fibre-optic cables. And with domestic supply hard to come by, many have had little choice but to move abroad to stay alive.

"Here in our industrial park we are the only company still producing - another 22 enterprises have stopped operations and just do warehousing or whatever, and all their staff have disappeared," said Jinhui's chairman, Thomas He. Jinhui has laid off 250 workers from its workforce of around 400 people since the restrictions came into force, though it has hired another 600 in Malaysia. The Malaysia plant was set up almost entirely with Chinese equipment and technology.

The company is one of more than 1,000 recycling enterprises a third of China's total - to relocate its expertise, equipment and waste supply chains to Southeast Asia, according to the China

Scrap Plastic Association (CSPA), with total investment so far estimated at around 10 billion yuan (\$1.54 billion). The association did not provide a breakdown.

China's decision last July to stop importing 24 kinds of foreign waste, including plastic, was part of an effort to upgrade its economy and tackle the growing volumes of domestic trash clogging its rivers or sitting untreated in sprawling landfills that encircle major cities. Now, countries in Southeast Asia, already struggling with their own domestic waste problems, will have to grapple with the same issues as trash imports increase.

The Chinese ban disrupted a global supply chain that saw more than 7 million tons of scrap plastic, mainly from Europe and the United States, delivered into Chinese ports every year. As that supply dries up for Chinese recyclers, they have created 4 million tons of new capacity outside China in operations that can receive imports from countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, said Wang Wang, CSPA's chairman. But it is not yet enough to offset a supply shortfall of about 6-8 million tons of recycled plastic. "As far as our companies are concerned, they just don't have enough raw materials," Wang said.

Domestic waste
Efforts to have recyclers take on more domestic waste have been progressing slowly; only 5 percent of domestic recycling firms have so far

been able to switch to local sources of scrap, according to CSPA figures. "Handling imports and handling domestic material are two very different channels and it will take time to switch," said Jinhui's He.

Recyclers said the government's abrupt ban gave the sector no time to adjust, and crucially, China has not devised policies required to scale up and standardize treatment of domestic waste, which is usually handled by small backstreet operators. With foreign material still the best option, companies hoped moving to countries like Malaysia and Thailand would enable them to deliver processed foreign scrap to China in a higher-grade form, but their shipments have faced delays. Customs are under pressure to ensure not only that imported pellets meet exacting standards, but also that containers are not being used to smuggle illegal low-grade waste, and cargoes are under far greater scrutiny, He said.

More restrictions?
The shift to Southeast Asia has alleviated some of the disruptions caused by the ban for companies in Europe. "We are continuing to export significant volumes, but to different destinations," said Roger Baynam, head of the recycling division of the British Plastics Federation. But as foreign trash piles up in countries like Thailand and Vietnam, China's recyclers face more risks. "No one wants this trash and the industry is worried these other countries will



HONG KONG: In this file photo taken on May 21, 2018 straws are kept in plastic packaging in a plastics goods store. — AFP

impose their own restrictions," said a China-based executive with an overseas recycling firm who did not want to give his name.

CSPA said Thailand was tightening regulations and raising import taxes, with one China-invested importer already forced to close. Malaysia also temporarily suspended new import permit appli-

cations in mid-May. Jinhui's He said he was worried that importing rules were likely to get tougher across the region amid environmental concerns. "There's no way China will import this sort of stuff again," he said. And Southeast Asia "will become more standardized and regulate more stringently". — Reuters

National Bank of Kuwait		البنك الوطني	
Financial Markets		NBK	
Daily Report			
At 02:00 PM Previous Day			
Global Stock Indices			
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change
Dow Jones	24,580.89	24,252.80	-328.09
NASDAQ	7,692.82	7,532.01	-160.81
S&P 500	2,754.88	2,717.07	-37.81
Financial Times	7,509.84	7,543.98	34.14
DAX	12,270.33	12,284.25	13.92
CAC 40	5,283.86	5,304.14	20.28
Swiss	8,458.75	8,464.48	5.73
Nikkei 225	22,338.15	22,342.00	3.85
Topix	1,728.27	1,731.07	2.80
Hang Seng	28,961.39	28,881.40	-79.99
Straits Times	3,260.84	3,280.87	20.03
MENA Stock Indices			
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change
Kuwait	4,867.07	4,905.59	38.52
Saudi Arabia	8,342.35	8,296.66	-45.69
Dubai	2,867.85	2,836.01	-31.84
Abu Dhabi	4,537.30	4,565.78	28.48
Bahrain	1,301.57	1,302.03	0.45
Qatar	8,936.78	8,895.21	-41.57
Oman	4,583.27	4,570.18	-13.09
Lebanon	1,062.68	1,063.21	0.53
Jordan	2,092.84	2,078.72	-14.12
Egypt	16,457.51	16,215.62	-241.89
Morocco	12,131.71	12,074.51	-57.20
Tunisia	7,969.31	8,004.89	35.58
Global Currencies Exchange Rate			
Currency	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	US Dollar
Kuwaiti Dinar	12.2943	3.2922	2.8220
Saudi Riyal	0.08134	0.2678	0.2295
US Dollar	0.30375	3.7344	0.8572
Euro	0.35435	4.3566	1.1666
Sterling Pound	0.40217	4.9443	1.3240
Swiss Franc	0.30694	3.7736	1.0105
Japanese Yen	0.00277	0.0341	0.0091
Australian Dollar	0.22484	2.7642	0.7402
MENA Currencies Exchange Rate			
Currency	US Dollar	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal
US Dollar	0.30375	3.7344	0.2678
Kuwaiti Dinar	3.2922	12.2943	1.2494
Saudi Riyal	0.2678	0.08134	0.1016
Bahraini Dinar	2.6350	0.80040	9.8403
Qatari Riyal	0.2757	0.08375	1.0296
Omani Riyal	2.6101	0.79283	9.7473
Emirates Dirham	0.2734	0.08306	1.0211
Egyptian Pound	0.0561	0.01706	0.2097
Global Interest Rates			
Currency	1-Week	1-Month	3-Month
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.13	1.75	2.00
US Dollar	1.98	2.10	2.33
Euro	-0.42	-0.39	-0.36
Sterling Pound	0.48	0.49	0.66
Swiss Franc	-0.79	-0.78	-0.73
Australian Dollar	1.71	1.99	1.88
Japanese Yen	-0.09	-0.08	-0.04
Global Bond Yields			
Country	2-Year	5-Year	10-Year
United States	2.52	2.74	2.88
Europe	-0.71	-0.31	0.32
United Kingdom	0.72	1.03	1.29
Commodities			
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change
Kuwait Oil	72.40	72.69	0.29
Brent	72.58	73.52	0.94
West Texas	71.06	68.76	-2.30
Gold	1265.00	1257.47	-7.53
Silver	16.30	16.21	-0.09

Spain bond sale to test euro zone resilience to risk

LONDON: Euro zone government bond yields rose yesterday as investors made space for a planned 10-year sale by Spain, a possible test case for the market's ability to withstand a period of political uncertainty in the bloc. The syndicated deal by Madrid - a structure where borrowers appoint banks to sell their bonds directly to investors - is expected to be completed yesterday.

Two weeks ago, bankers who manage government bond sales told Reuters the deal was unlikely to materialize so soon after the potentially destabilizing emergence of an anti-establishment government in Italy. But yesterday, market sentiment towards it appeared to be positive, with yields rising 1-3 basis points across the board, suggesting investors were clearing space in their portfolios.

Germany's 10-year government bond yield, the benchmark for the region, was up 2 bps at 0.34

percent while Spain's 10-year bond yield was steady at 1.37 percent. "The expected size is 7-8 billion euros, and a large order book would be a good signal for Spain, the periphery and the fact that Italian fears are contained to Italy," said ING strategist Benjamin Schroeder.

In the euro zone debt crisis of 2011-2012, all lower-rated debt from governments on the euro zone periphery sold off on contagion fears when Greece appeared on the brink of default. But this effect seems to have reduced significantly since. Though Spanish and Portuguese debt did sell off when a coalition of the 5-Star Movement and League was taking office in Rome, it soon recovered. The spread between Spanish and Italian 10-year bond yields was at 147 bps yesterday compared with 47 bps at the start of May. Earlier this month, it hit 165 bps, its widest since January 2012. "We find Spanish gov-

ernment bonds are sufficiently insulated from market volatility as Spain does not face the same structural and political challenges as Italy," Mizuho analysts said in a note. They expect the deal to be at the smaller end of the 8-10 billion euro range of recent 10-year bond sales.

Merkel watch
Investors will also be keeping an eye on the political situation in Germany, where Chancellor Angela Merkel continues to seek a Europe-wide solution on migration as she faces a revolt on the issue from her Bavarian coalition allies that threatens her government.

"Do we really think she will get anything out of the EU summit that will satisfy her CSU (Bavarian) partner? Tensions have not been defused and there's still a risk of government breakup in Germany," said Schroeder of ING.

This possibility has kept safe-haven German Bunds pinned near recent lows, and though 10-year yields rose 2 bps to 0.34 percent, they were still close to near one-month lows of 0.304 percent hit on Monday. — Reuters

Last straw for food chains in Mumbai's plastic ban

MUMBAI: Several major food chains are among the dozens of companies fined for violating a new ban on single-use plastics in India's commercial capital Mumbai, an official said yesterday. The rules, in force since Saturday, prohibit the use of disposable plastic items such as bags, cutlery, cups and bottles under a certain size. Businesses and residents face fines of between 5,000 rupees (\$73) for a first-time offence to 25,000 rupees (\$367) or even three months in jail for repeat offending.

Some 250 officials, wearing blue uniforms and dubbed Mumbai's "anti-plastic squad", have been deployed to carry out inspections of restaurants and shops across the teeming coastal city of 20 million. Nidhi Choudhari, a deputy municipal commissioner in charge of enforcing the ban, said 660,000 rupees (\$9,684) in fines had been collected during the first three days. She said 132 premises had been issued with penalties including outlets of Burger King, McDonald's and Starbucks. A branch of Godrej Nature's Basket, a high-end Indian supermarket, had also been penalised, Choudhari added. "All were fined for using banned plastic straws and disposable cutlery etc," she said.

A spokesperson for Starbucks in India said the company complies with local laws in all of its markets and was committed to "environmental sustainability". Hardcastle Restaurants, which runs the McDonald's



MUMBAI: A shopper gives a bag she carried from home to a fruit-seller to put her purchases in as the city civic authorities try to enforce a ban on single-use plastic bags. — AFP

franchise in Mumbai, said it had "successfully transitioned from plastic to eco-friendly and biodegradable alternatives" such as wooden cutlery. Authorities hope the ban will help clean up Mumbai's beaches and streets, which like other cities in India are awash with vast mountains of plastic rubbish.

Plastic has also been blamed for blocking drains and contributing to flooding during the city's four-month-long summer monsoon. Authorities first announced the ban - which covers the whole of Maharashtra state, of which Mumbai is the capital - three months ago to allow businesses to prepare. The majority of India's 29 states have a full or partial ban on single-use plastics but the law is rarely enforced.

Choudhari said more than 8,000 business-

es had been searched in Mumbai alone and at least 700 kilograms of plastic seized. Small traders, however, have claimed that the crackdown threatens their livelihoods. Retailers associations say a confusion over what is and isn't allowed has led small grocery stores to remain closed for fear of being fined. The Plastic Bags Manufacturers Association of India estimates that 300,000 people employed in the industry could lose their jobs. The United Nations warned earlier this month that the world could be awash with 12 billion tons of plastic trash by the middle of the century if use is maintained at current levels. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently pledged to make India, which was the host of this year's International Environment Day, free of single-use plastic by 2022. — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL	America	Taiwan	0.010398	0.010578
British Pound	0.395353	0.409253	0.223382	0.231382	0.008882	0.009432
Czech Korune	0.005699	0.014999	0.299650	0.304450		
Danish Krone	0.043556	0.048558	0.299450	0.304250		
Euro	0.347173	0.360873				
Georgian Lari	0.139332	0.139332				
Hungarian	0.001142	0.001332				
Norwegian Krone	0.033377	0.038577				
Romanian Leu	0.064866	0.081716				
Russian ruble	0.004830	0.004830				
Slovakia	0.009037	0.019037				
Swedish Krona	0.030225	0.035225				
Swiss Franc	0.300488	0.311488				
Australasia						
Australian Dollar	0.216041	0.228041				
New Zealand Dollar	0.202440	0.219440				
Canada Dollar						
US Dollars						
US Dollars Mint						
Bangladesh Taka						
Chinese Yuan						
Hong Kong Dollar						
Indian Rupee						
Indonesian Rupiah						
Japanese Yen						
Korean Won						
Malaysian Ringgit						
Nepalese Rupee						
Pakistan Rupee						
Philippine Peso						
Singapore Dollar						
Sri Lankan Rupee						
Bahraini Dinar						
Egyptian Pound						
Iranian Rial						
Iraqi Dinar						
Jordanian Dinar						
Kuwaiti Dinar						
Lebanese Pound						
Moroccan Dirhams						
Omani Riyal						
Qatar Riyal						
Saudi Riyal						
Syrian Pound						
Tunisian Dinar						
Turkish Lira						
UAE Dirhams						
Yemeni Rial						

Business

Europe claws higher after China enters bear territory

Tech shares retreat broadly on latest US-China row

LONDON: Modest gains from Europe's main bourses relieved nervy investors yesterday, after the latest escalation in an increasingly global trade storm pummeled Wall Street and sent China into 'bear' market territory. A 0.3 percent rise from the FTSE in London and 0.4 percent gains from Frankfurt and Paris was a welcome sight after another bumpy Asian session had extended a sell-off that has now wiped \$1.5 trillion off world stocks.

China's yuan had slumped to a near six-month low against the dollar, while 0.5-0.8 percent fall on big share markets left them down 20 percent from their January peaks, a threshold that defines a 'bear' market. The dollar hovered near a 12-day low against a six-strong group of other top world currencies having drifted down versus the euro, yen and pound despite a modest uptick in US bond yields. "The sell off in risk assets has eased, but it is certainly not the last storm we are likely to see coming from that direction," said Societe Generale's global macro strategist Kit Juckes. The tense atmosphere also kept metals on the defensive as financial markets worried about the wider global economic fallout of the US administration's "America First" agenda.

Wall Street has tumbled
US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin had ramped up the rhetoric again on Monday

saying on Twitter that restrictions on investing in US tech firms would apply "to all countries that are trying to steal our technology." Wall Street had tumbled, with the S&P 500 and Nasdaq suffering their steepest losses in more than two months, and the Dow Jones closing below its 200-day moving average for the first time since June 2016.

“ Trying to steal our technology ”

The so-called FAANG stocks, which have led momentum in US stocks, were hammered too after having hit record intraday highs last week. Facebook dropped 2.7 percent, Amazon <AMZN.O fell 3.1 percent, Netflix slid 6.5 percent, and Alphabet lost 2.6 percent. Asia then followed albeit in smaller scale. Tech-heavy indexes such as South Korea's KOSPI and Taiwan's weighted index fell 0.45 percent and 0.55 percent, respectively.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co was down 1.8 percent, South Korean chipmaker SK Hynix Inc lost 1 percent and Chinese tech giant Tencent Holdings shed 0.3 percent. "Unlike the seemingly spur-of-the-moment tweets by President Trump and the retaliatory exchange of tariffs, Washington's bid to protect intellectual property is an issue at the heart of a trade row between two powers battling for future global supremacy," wrote Yoshimasa Maruyama, chief market economist at SMBC Nikko Securities in Tokyo. "It's turning out to be a long-term bearish factor for the financial markets, as the United States is unlikely to back down at least through its midterm elections (in November)."

Cars wars
Another sign of the dust gradually settling in Europe was the first rise in European car shares in eight days. Carmakers are another likely target of US President Donald Trump's tariff plans. The euro dipped back having reached a near two-week high of \$1.1722 while the dollar was beginning to find some traction again against the yen. It was last at 109.67, having fallen to a two-week low of 109.365 yen.

The yen often attracts safe-haven bids in times of political tension and market turmoil. Brent crude oil futures were up 0.15



NEW YORK: The day's numbers are displayed after the closing bell of the Dow Industrial Average at the New York Stock Exchange. — AFP

percent at \$74.83 on uncertainty over Libya's capacity to deliver on exports commitments. Brent futures had fallen 1 percent overnight as receding investor risk appetite weighed on commodities. Oil prices were capped after OPEC and its allies on Friday

agreed to increase global supplies, albeit modestly. Trade concerns kept copper on the London Metal Exchange near a 2-1/2-month low of \$6,702.5 per ton brushed on Monday. Spot gold shed 0.1 percent to \$1,263.62 an ounce. — Reuters

China's regional jet gold rush hits regulatory turbulence

SHANGHAI: China's regional jet market is struggling to get off the ground as Beijing slows approvals for new airlines, industry executives say, dashing hopes that recent policy changes would drive aircraft sales. Foreign companies such as Bombardier Inc, Embraer SA and ATR had cheered a 2016 policy that required passenger carriers to operate at least 25 city-hopper jets before graduating to bigger aircraft.

It appeared to all but assure sales of such small planes in the world's fastest-growing aircraft market, currently dominated by wide-body jets, as the regulator tried to boost flights into China's smaller cities. But there is a problem, executives say: the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) has only approved two new airlines since the "Rule 96" policy went into effect. "The truth is that almost two years has passed and I have not succeeded in one single deal," said one executive from a Chinese aircraft lessor speaking on condition of anonymity, who added that he had met with numerous start-ups to promote regional aircraft. The executives added that although the slowdown was probably well meaning, caused by regulators' concerns over safety and quality, it meant that there was a queue of at least six Chinese airlines waiting for approval.

The policy had stoked optimism among regional aircraft makers, as Chinese airlines have for years mostly focused on growing their fleets of Airbus and Boeing rather than buying smaller jets for short-haul flights. Out of 3,311 commercial aircraft flying in China at

the end of March, just 5 percent were regional jets, the CAAC said in April. By comparison, regional jets in 2016 took up 30.6 percent of the 7,039-strong fleet of aircraft in the United States, according to data from the Federal Aviation Administration.

"The intention is that (the regulators) want to push, but they have enhanced the entry barriers so they have very high standards for the investors," said Wang Qi, chief China representative for French turboprop manufacturer ATR, which is renewing its Chinese certification. Chinese airlines in general have a good safety record. The CAAC did not respond to requests for comment.

Patience and frustration
For many, Rule 96 underlined Beijing's intentions to improve regional air transport. The country's 13th five-year plan for 2016-2020 included 500 new airports. But only Tianjiao Airlines in Inner Mongolia and Air China subsidiary Beijing Airlines, which converted from a private charter operator to a passenger airline, were approved last year.

An executive at Tianju Airlines, which is waiting for the green light to start carrier operations from central China's Shaanxi province, said regulators grew more cautious. But he said the airline hopes to fly next year, after four years of preparations and at least one change to its proposal to adjust to CAAC policies. "We currently fulfill all conditions," said the executive, who only gave his surname as Li because he was not authorized to speak to the media. AirAsia Group, which is working with local partners to establish a

low-cost carrier in China, has looked at options like buying an existing air operator's certification to speed things up, according to two sources familiar with their plans. The company, which last year signed a memorandum of understanding with China Everbright Group and the Henan government, declined to comment.

Optimism
The only aircraft that meet Rule 96's seat limits of 100 or less and are certified to be sold in China are Commercial Aircraft Corp of China Ltd's ARJ-21, AVIC Aircraft's MA60 turboprop and Bombardier's Q400 and CRJ 900 models.

Bombardier and Embraer said they remained optimistic about their prospects in China. "The situation under Rule 96 continues to evolve," Bombardier Commercial Aircraft's President Fred Cromer said in an interview with Reuters at the company's

Montreal-area factory in the Canadian province of Quebec last week. "The fact that we have a plane that's well known by the authorities there and an operator that operates quite a few works in our favour," he said in reference to Bombardier CRJ 900 operator China Express.

Embraer said in an e-mail that it expects its E175 jet to obtain CAAC certification by September. But Corrine Png, chief executive of transport consultancy Crucial Perspective, said Chinese airlines were still more inclined to buy larger jets to meet surging travel demand amid a shortage of landing slots and pilots. "It would be costly to maintain a small number of regional jets in China which may not be economically efficient from the Chinese airlines standpoint," she said.

Homegrown competition
Industry insiders are also concerned that Beijing may be promoting China's domesti-

cally produced aircraft over more advanced models. COMAC put the ARJ-21 regional jet into service in 2016 and has delivered just five so far. But it has orders for 450 planes, dwarfing the numbers for Bombardier and Embraer's in China.

Tianju Airlines told Reuters it had considered Airbus' A320 and Embraer E190 jets but decided to buy the ARJ-21. "We think it's the most suitable model for us," said Li, who declined to comment further. ATR's Wang said the turboprop maker planned to look beyond regional jets and consider general aviation, which Beijing has also pledged to support with infrastructure investment. Any company can buy an aircraft and begin operating it for charters, for instance. That means ATR could reconfigure its 42-seat model into a 30-seat offering for such businesses, he said. "That category has very low barriers and there are potential investors for ATR," he said. — Reuters

S&P raises Greece debt rating on reduced debt risks

NEW YORK: Ratings agency S&P Global announced Monday it was upgrading the debt rating for Greece given the improved prospects for the country to pay off its sovereign debt. S&P raised the country's debt grade a notch to "B+" with a stable outlook, noting that the debt relief announced by Europe last week and the country's cash buffers "significantly" reduced debt servicing risks over the next two years.

The upgrade comes after eurozone ministers agreed to extend maturities by 10 years on major parts of the country's total debt obligations,

a mountain that has reached close to double the annual economic output. They also agreed to disburse 15 billion euros (\$17.5 billion), which left Greece with a hefty 24 billion euro safety cushion, officials said.

S&P said the maturity extensions and the sizeable cash buffer would cover Greece's debt payments through 2021 and "partly cover repayments coming due in 2022," significantly reducing refinancing risks. However, the ratings agency cautioned that "public and private debt remains high and the authorities' track record on attracting foreign direct investment is weak." Greece has the second-highest gross general government debt-to-GDP ratio after Japan, S&P said.

The country's eight-year crisis toppled four governments and shrank the economy by 25 percent. Unemployment soared and still hovers over 20 percent, sending thousands of young educated Greeks abroad. S&P said it was important for the country to resist rollback of economic reforms and continue with additional measures "to restore economic health and confidence in the banking sector as well as to attract foreign capital inflows to finance growth." — AFP

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Business

Pride of the land: Legendary land cruiser's greatest range of vehicles



KUWAIT: Toyota sells Land Cruisers worldwide in just about every country and has been selling the Land Cruiser in the Middle East for more than half a century. Around 10 million satisfied users cannot be wrong about their choice!

In the Middle East, the history of the Land Cruiser is also the history of Toyota. This vehicle has been especially popular in fact, legendary. It was a bit since the first one was sold. Here you will witness the world's most difficult terrain testing the capabilities of any vehicle. But over the years, Toyota has developed the Land Cruiser to handle even the toughest challenges in the burning deserts.

Power, advanced technology and luxury

Toyota Land Cruiser Wagon was designed with this philosophy in mind. As a flagship model, it delivers peace of mind excitement and luxury all at the same time to not just meet but surpass customer expectations. The King of 4-wheel drive SUV's offers amazing utility delivers, upgraded per-

formance, the latest technology, and safety. It is reliable and tough it can go anywhere do anything and yet luxurious. Toyota recently raised the bars again with all new Land Cruiser to win hearts of customers with functionally appealing design, luxurious interiors, powerful engine, superior driving dynamics and unmatched safety technologies.

Greatest range for all terrains

The Land Cruiser is on regular roads, in the city, and country, navigating deserts and ice and snow. You will find it doing its job even high in the mountains and underground in mining sites. This is a true go anywhere, all-terrain four-wheel drive SUV with 4x4 capabilities, available with petrol or diesel engines, 6 or 8 cylinders including a new line of accessories models. Here's a breakdown of the Land Cruiser LC 200 V8 - VXR which is the heart of the new Land Cruiser's capability with its 5.7-liter VVT-i cc, 8 Cylinder, 362 / 5600 Max. Output, 54.0 / 3200 Max. Torque, Tiptronic 8 Speed Transmission.



V8 - VXR

Specs:
Hill-Start Assist Control (HAC)
Variable Gear Ratio Steering (VGRS)
Adaptive Variable Suspension System (AVS)
Active Height Control (AHC)
Front Radar Cruise Control + Pre-Crash Safety System
Blind Spot Monitor (BSM)
Lane Departure Alert (LDA) with Lane Keep Assist (LKA)
Front and rear sensors
Sunroof
Front LED Lights
Front Display 9 Inches
Automatic 4 zones Air-condition
Leather seats + Front power seats with Ventilation System + Driver seat with 3 memories
Navigation System + 4 Cameras
Smart key system with start / stop engine
Remote Engine Starter
Driver Mode Select (5 Modes)
Mobile Wireless Charger
JBL Sound system with 14 Speakers

Wide range of investment plans to KFH customers

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) rolls out a wide range of long-term investment plans specifically designed to fulfil all customers' needs and meet their aspirations, yet reinforce the culture of planning for the future and reiterate the Bank's pioneering position in offering innovative sharia-complaint financial solutions. The investment plans are flexible, long-term and yield high investment rates. They are "Shifaa" for healthcare, "Jameati" for education, "Rafaa" for marriage, "Enjaz" for youths' projects, and "Thimar" for retirement.

"Shifaa" offers customers a plan based on monthly saving, while earning higher investment returns on their savings along with "Takaful" cover. If and when facing critical health circumstances, savings and "Takaful" cover will assist to meet the required medical expenses. Customers should be between 21 to 60 years, and the saving period ranges between 5 years to 15 years.

The plan is covered by "Takaful" insurance policy. The policy will cover the unpaid savings due to death, total disability including sickness or accident and critical illness. Critical illness can have a massive impact on a person's health and at the same time effect the person's finance situation. The significant benefit of the Shifaa invest-

ment plan is the availability of saved funds for emergency. If the person has been diagnosed with one of 11 major and critical illnesses as per the policy conditions, the plan target amount will be paid to the person.

Customers can deposit any amounts in addition to the withheld monthly saving amounts without affecting the schedule of the plan. "Shifaa" investment plan can be closed at any time. All saving and declared profits in "Shifaa" account will be refunded.

"Jameati" investment plan is tailored to meet parents' aspiration in paying their children's university education fees when they are 18 years old, while "Rafaa" is designed to cover marriage expenses and it assists in the early family planning and parents' planning for their children. Moreover, "Enjaz" is a multipurpose investment plan that caters for the youth's aspirations and ambitions by allowing them to plan for their future and achieve their goals by running their own businesses and projects or purchasing a house etc. Furthermore, "Thimar" contributes in offering restful and comfortable retirement life for clients, who can receive the targeted amount with all investment profits accrued by the end of the investment plan period identified by them.

Turkish Airlines to start flights to famous Bodrum

KUWAIT: Turkish Airlines has started to directly fly between Bodrum, one of the most famous tourist destinations in Turkey, and London during the 2018 summer season. Having increased its capacity for many destinations with the arrival of summer season, Turkish Airlines now enables its passengers to directly fly between Bodrum, and London. The flights have been introduced as Turkey is tipped to be 'the' holiday destination for Brits seeking sun, sea, sand, and peace in 2018.



Bodrum-London flights, which started by June 13th, 2018, will be operated two times a week, as on Wednesdays and Saturdays during this summer season. Turkish Airlines, who made its first flight to the United Kingdom with its London flights on September 9th, 1961, now

operates totally 90 flights per week to the United Kingdom including London, Manchester, Birmingham and Edinburgh. Round trip fares are available from London to Bodrum starting at 235 GBP (including taxes and fees).



Suez Canal Economic Zone, Agility agree to develop East Port Said logistics hub

CAIRO: Admiral Mohab Mamish, Chairman of the Suez Canal Authority and Chairman of the Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE), along with Tarek Sultan, Vice Chairman and CEO of Agility, a leading global logistics provider, yesterday signed a Protocol of Cooperation, establishing a logistics center in East Port Said, one of the most important strategic sites on the Mediterranean Sea.

Under this protocol, Agility will develop a hub with international standard logistics infrastructure to enhance the importing and warehousing of raw materials, as well as the export and distribution of intermediate and final goods through the Suez Canal Ports. The logistics hub is part of the current expansion of East Port Said.

The company will also provide world-class solutions for Egyptian customs, including the modernization and automation of the customs processes. This will improve the speed at which commodities are moved and strengthen the supply chain in a fast and secure manner. These improvements, in turn, will help decrease supply chain costs for the industrial operations across the various areas of the economic zone. "The establishment of the East Port Said project is in line with the Egypt 2030 Vision. It also achieves Egypt's development goals in creating an integrated sustainable economic growth through the creation of new job opportunities and enhancing Suez Canal Zone status as a commercial and industrial hub," Admiral Mohab Mamish said.

Admiral Mamish added that the protocol of cooperation with Agility is one of the significant steps in the Economic Zone's development plan, and particularly the development of East Port Said, noting that Agility is one of the world's largest logistics companies operating in the Arab region. The Chairman of the Suez Canal Economic Zone announced that the protocol aims to study the investment in the development and marketing of both the logistics and industrial areas. It also includes the development of a 'green' logistics hub for value-added services, in



addition to applying advanced customs technology solutions that facilitate trade.

'World-class infrastructure'

Tarek Sultan, Vice Chairman and CEO of Agility said, "Egypt's prominent location allows access to strong regional markets and trade routes, making it an ideal site for a regional distribution hub. Given the global demand for access and presence in the continent, Agility has continuously invested in Africa. Establishing an integrated industrial and logistics hub in partnership with SCZone, as well as providing modernized, automated customers services, matches Agility's Africa strategy and further highlights Egypt's role as a key regional player."

"Being present in the Suez Canal Economic Zone and, in particular, working in the East Port Said area will give companies access to world-class infrastructure as well as fast, easy and efficient logistics and customs services in terms of time and cost," added Sultan.

Admiral Abd El Kader Darwish, Vice Chairman of the Suez Canal Economic Zone for the Northern Sector, said that the establishment of a logistics center in East Port Said is set to provide logistical and technological solutions for investors in the region. It will also provide a secure electronic customs system to facilitate the movement of goods in a safe manner that will in turn contribute to more job opportunities in East Port Said.

LG Signature: Masterpieces offering state-of-art living experience

DUBAI: LG Signature products advocate an authentic lifestyle in which state of the art technology, elegance and art co-exist harmoniously. The ultra-premium brand provides aesthetic satisfaction by achieving a minimalist design while effortlessly and perfectly blending in its surrounding to give its customers a unique living experience in terms of innovation and usability that they haven't experienced before.

The innovative and sophisticatedly crafted LG SIGNATURE family consists of four super premium products including the amazingly thin picture-on-glass OLED television, which takes the immersive viewing and listening experience to the next level with its new Artificial Intelligence (AI) feature; a sleek refrigerator with a beautiful InstaView Door-in-Door(tm) feature to keep food fresher; a bold new black stainless steel washer and white all-in-one washer/dryer unit, and an intuitive Air Purifier designed to filter the air in any home in any environment in order to protect your family from pollutants and allergens.

LG SIGNATURE OLED TV W8 - Seeing is believing

Entertaining guests is part of every culture, and with the ultra-thin LG SIGNATURE OLED TV W8, it has never been more rewarding as it creates a state-of-the-art living experience. It demonstrates that simplicity is the ultimate form of sophistication. The minimalist design of the W8 series follows LG's "less is more" philosophy to highlight the beauty of the screen alone. Additionally, the W8's sleek and captivating ultra-thin profile makes the TV appear to be levitating in mid-air - like a piece of art - adding to the sense of immersion.

LG SIGNATURE Air Purifier - Breathing is believing

Although the television remains the key focal point of any living room, LG SIGNATURE Air Purifier adds to an aesthetic and refined experience. LG SIGNATURE believes that great designs must be experienced and that clean air is the key to healthy and premium living. The beautifully designed LG SIGNATURE air purifier is engineered with an advanced Watering Engine(tm) that can harness the power of water to filter out dust, chemicals and contaminants while quickly adjusting humidity levels to maximize comfort.

LG SIGNATURE InstaView Refrigerator - Tasting is believing

True art lives in the kitchen as home owners and chefs prepare the



most decadent meals. The LG SIGNATURE InstaView Door-in-Door refrigerator adds another dimension of refined elegance to the overall ambience. It not only enhances the décor of the kitchen, but also facilitates a symphony of experiences, from the two-quick knocks to see what is inside the fridge without opening the door, to the hands-free open-door with the foot feature. It is a visualization of essence that is both intuitive and innovative designed to spark heightened levels of creativity and inspiration in the kitchen whilst keeping food fresh.

LG SIGNATURE Washing Machine - Feeling is believing

Washing machines are typically neglected in terms of design as they are used to serve function and typically kept hidden away in laundry room. However, the LG SIGNATURE TWIN Wash Washing Machine was inspired by essence and designed to be experienced. Its clean, ergonomic and minimalist design exudes perfection and sophistication. It blends in effortlessly to create a timeless look and feel of any environment whilst working in virtual silence due to LG's Centum System.

Each LG SIGNATURE premium product is thoughtfully designed to be visually astounding, while staying true to its essence: delivering the most elegantly curated human experience. The visualization of "essence" was the inspiration behind the design philosophy of the LG SIGNATURE brand. By eliminating unnecessary elements, LG SIGNATURE represents the ultimate in elegant simplicity. Its radical design heightens the intrinsic purpose of the product and streamlines usability.

Commenting on the upcoming launch, Kevin Cha, President LG Electronics Middle East & Africa, said, "LG SIGNATURE stays true to the essence, delivering a new sense of life for the most discerning customers. Our role at LG is to innovate for a better life, and with LG SIGNATURE, we not only provide unparalleled performance, but generate an intuitive user experience whilst accentuating aesthetic satisfaction. Now, people can elevate the look and feel of any room to meet their exquisite design taste and preferences"

Technology

For French Tech, Macron's global appeal is a double-edged sword

French startup sector is booming, challenging UK

PARIS: When the founder of France's Qwant search engine went to his local tax office to catch up on business, an agent there had to look up the firm using US rival Google. When she did, Qwant's home page was blocked - by the government tax office's firewall. To Eric Leandri, the founder of Qwant, the episode illustrated a French paradox: startups are benefiting from President Emmanuel Macron's support, but so are global tech giants, and competing with them is proving a problem.

"Can you imagine?" he told Reuters. "It just gives you an idea of how these people can't see what's in front of them." Over the past few years, 'French Tech' has been catching up with regional leader Britain. France's venture capital firms raised about 2.7 billion euros last year, overtaking Britain's 2.4 billion, according to Dealroom, although the research group also said that in terms of IPOs and sales, Britain still led.

Macron, a 40-year-old former investment banker who styles himself as a champion of the tech-savvy youth, pledges to turn France into a "startup nation". He has sought to redirect investment flows to improve funding for startups, made taxes more attractive and extended a tech visa program to draw foreign expertise. He also plans to simplify red tape to make setting up companies easier.

A generation of young entrepreneurs is less interested in careers in public service or at blue chip companies, and wants to innovate. And aggressive funding by France's state investment bank is trying to push France's traditional strengths in mathematics and engineering to nurture the sector. At the same time, Macron wants to attract investment from tech leaders like Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon - disparagingly referred to as "GAFAs" in French - and that is frustrating some French firms struggling to make a mark in the early days of Macron's rule.

How to compete?

For the founder of Snips, a Paris-based artificial intelligence startup developing an "Alexa killer" to take on Amazon's voice assistant, big announcements made by U.S. tech giants and hailed by Macron to open AI hubs in France left a bitter taste. "The biggest companies that were showcased were Samsung, Facebook, Microsoft ... there wasn't a single French company. They want big names," said Rand Hindi, a computer whiz who coded at the age of 10 and founded his first startup at 14. "It's PR for the outside world, showing France can attract the best. I would have done the same if I were him. That's the only way for American and English newspapers to talk about us. But it did sound a bit off domestically," he added. Clad in a long black cape, sporting a hat and a shiny pendant around his neck, the would-be tech guru looks the part. But the 33-year-old says his 70-strong company struggles to get work from big French groups, who often prefer to opt for well-established rivals.

A recent, potentially transformational deal with a large French company Hindi did not name, but which is listed on the CAC-40 index, fell through after months of work despite the client telling Snips they performed better in technical tests. The client went instead for a big US group with extensive 'support'. Hindi's problem gets to the heart of Macron's challenge, as the president seeks to make France a world leader in AI.

French tech firms welcome Macron's support and accept that he wants a break from the 'dirigiste' French tradition of the past, when the government would pick national winners and throw subsidies at them to keep them afloat. Yet without it they wonder how they will grow and become players on the national stage and beyond.

"Americans buy American, the Chinese buy Chinese, and Europeans buy American. That

can't work," Hindi said. "I'm not saying we should be protectionists. But each time I see a French company buy US technology when a European alternative exists, I take it as a betrayal of the ecosystem." A French presidential adviser said that the government wanted to attract investment from major global tech players to help create an environment in which local firms would thrive.

At the "Tech for Good" summit held by Macron at the Elysee last month, most of the 61 guests invited were foreign chief executives including Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg and Microsoft's Satya Nadella. French entrepreneurs rebuked Macron for overlooking local talent, prompting his office to hurriedly add the bosses of a few prominent French companies, including ride-sharing startup BlaBlaCar and web-hosting and server provider OVH. Particularly disheartening to the local tech sector was the recent decision by French IT services giant Atos to partner with Google in the field of artificial intelligence. The company is headed by a former French finance minister who has preached the need to 'buy French'.

Hurdles

France's legal framework, despite several attempts in recent years to modernise it, sometimes work against startups. Three annual accounts are often compulsory before a company is allowed to bid for public tenders. In the US or Britain, new firms can immediately pitch for work without such obstacles. European digital and financial markets are fragmented along national lines, and the absence of a "European Nasdaq" to give local firms access to serious funding through direct sales or IPOs is a further barrier to expansion.

Despite the hurdles, there is plenty of optimism surrounding "La French Tech". Macron's team is confident the "Macron effect", combined with the impact of Brexit on London's appeal and Donald Trump's protectionism, will



LE GUILVINEC: French President Emmanuel Macron poses for photographers on June 21, 2018 at the harbor during his visit at the French western France of Le Guilvinec. — AFP

make France an increasingly attractive draw. Presidential advisers say they must balance creating the right environment with avoiding direct intervention.

"This is no Minitel," said an adviser, when presenting Macron's plan to win the "arms race" in artificial intelligence, referring to the state-funded 1980s Internet precursor that failed to spread beyond France's borders. "In a way, we're less interventionist in how French national champions are built. However, we want to create the right framework to let these champions emerge naturally by the quality of their products, their management team," another adviser said.

The increased inflow of foreign investment has helped reverse a brain drain that included the departure of Yann LeCun, a leading French

AI research hub. "There's a snowball effect, Macron did manage that. Many companies are settling in, brains are coming back from abroad," Antoine Bordes, who heads Facebook's Paris AI hub, Europe's biggest, told Reuters at the group's new offices in the heart of the French capital. But some in the Macron orbit see risks.

Cedric Villani, a member of parliament in Macron's party and the president's appointed AI specialist, had a stark warning: "They invest here so they are allies," he told Reuters in the gardens of French parliament. "But they capture local resources so they are also competitors." For the lawmaker, the risk for France is about losing independence: "That's cyber-colonisation." — Reuters

Australia to invest in high-tech drones

SYDNEY: Australia will invest Aus\$7 billion (US\$5.2 billion) to develop and buy high-tech US drones for joint military operations and to monitor waters including the South China Sea, it said yesterday. Canberra has been embarking on its largest peacetime naval investment through a massive shipbuilding strategy that includes new submarines, offshore patrol vessels and frigates to shore up its defence capabilities.

As part of this, the government will spend Aus\$1.4 billion to buy the first of six MQ-4C Triton maritime surveillance drones, with the aircraft to enter service from mid-2023, complementing seven P-8A Poseidon planes currently in use. "Together these aircraft will significantly enhance our anti-submarine warfare and maritime strike capability, as well as our search and rescue capability," Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said in a statement. "This investment will protect our borders and make our region more secure."

The drones-high-altitude, long endurance aircraft that can support missions for up to 24 hours and provide a 360-degree view of their surroundings for over 2,000 nautical miles-will replace the AP-3C Orion spy plane. "It gives us enormous capabilities in surveillance and reconnaissance," Defense Industry Minister Christopher Pyne told Sky News, adding that the total cost was about Aus\$7 billion. "Australia's responsible for about 10 percent of the world's surface into the Indian Ocean, the Pacific, down to Antarctica up into the South China Sea."

Pyne added that the drones would be used to monitor who was in Australian waters, other countries' naval vessels, for people-smuggling and illegal fishing. The



CANBERRA: This handout photo taken on April 2, 2014 and received from the Australian Department of Defense yesterday, shows a full scale mock up of the MQ-4C Triton Unmanned Aerial Vehicle. — AFP

unmanned systems would also continue Australia's surveillance of the South China Sea, he added. "Australia insists on its rights to be able to travel through the South China Sea, in international waters as we have always done, whether it is with surface ships or aircraft," Pyne said.

China claims sovereignty over virtually all the resource-endowed South China Sea, despite rival claims from its Southeast Asian neighbors. The Australian navy has already conducted joint exercises in the South China Sea with other nations, including the US. — AFP

Early detection of 'olive tree leprosy' with help of drones

PARIS: A bacterial infection ravaging olive orchards in southern Europe can be detected from small planes or drones well before symptoms appear, offering panicky growers the prospect of an early warning system, scientists said Monday. Using high-tech cameras that detect heat and the electromagnetic spectrum from X-ray to radio waves, researchers were able to spot diseased trees that, on the ground, still seemed healthy, they reported in the journal Nature Plants.

"After infection, it takes four to 14 months before visual symptoms are observable by plant pathologists in the field," lead author Pablo Zarco-Tejada, an agricultural engineer at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre in Ispra, Italy, told AFP. "The problem is that during this entire time the tree remains a potential source of infection."

Once *Xylella fastidiosa* bacteria-carried by tiny sap-sucking insects known as leafhoppers-take hold, there is no cure and the plant is doomed. The only way to fight the spread of what is known as "olive tree leprosy" is to destroy diseased trees. "Early detection is critical for the eradication of the bacteria," Zarco-Tejada said.

Since it hit the Apulia region in 2013, the microscopic pathogen has killed more than a million olive trees in Italy, and 10 million more are currently affected. The bug has also attacked orchards in Spain and France, and both Greece and Portugal are bracing for its likely arrival. Some 350 plants are vulnerable, including grape vines, citrus and almond trees.

Known in the United States as Pierce's disease, it devastated California vineyards in the late 19th century. To test their approach, Zarco-Tejada and international team of researchers fitted thermal and hyperspectral cameras



An olive tree affected by Xylella fastidiosa.

on a small plane, and then analyzed images of orchards. At the same time, they tested olive trees on the ground for infection. They found that the bacterial infection can be remotely detected three to six months before visible symptoms appear.

"We extracted the spectral signature and the temperature from each single tree crown," Zarco-Tejada said. The data were then fed into a model built with machine-learning methods. The cameras can be easily installed on planes or drones, similar to ones used for aerial photography and surveillance. The cost would depend in part on the size of the area covered.

The insect-borne pathogen has likely spread more quickly as global warming takes hold, according to a study published earlier this year in the journal *Biorxiv*. But a more immediate factor in its expansion is probably global trade, the study said. The authors are currently measuring for *Xylella fastidiosa* in almond orchards in central Spain. Italy and Spain together account for nearly 70 percent of global olive oil output, according to the International Olive Council (IOC). — AFP

China's online service giant Meituan plans for massive IPO

SHANGHAI: Chinese online services giant Meituan-Dianping filed for an initial public offering in Hong Kong yesterday, in what could become the biggest IPO of the year. The food delivery and restaurant review service is the latest Chinese "unicorn"-a tech startup valued at least \$1 billion-to seek a listing to raise billions in funds.

The file did not disclose which day it will list or the amount of cash it aims to raise, but Bloomberg News reported the firm was said to have been targeting a \$6 billion fundraising at a valuation of about \$60 billion. The scale would be around the same level as smartphone maker Xiaomi's announced goal of \$6.1 billion, which Bloomberg said would be the world's biggest IPO for two years. Xiaomi is expected to list on July 9.

Group-like website Meituan.com was founded by CEO Wang Xing in 2010 and merged with comment-rating platform Dianping Holdings into a \$15 billion provider of online services in 2015. The pair are leading enterprises in China's group-buying market and were backed by internet giants Alibaba and its rival Tencent, respectively. The combined company Meituan-Dianping, now mainly backed by Tencent, offers a variety of services including group-buying, food ordering and delivery, restaurant and movie ticket booking.

It also launched ride-hailing services earlier this year trying to compete with industry leader Didi Chuxing. With revenue mainly generated by commissions, Meituan said it had 310 million active users and 4.4 million active merchants and its gross transaction volume reached 35.7 billion yuan (\$5.5 billion) in 2017. But it reported a 19 billion yuan loss for last year, up from the around six billion yuan loss in 2016. — AFP

Australia, NZ central banks shun 'volatile' digital currencies

WELLINGTON: The central banks of Australia and New Zealand ruled out yesterday the notion that they would issue official cryptocurrencies anytime soon, warning the potential damage to their banking systems could outweigh the benefits. Tony Richards, head of the Reserve Bank of Australia's (RBA) payments policy, said that bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies had not proven their worth as reliable stores of value or means of payment because of their volatility and vulnerability to hacking.

"Nine years after its launch and about five years since it entered the public consciousness, bitcoin continues to have structural flaws that make it unsuitable for many uses, many of which stem from its inefficient verification process," he said in the text of a speech given in Sydney. Given their low usage in Australia, cryptocurrencies were unlikely to have any significant impact on the RBA's oversight of monetary policy and the banking system, he said.

The RBA had no plan for the time being to adopt any new electronic form of money for households, he added. "Based on our interactions with our counterparts in other countries, it is also not front of mind for most other advanced economy central banks," Richards said. The Reserve Bank of New Zealand (RBNZ) also said that while it was open to exploring new technology, it was unclear whether a central bank digital currency will bring conclusive benefits.

While digital currencies could make distribution of money safer and cheaper, they could increase the likelihood of bank runs during periods of financial instability, said RBNZ Deputy Governor Geoff Bascand. That was because in times of financial stress, depositors could easily and remotely transfer large deposit holdings to a central bank digital currency, he said.

"A breakdown in the financial system can cause enormous economic and social harm. We could not issue a digital currency if it might undermine financial stability," Bascand said in the text of a speech at an Auckland conference. "The payments industry is dynamic, which is good. But the Reserve Bank must be a considered prospector in the exploration for digital currency benefits - we have New Zealand's currency and financial system at stake."

Wild swings in the price of cryptocurrencies, and fears they may be used for illicit activities such as tax evasion, have drawn the attention of global policymakers. Finance leaders of the Group of 20 major economies agreed in March to open the door to regulating the booming industry, though they have only just started adopting individual rules due to the difficulty of agreeing on a multilateral approach. Most central banks are wary of embracing cryptocurrencies and say they have no plans to issue their own digital money with the exception of Sweden, where the shift away from the use of cash is significantly more advanced than in other countries. Bitcoin prices dropped their lowest in more than four months on Friday, continuing a downtrend driven by authorities' measures to impose tighter regulation on cryptocurrencies. — Reuters



SEOUL: A man glances through a window at Bithumb virtual currency exchange. — AFP


CLINIC

PAGE






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What's On

Nespresso reveals two Italian inspired limited edition iced coffees

Create your summer experience with Nespresso

Rooftop soirees, pool slide lounging, picnics in the park, everyone has their own idea of the perfect summer experience. But the non-negotiable? A deliciously refreshing and ever so stylish iced coffee. To help you create your perfect summer experience, Nespresso is launching two limited edition coffees, especially designed to be drunk over ice, *Ispirazione Salentina* and *Ispirazione Shakerato*.

Keep cool whether you're out and about or enjoying a 'staycation' with the two delicious new blends that take inspiration from the Italian coffee culture and two well-known Italian iced coffee recipes. *Ispirazione Salentina* is smooth and bold yet balanced whereas *Ispirazione Shakerato* is powerful with dark cocoa aromas.

For summer adventurers, Nespresso is also launching on-the-go Limited Edition accessories including the Nomad drink bottle, and the VIEW Shaker Mini Kit, which includes a lid and enables you to shake and mix the ingredients like a barista.

Creating your ideal summer experience has never been easier, thanks to Nespresso.

Limited Edition Coffees

Ispirazione Shakerato (25ml and 40ml) - A full bodied, smooth iced coffee with cocoa aromas and long lasting roasted notes. Best prepared using the VIEW Shaker Mini Kit shaker with ice and sugar using the *Caffe Shakerato* recipe

Ispirazione Salentina (25ml and 40ml) - A bold coffee with a smooth and round texture, revealing nutty aromas together with roasted notes. From the region of Salento in Puglia, this coffee is indulgent and best prepared with cane sugar syrup, ice cubes and almond milk, using the *Caffe Alla Salentina* recipe.

Recipes

Caffe Shakerato by Nespresso

1. Add 1 Nespresso sugar stick in a view Recipe glass with lid or shaker
2. Extract 40ml coffee on top
3. Add 3 Nespresso ice cubes
4. Shake it!

Caffe Alla Salentina by Nespresso

1. Add 2 Nespresso ice cubes into a view Lungo glass
2. Pour 30ml of almond milk on top (or alternatively cow's milk)



3. Delicately add 5ml of sugar cane syrup
4. Extract 25ml coffee on top

- 1 Nespresso ice cube = 30g
- 1 Nespresso sugar stick = 3g sugar



KAICO conducts Mazda service drive with ENEOS

KAICO, Kuwait Automotive Imports Company WLL (Alshaya and Alsagar) conducted a Mazda Service Drive in collaboration with ENEOS oil at Shuwaikh, Mazda Service Centre on the 5th and 6th of May 2018. Utsomi (MD), Iso (GM) and Mathan Kumar (DGM) were present to represent Japan's number 1 Oil - ENEOS.

ENEOS products are the highest quality lubricants available now through FTC, Federal Trading and Contracting Company (a subsidiary of KAICO). These products use advanced additive and base oil technology, the result of joint engineering and research with all of the Japanese automotive manufacturers. ENEOS lubricants provide exceptional performance, power and protection for a wide variety of applications including race cars, motorcycles and street automobiles.

Ashish Tandon, General Manager, KAICO and FTC, said that they have

partnered with ENEOS to deliver high quality and superior performance products for its customers. It's our mission to have Customer No 1, Customers for Life. He also thanked the ENEOS team and all the customers who participated.

Mohamed Abuloun, Senior Executive Manager - After Sales, added that the offer was designed to meet the customers' demands and experience ENEOS performance in addition to the valuable discounts on Parts and Labor.

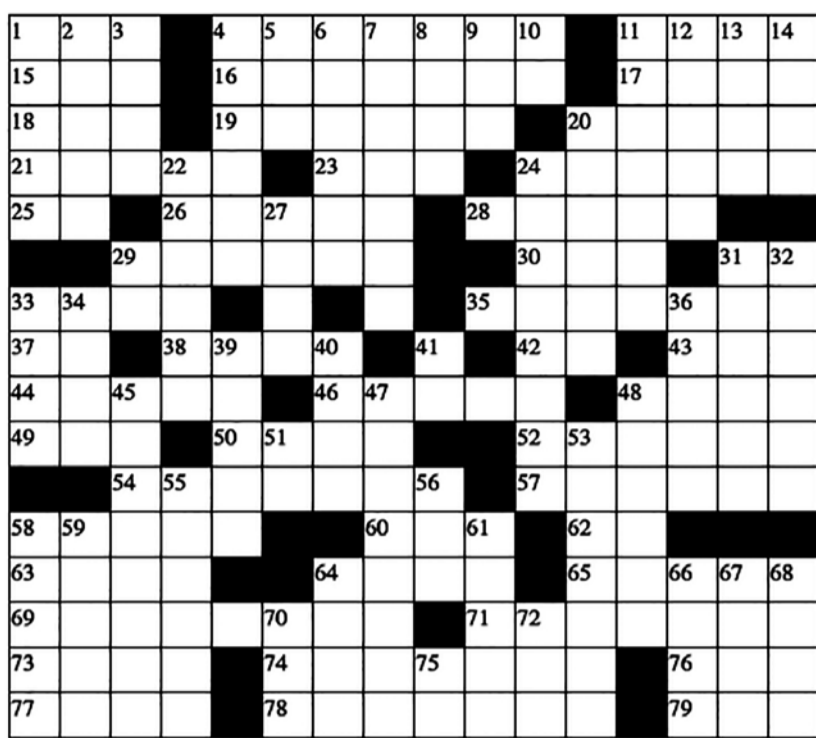
Customers received SMS invitations and were requested to book their appointments in advance. The vehicles that participated in the event were able to grab a parts discount of up to 60 percent and a labor discount of 15 percent. Around 200 customers participated in the campaign and were given an option to change engine oil, oil filter and have a 54 point complete health checkup for KD 5.



Congratulations to Mahmoud Sharaa and Hanan Eraikat on the occasion of their engagement. Also, congratulations to Yousef Al-Nusoor and Rajaa Sharaa on the occasion of their engagement as well. May Allah bless them all.

Stars

CROSSWORD 1944



ACROSS

1. An artificial language that is a revision and simplification of Esperanto.
4. Occupy in an agreeable, entertaining or pleasant fashion.
11. (trademark) A tinned luncheon meat made largely from pork.
15. The upper side of the thighs of a seated person.
16. Genus of shrubs of southwestern United States and Mexico.
17. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
18. Water frozen in the solid state.
19. Protected from heat and light with shade or shadow.
21. English scholastic philosopher and assumed author of Occam's Razor (1285-1349).
23. The former capital and 2nd largest city of Brazil.
25. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
26. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
28. Variety of silica containing microcrystalline quartz.
30. A nucleic acid that transmits genetic information from DNA to the cytoplasm.
33. (informal) Exceptionally good.
35. The grasses.
37. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
38. The United Nations agency concerned with civil aviation.
42. A metric unit of volume equal to one thousandth of a liter.
43. The use of nuclear magnetic resonance of protons to produce proton density images.
44. Severe spasm of pain.
46. A wealthy man (who made his fortune in the Orient).
49. The quality of a color as determined by its dominant wavelength.
50. Goddess of spring and wife of Bragi.
52. (commerce) The period of time permitted by commercial usage for the payment of a bill of exchange (especially a foreign bill of exchange).
54. Tall feather palm of northern Brazil with hard-shelled nuts yielding valuable oil and a kind of vegetable ivory.
57. A shoe consisting of a sole fastened by straps to the foot.
58. A small pendant fleshy lobe at the back of the soft palate.
60. Standard time in the 5th time zone west of Greenwich, reckoned at the 75th meridian.
62. An informal term for a father.
63. An aromatic ointment used in antiquity.
65. Swiss writer (born in Germany) whose novels and poems express his interests in Eastern spiritual values (1877-1962).
69. (trademark) An antacid.
71. Made clean.
73. A river that rises in northeastern Turkey (near the source of the Euphrates) and flows generally eastward through Armenia to the Caspian Sea.
74. Hypothetical remedy for all ills or diseases.
76. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
77. The actions and activities assigned to or required or expected of a person or group.

78. French philosopher and theologian.
79. A crystalline rock that can be cut and polished for jewelry.

DOWN

1. An ancient city in Asia Minor that was the site of the Trojan War.
2. The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
3. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
4. Freshwater green algae.
5. Antibacterial drug (trade name Nydradiz) used to treat tuberculosis.
6. Scarabaeid beetle considered divine by ancient Egyptians.
7. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
8. A spread made chiefly from vegetable oils and used as a substitute for butter.
9. (usually followed by "off") Released from something onerous (especially an obligation or duty).
10. A hard gray lustrous metallic element that is highly corrosion-resistant.
11. Bourbon with bitters and Pernod and sugar served with lemon peel.
12. Buildings for carrying on industrial labor.
13. A city in northern India.
14. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
20. Of or relating to the palm of the hand or to the area at the base of the thumb.
22. (of tempo) Leisurely n.
24. A blood clot formed within a blood vessel and remaining attached to its place of origin.
27. A Hindu prince or king in India.
29. A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
31. A percussion instrument consisting of a pair of hollow pieces of wood or bone (usually held between the thumb and fingers) that are made to click together (as by Spanish dancers) in rhythm with the dance.
32. A glass for beer.
34. A demon who swallows the sun causing eclipses.
36. Make improvements or corrections to.
39. Tropical American trees with palmately compound leaves and showy bell-shaped flowers.
40. An onerous or difficult concern.
41. A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.
45. The act of burying again.
47. (zoology) Of or resembling a goose.
48. Fairly small terrestrial ferns of tropical America.
51. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
53. A person who lacks good judgment.
55. A monosaccharide sugar that contains the aldehyde group or is hemiacetal.
56. The act of using.
59. Roman scholar (116-27 BC).
61. Genus of tropical plants with creeping rootstocks and small umbellate flowers.
64. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
66. An unforeseen obstacle.
67. The compass point that is one point east of southeast.
68. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
70. An accountant certified by the state.
72. (Irish) The sea personified.
75. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.

Yesterday's Solution

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

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may want to be prepared for a bit of conflict. This may involve some issues that are very sensitive to you. Crawl over the road blocks and step through the fire. You can work through this. Everyone may not agree with your methods or logic today, but you continue to handle things the way that is best for you. Others may view you as too independent today. Remember, in the long run, you are the only person that is truly going to take care of you. Stay calm and make sure your decisions are good ones and won't lead to regret in the future.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Today you are motivated and driven. Don't let anything stand in your way. You may feel as if an obstacle is blocking your forward motion. Take a leap and keep on going. Sometimes your work is at its best when you feel as if your back is against the wall and you are under pressure. Your family may be something you feel as if you have to put on the back burner as the pressure at the workplace builds. This is temporary, and you will find your loved ones show great compassion and understanding for your situation. Taurus, even though this may feel like a difficult time you will feel great pride when you are able to conquer these problems and come out of this on top.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Today may feel as if you are in a dream. You may find yourself feeling disconnected and this may cause a bit of anxiety. Today is not the day for big decisions rather a great day for relaxation and finding an escape. A book, a movie, or a long hot bath may be in order. Some time for yourself is on the menu for the day. You may feel the need to express your feelings, but the social scene is not for you today. Pick up that paint brush, pen a poem, or just journal away. You may find this as a great way to express all the emotions you have weighing on you and find a bit of relief.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Today is one of making memories and spending enjoying time with loved ones. Especially children and those younger than yourself. A fun day and a day to just sit back and go with the flow. All is well in your world. You are happy where you are. You feel love and support from those closest to you. You have a gift when it comes to dealing with people. You may be sought for advice today as others respect the decisions you make and know you are led by common sense as well as life experience. You feel much support and love from those closest to you and are very happy with your position in life.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Today may find you in a more private mood than usual. You have been deep in thought. The desire to make a difference is nagging at you. You were told as a child you could be anything you wanted when you grew up. This seems to be ringing in your ears. Why not you have dreams and you are determined to see them become reality. You want to surround yourself with family and loved ones. These are the ones you feel close enough to share your dreams with. Now is a time of planning. You are setting the scene to be organized and prepared when opportunity presents itself to you.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

When someone comes to you with a trying issue, you're able to see what they're talking about. You're more interested and drawn to the needs of others at this time. A new group gets your attention with something very impressive they offer; you tend to appreciate people that do for others. You're beginning to feel better about some changes you've made that you weren't sure of. You could ruin a surprise if you say the wrong thing to the wrong person; use your best judgment or intuition on this. You deliver a forceful speech to someone that doesn't want to listen. You find yourself in the right place at the right time when an item you cherish needs to be refurbished. You feel complete and strong as you look back over your journey so far.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Leave the major decisions for later. You seem to find yourself wanting to be more social. A desire to hit the town. You find pleasure in surrounding yourself with friends. Choose your company wisely as you could find yourself in conflict with someone close to you. You seem to know what to say and when to say it. Others are seeking your company, and this would be a great time to spend time with your siblings or neighbors. You may find yourself being needed by someone close to you. They may need a listening ear and a bit of advice you will be able to give. You may find the solution to their problem is an easy one for you.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may find the desires of your heart are being fulfilled. Your close relationships seem more powerful and feelings are stronger than ever before. You are at your most content when you feel cared for and needed. You find great stability when you feel this love and support. Now is a great time to make spending time with love ones a priority. You will find this may be the most peaceful situations for you. You are comfortable, loved, and valued. You may be the recipient of much praise and appreciation from your love ones.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your hard work is paying off. You can expect to be recognized in some way for your accomplishments. This could be anything from a pat on the back to a pay increase. No matter what package this reward is wrapped in be thankful you are being noticed. You feel much love and support from those around you. A time to step back and take a deep breath is in order. You may find a walk in the park, a good book, or a long relaxing bath will give you the escape you need. You always need to remember to take time to relax and reap the rewards of your hard work. Go play a little.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You are no stranger to that old saying, bite your tongue. Well today may be one of those days to practice this. Hold your words a count to ten if need be. Be sure and think before you speak. This could help make this a day without conflict. You may find yourself in conflict with your elders today. Today may be a good one to resist the urge to be social and spend some quiet time at home.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may experience what is best defined as an inner peace today. You find your clear mind and level of peace make it very easy to solve problems in the workplace and make very clear decisions. You are focused and determined and may find others seeking your advice. Today is a very good one. You will be able to find a sense of clarity in the big scheme of things. You will really be able to discover what drives you. This may be the beginning of much progress for you as you have a deeper understanding of what you truly desire.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Today finds you with grace and compassion. You are drawn to those close to you and very sensitive to their needs. You are able to communicate on a much deeper level than usual and feel as though you are able to persuade those around you into agreement. You are not only a great team leader but also a team player. You may find yourself leading a project today that has great results. You are admired by many around you for your people skills and the ability and willingness to always help whenever you see someone in need. Pisces, these are the qualities that will take you far in life. Keep up the good job!

Wordsearch Puzzle

Sewing

Find and circle all of the Sewing words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an old saying.

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

- | | | | |
|------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| AWL | HEM | PINS | SPOOL |
| BOBBIN | HOOKS | QUILTING | STITCH |
| BUTTONS | LACE | RIBBON | TAILOR |
| CLOTH | MAGNIFYING GLASS | RIPS | TAPE MEASURE |
| DARNING | MENDING | ROTARY CUTTER | TEARS |
| DRESSMAKER | NEEDLES | SCISSORS | THIMBLE |
| ELASTIC | PATCH | SEAM RIPPER | THREAD |
| EMBROIDERY | PATTERN | SEAMSTRESS | TRACING PAPER |
| EYES | PENCIL | SHEARS | TRACING WHEEL |
| FABRIC | PINCUSHION | SNAPS | ZIPPER |
| GROMMETS | | | |

SCUBA Diving

S	E	R	M	O	U	T	H	P	T	E	C	E	L	F	V	A	L	I	V	E	W	C	R	E	
O	L	T	E	V	E	L	C	A	E	S	B	N	N	U	T	R	M	A	U	I	C	O	B	O	H
G	A	K	R	I	N	O	N	N	O	E	E	N	R	O	W	N	A	I	C	O	O	B	O	H	
A	K	R	I	N	O	N	O	E	E	N	R	O	W	N	A	I	C	O	O	B	O	H	O	H	
S	R	E	V	E	I	I	T	X	I	T	R	O	V	E	T	S	O	A	S	E	I	T	S	P	
C	O	A	E	R	S	O	R	S	T	R	G	U	N	T	E	L	L	E	D	I	E	S	O	M	
R	E	S	B	E	L	P	S	O	N	S	O	O	A	H	T	E	D	V	T	O	R	R	E	M	
L	I	S	H	L	O	E	R	R	A	N	A	O	B	G	U	R	M	T	H	S	N	E	R	M	
N	T	R	G	N	P	S	B	I	E	R	A	A	A	E	N	E	F	I	S	O	A	C	O	A	
D	H	W	N	M	O	I	L	V	G	A	R	P	S	B	G	G	A	S	A	S	R	T	O	A	
E	G	T	O	B	O	I	T	H	S	W	E	M	O	U	T	I	M	A	R	I	O				
R	I	C	I	U	C	I	T	M	H	O	N	D	R	I	C	A	L	I	G	E	I	M			
R	E	S	B	E	L	P	S	O	N	S	O	O	A	H	T	E	D	V	T	O	R	R	E	M	
O	W	E	I	B	R	E	A	L	A	S	T	I	D	R	I	T	S	T	A	S					
M	D	I	V	E	C	O	M	P	U	T	E	R	S	I	T	N	W	R	E	R					
B	R	I	L	G	S	A	C	E	V	I	D	E	C	N	U	O	B	I	O	P	P	E	D	R	
O	A	I	N	A	R	C	O	S	T	A	I	M	R	E	H	O	C	P	Y	H	N	A			
L	W	C	A	R	D	N	U	G	R	A	E	P	S	H	O	A	L	C	A	R	A	U			
I	E	O	C	E	N	A	R	B	M	E	M	O	Y	T	I	C	X	O	T	A	S	N	T	A	
S	E	N	T	B	U	O	Y	A	N	C	Y	U	M	I	N	D	E	R	S	U	T	S			
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|-----------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| AIR PRESSURE | CURRENT | HYPOTHERMIA | RECOMPRESSION | TIDE |
| ALTITUDE DIVING | DECOMPRESSION | LEEWARD | REGULATOR | TOXICITY |
| ANOXIA | DEPTH GAUGE | LUNGS | SCOOTER | TRIMIX |
| ATMOSPHERE | DIVE COMPUTER | MASK | SEA LEVEL | UNDERSEA |
| BAROTRAUMA | DIVE FLAG | MEMBRANE | SHEARS | UNDERSUIT |
| BOOTS | DIVE MARSHAL | MOUTHPIECE | SHOAL | UNDERTOW |
| BOUNCE DIVE | DRYSUIT | NARCOSIS | SILICONE | VALVE |
| BUBBLES | EDDY | NEOPRENE | SNORKEL | VISION |
| BUDDY SYSTEM | EMBOLISM | NITROGEN | SPEAR GUN | VOLUME |
| BUOYANCY | GAS CYLINDER | NITROX | STROBE | WATER |
| C CARD | GAS MIXTURE | OCEAN | SWIM FINS | WEIGHT BELT |
| COMPASS | GIANT STRIDE | OXYGEN | SWIMMING | WEIGHTS |
| COMPRESSOR | HELIOPX | PANIC | TANK | WETSUIT |
| CORAL REEF | HOSE | REBREATH | THE BENDS | WINDWARD |

The hidden message is: SELF CONTAINED UNDERWATER BREATHING APPARATUS

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27, 2018



A light projection illuminates the facade of the Hotel des Invalides in Paris during the show '1918-The Rise Of A New World' on June 25, 2018. — AFP

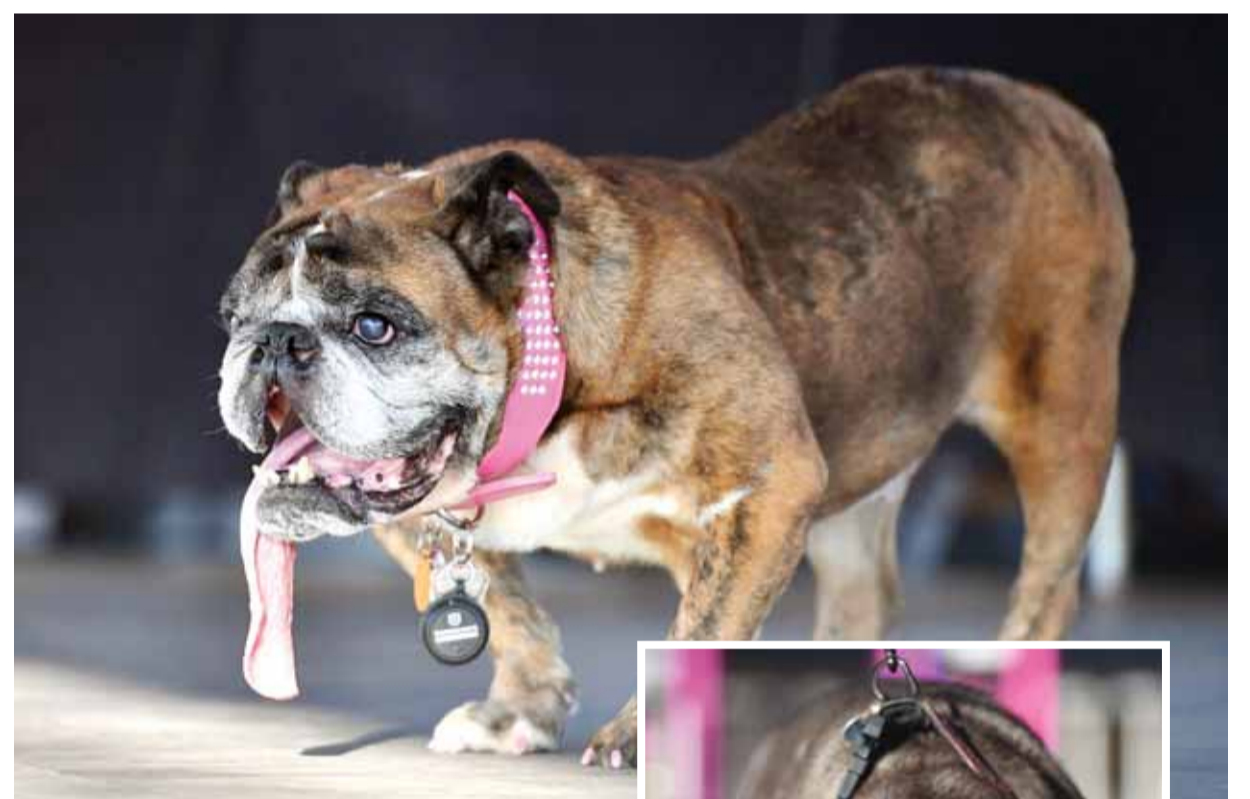
English Bulldog drools way to World's Ugliest Dog crown



Rascal Deux, a Chinese Crested, wears sunglasses while being held up by his owner Dane Andrew during The World's Ugliest Dog Competition.

With a lolling tongue and a propensity to drool, English Bulldog Zsa Zsa won best in show at World's Ugliest Dog competition in Petaluma, California. Zsa Zsa, sporting a hot pink collar and matching nails for her moment in the spotlight, came out on top of a tough field of fourteen. The nine-year-old Zsa Zsa came from a hardscrabble background, spending five years in a puppy mill in the US state of Missouri and being sold at auction before she attained ugliest dog immortality.

Other competitors included Rascal Deux, a Chinese Crested who wore sunglasses and a leopard print coat to cover hairless skin, and Wild Thang, a Pekingese all but hidden by a mass of fluffy hair. Martha, the jowly Neapolitan Mastiff who took first place in the competition the previous year, was on hand to pass the baton to Zsa Zsa, whose winnings include a trophy, \$1,500 and an appearance on NBC's Today Show in New York. — AFP



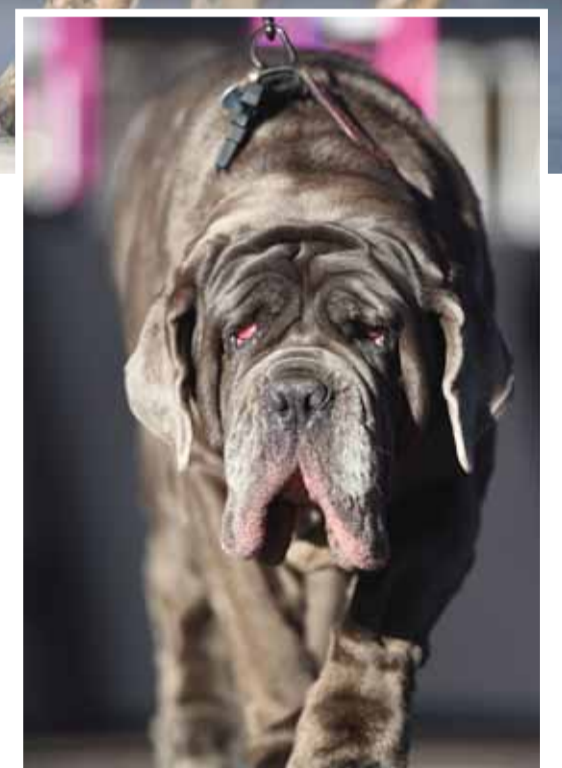
Zsa Zsa, an English Bulldog, stands on stage after winning The World's Ugliest Dog Competition in Petaluma, north of San Francisco, California. — AFP photos



Zsa Zsa, an English Bulldog, drools while competing in The World's Ugliest Dog Competition.



Wild Thang, a Pekingese, walks on stage.



Last year's World's Ugliest Dog Competition winner Martha, a Neapolitan Mastiff, takes the stage before the new winner is announced in Petaluma.



Himisaboo, a Chinese Crested Wiener Dog mix, walks on stage.



Mrs Kravitz, a Chihuahua, takes the stage.



Heather Wilson (right) holds up her dog Himisaboo, a Chinese Crested Wiener Dog mix.

Toxic Fan Culture: A 'Star Wars' Story

As much as they are about lightsabers, hyperspace and the eternal struggle of good versus evil, the recent installments in the "Star Wars" saga have also been about rebutting conventional wisdom on who can lead a movie. Releases like "Rogue One" and "The Last Jedi" made a fortune giving women and characters of color like Rey (Daisy Ridley) and Finn (black actor John Boyega) screen time alongside

"It would be unfair and too general to say that 'Star Wars' has a fandom problem. What it has is a white male fandom problem," said film writer Kayleigh Donaldson. This toxic subset of devotees—overlapping with elements of the far-right and the misogynist "incel" men's movement—are angry that the new films are no longer targeted solely at them. Amid the vitriol about untrammelled political correctness, it is worth noting that "Star Wars" still lacks gender parity and, even in the Disney era, has a long way to go before it can be a paragon of inclusiveness.

The most female-friendly release, "The Last Jedi," features women during less than half of the running time while men get two-thirds of the dialogue in "The Force Awakens." "Yet this is enough... for these toxic fans to cry propaganda and claim 'their Star Wars' is over," added Donaldson, in an essay for the SyfyWire entertainment website. "The mere inclusion of women and people of color is enough for them to cry foul and claim they're 'taking over' the franchise."

Sacrilege "The Last Jedi," in particular, is accused of destroying the legacy of "Star Wars" by tearing up a carefully-constructed, decades-old mythology and promoting liberal identity politics. While Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker) and Adam Driver (Kylo Ren) have avoided the slings and arrows, Kelly Marie Tran, an American cast member with

Vietnamese roots, has been mercilessly attacked. Tran, who plays mechanic Rose Tico, wiped her Instagram account earlier this month after prolonged sexist and racist abuse by a legion of trolls.

Her page on the Wookieepedia "Star Wars" reference site was edited to change her name to "Ching Chong Wing Tong" and she was described as "stupid, autistic and retarded." Hamill has come to Tran's defense, tweeting a picture of the two of them and writing: "What's not to love? #GetALifeNerds." The movie's amiable, patient director Rian Johnson has faced death threats and endless abuse from those who seem to see him as more of an existential threat than Darth Vader. A petition demanding the removal of "The Last Jedi" from the "Star Wars" canon has attracted 107,000 signatures while another asking for a personal apology from Johnson passed 10,000 on Monday. This is a movie that critics loved, and its lowly 46 percent audience score on Rotten Tomatoes appears to have been artificially depressed by bots unleashed to game the system.

Stormtrooper in the "Star Wars" universe. The toxic fan culture surrounding "Star Wars" actually pre-dates the perceived political correctness of Disney, which bought Lucasfilm for \$4 billion in 2012. Child star Jake Lloyd and actor Hayden Christensen—both white and male drifted out of Hollywood after relentless mockery for their performances in "Star Wars" creator George Lucas's prequel series.

Meanwhile, the people who hung Lucas out to dry for ruining their childhoods are part of the same movement clamoring now for him to save "Star Wars" from Disney. While the trolls may not have come suddenly out of a clear blue sky, the toxicity of their obsession has been intensified by the megaphone of Twitter. But it's not time just yet to despair and beat a retreat to the solitude of Luke Skywalker's ocean-bound sanctuary on Ahch-To, says David Opie of online lifestyle magazine Highsnobiety.

"Instead of fighting what we hate, the best way to win is by 'saving what we love,'" he wrote, borrowing the powerful words of Rose in "The Last Jedi." "Nothing captures the Rebel spirit more than celebrating the things that matter to us most and treating others with respect. As long as we keep doing that, the Dark Side of the Star Wars fandom will forever be kept at bay." — AFP



Actors Kelly Marie Tran (left), John Boyega and Daisy Ridley attend the Star Wars Celebration day 02 in Orlando, Florida. — AFP

the traditional male, white heroes of the series. But the inclusive Disney era ushered in by 2015's "The Force Awakens" has its own Dark Side—the vile online behavior of a vocal minority offended that their sacred cow is being stolen.

BIG, MEAN AND MAKING THE GREEN: 'JURASSIC' TOPS N AMERICA BOX OFFICE

Huge, green and scary stomped on cute, young and funny this weekend as "Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom" debuted at \$148 million to dislodge "Incredibles 2" from the top spot at the North American box office, sales data showed Monday. The dinosaur sequel—executive-produced by Steven Spielberg, who directed the original two movies—fell short of the then-record \$208 million opening by the last "Jurassic" film in 2015, according to industry tracker Exhibitor Relations. Still, "Fallen Kingdom" has passed the \$700 million mark worldwide—despite tepid reviews like the suggestion by The New York Times that the film is little more than "a way for people with no other plans to grab some air conditioning."



The movie stars Chris Pratt and Bryce Dallas Howard as they try to rescue genetically recreated dinosaurs from a volcano-threatened island and move them to—why not? — a sprawling California mansion. Sliding to sec-

ond, Pixar's "Incredibles 2" earned a respectable \$80.3 million as North American theaters continued to recover from last summer's downturn. The film, about a quirky superhero family, raked in \$182 million in its debut weekend, a record for an animated feature in the US and Canada, easily surpassing the \$135 million debut of 2016's "Finding Dory." The film tells the story of the Parr family-centered this time on matriarch Helen (Holly Hunter) as she battles to help bring the world's hiding superheroes back into the open.

Husband Bob (Craig T. Nelson) is left at home in charge of their frighteningly talented but scarily unpredictable kids, and finds the homemaker's job more challenging than being a superhero. In third spot was Warner Bros.' heist movie "Ocean's 8," at \$11.5 million. The female-centric sequel has Debbie Ocean (Sandra Bullock) assembling a gang of talented women (Cate Blanchett, Anne Hathaway, Helena Bonham Carter) to plan a seemingly impossible diamond heist from the Met Gala in New York. Adult comedy "Tag," also from Warner Bros., came in fourth at \$8.3 million. It tells the story of childhood pals, led by Jon Hamm and Jeremy Renner, who keep up a game of tag for decades, sometimes at the oddest of moments.

Staying alive in fifth was "Deadpool 2," the R-rated superhero flick from Fox, at \$5.3 million. It stars Ryan Reynolds as the irreverent, foul-mouthed title character. Rounding out the top five were:

- 1- "Solo: A Star Wars Story" (\$4.5 million)
- 2- "Hereditary" (\$3.6 million)
- 3- "Superfly" (\$3.4 million)
- 4- "Avengers: Infinity War" (\$2.6 million)
- 5- "Won't You Be My Neighbor" (\$1.8 million)—AFP



In this file photo US actor George Clooney attends the 46th American Film Institute Life Achievement Award Gala at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood. — AFP photos



In this file photo US actress Kirsten Dunst poses during a photocall for the film 'The Beguiled' at the 70th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.

YouTube enlists Dunst and Clooney for comedy

YouTube Premium has commissioned a dark comedy co-produced by George Clooney and Kirsten Dunst, who will also star in the series, according to a source familiar with the deal. YouTube's alliance with two powerhouse names in Hollywood comes as competition intensifies in an online streaming video market with players such as Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, and Apple. Google-owned YouTube's subscription service Premium offers ad-free viewing of shared videos along with original content for \$12 a month.

Original content has become a battlefield in online video, with Netflix and Amazon Prime spending billions of dollars on shows. The YouTube series titled "On Becoming a God in Central Florida" will center on the US cult of unbridled entrepreneurship and a

woman's intense pursuit of the American Dream. The series will be set in the 1990s, and is scheduled for release next year. YouTube Premium, formerly named YouTube Red, had a hit with its first big original series, "Cobra Kai," inspired by the "Karate Kid" martial arts underdog film from 1984.

The first episode of "Cobra Kai" has logged more than 40 million views since it was made available at YouTube on May 2 and a second season has been ordered. Launched in late 2015, YouTube Premium includes an online streaming music service and is seen as part of a broader effort by Google-parent Alphabet to expand how it makes money beyond advertising revenue. — AFP

Motion Picture Academy announces record recruitment

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences said Monday it has swelled its ranks by a record 928 members, as part of its drive for a more inclusive Hollywood. The Oscar-awarding body announces a round of invitations every year, and has been bolstering its ethnic and female representation following criticism over its predominantly white, male membership. More than a third of the list—drawn from 59 countries—are people of color, while around half are women, bringing the female proportion of the Academy up from 25 percent in 2015 to 31 percent. The proportion of people of color doubled in the same period, but started from a low bar of just eight percent.

The recruits include 17 Oscar winners and 92 nominees, including Timothee Chalamet, Kumail Nanjiani, Daniela Vega and Yance Ford. "Aggressively expanding the palette of perspectives within the 90-year-old organization's ranks is the goal," said Variety's awards editor Kristopher Tapley. "Nine hundred twenty-eight new members is more than a statement, it's a declaration. Next year, the number will likely be north of 1,000 and the overall membership will tip the scales at 10,000. It was nearly half that just seven or eight years ago." If all the 2018 invitees accept, voting members will be 8,186 and total active membership 8,356.

The list includes Native Americans such as "Westworld" star Irene Bedard, Q'orianka Kilcher from "Hostiles" and "Wind River" actor Tantoo Cardinal, and numerous Asian and Spanish-language creatives. Marvel's "Black Panther" is rewarded for its groundbreaking success with invitations for Danai Gurira, Daniel Kaluuya and rapper Kendrick Lamar, who produced the soundtrack. Roman Polanski may recently have been expelled over his historic statutory rape conviction in the United States but his wife, the actress Emmanuelle Seigner, will be in charge of Oscar voting if she takes up her invitation. — AFP



Venezuelan music conductor Gustavo Dudamel speaks during a press conference in Santiago. — AFP

Venezuela's Dudamel to lead youth concerts in Chile

Venezuela's Gustavo Dudamel will lead concerts Thursday and Friday in Santiago with youth from Latin America and Europe to honor his late mentor Jose Antonio Abreu, who created a celebrated public music education program for young people. "This is the start of something that will last throughout one's life," said 37-year-old Dudamel, currently the music and artistic director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra.

Abreu, also a Venezuelan, died in Caracas on

March 24 at the age of 78. The music program he pioneered, the National System of Youth Orchestras of Venezuela, or "El Sistema," has been replicated in more than 40 countries. It seeks to provide low-income children music education to build confidence and rise out of poverty. Dudamel told reporters that the Santiago concerts will bring together members of Chilean youth orchestras with musicians from ensembles based in Vienna, Berlin, Los Angeles and Gothenburg, as well as two

Venezuelan orchestras, Nacional de Venezuela and Simon Bolivar.

For the performances, the conductor said he chose some of Abreu's favorite pieces, including Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony. Some 500 children from across Chile are also set to travel to Santiago to attend the second performance. — AFP

David Lynch: Trump could be among greatest US presidents

David Lynch says President Donald Trump could go down as one of the greatest presidents in United States history, earning him instant praise from the Republican leader shunned by much of Hollywood. The enigmatic filmmaker told The Guardian newspaper in an interview published over the weekend that while he is undecided about the job the property tycoon is doing in office, his rise could pave the way for major reform. "He could go down as one of the greatest presidents in history because he has disrupted the thing so much. No one is able to counter this guy in an intelligent way," the 72-year-old, four-time Oscar nominee said.

After tweeting his approval, Trump quipped during a rally with supporters in South Carolina: "There goes his career in Hollywood." "He now appears to believe that Trump may have been the right choice after all," Trump said to cheers and applause from the crowd. Lynch, regarded as one of the greatest American filmmakers of his generation, told the London-based Guardian he couldn't remember who he voted for in the 2016 presidential election.

The "Eraserhead" and "Blue Velvet" director said it may have been Bernie Sanders, whom he preferred over Hillary Clinton for the Democratic primary. "Our so-called leaders

can't take the country forward, can't get anything done. Like children, they are. Trump has shown all this," he said. "Twin Peaks," Lynch's famously surreal noir soap opera about murder in small-town America, returned last year after 26 years away, in perhaps the most eagerly anticipated television event of the year.

The compelling mystery of the original eight-episode "Twin Peaks"—who killed the beautiful cheerleader Laura Palmer—captured the imagination of a generation in 1990. It quickly gained a loyal fan base and won three Golden Globes in 1991, including one for best television drama and another for actor Kyle MacLachlan. Audiences and critical appreciation waned when the 22-episode second series unmasked Palmer's killer and ABC canceled the show. A movie that followed, "Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me," was a commercial and critical flop. The director has spent recent years directing music videos and dabbling in comedy acting, but hasn't made a motion picture since the box office miss "Inland Empire" 12 years ago. Lynch, who has meditated twice a day for more than 40 years, suggested to AFP last year that he had made his last feature film. — AFP



This combination of file pictures created shows US President Donald Trump (left) during a meeting with North Korea's leader at the US-North Korea summit in Singapore on June 12, 2018 and US director David Lynch arriving for the closing ceremony of the 70th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes on May 28, 2017. — AFP



Model present creations by Balmain, during the Men's Spring/Summer 2019 fashion show.

Model present creations by Balmain, during the Men's Spring/Summer 2019 fashion show.

MENSWEAR IN VOGUE FOR LUXURY BRANDS WITH DESIGNS ON GROWTH

Young, hip, urban, and male ... meet the fashion world's new best friend. Luxury brands are raising their game in menswear, which is expanding at a faster clip than women's clothing as styles loosen up and streetwear like hoodies find a new audience. Big fashion houses including French conglomerates LVMH and Kering are among those hiring eye-catching designers and investing in male attire. LVMH's Paris-based Louis Vuitton summed up the zeitgeist at the latest run of men's fashion shows that closed last week with a collection by its new DJ-turned-designer Virgil Abloh.

clearly in the sales." LVMH brands do not detail earnings, though analysts estimate that menswear at top money-spinner Vuitton is 5 to 7 percent of revenue. Vuitton did not respond to a request for comment. Meanwhile Kering's fastest-growing brand Balenciaga, a one-time couture house which scored a hit with a line of chunky sneakers, says men are now among its biggest sales drivers along with millennials, or 20 to 35 year olds. Womenswear still had the biggest share of the broader \$1.7 trillion apparel and footwear market in 2017, with menswear less than a quarter, Euromonitor data shows. Yet the market research firm

Work to weekend
Brands are taking note, expanding their reach with Instagram campaigns and famous faces such as ex soccer star David Beckham who is an ambassador for the British Fashion Council. The growth of casualwear may entail some setbacks, with tailoring - usually items that are more expensive than sportswear - at risk of taking a hit. Sales of men's suits fell by \$700 million between 2012 and 2017 in western Europe, Euromonitor data showed, contrasting with growth in premium jeans.

LVMH's Toledano - who oversees LVMH labels like Celine, which is due to launch a men's line - said tailored styles were still doing well, however, adding that sales growth was spreading to accessories and shoes. Upstart labels are also keeping big brands on their toes. "The men's business has exploded in the last five years," said Roopal Patel, fashion director of Saks Fifth Avenue, adding that the US department store was bringing in newer menswear-focused labels like France's Ami, or Off-White, the streetwear brand founded by Vuitton's Abloh. "We've gone from just category addressing to really designers looking at how they're going to wardrobe a man's lifestyle, everything from work to evening to weekend to sport." - Reuters

“ **Menswear growth to outpace womenswear in coming years** ”

This mixed casual anoraks, holster-style accessories and sleek trench coats, and drew hip hop royalty. "It's more than a buzz. It's a deeper trend," Sidney Toledano, head of LVMH's fashion group, said on the sidelines of a fashion show. "There's strong demand across the men's fashion industry, in all its shapes and forms, and which comes in part from a younger clientele. We see it very

forecasts men's lines will outperform women's between 2017 and 2022, with sales expanding by a compound annual growth rate of 2 percent. "This is due to men placing a greater emphasis on their appearance, fuelled by the rise of social media, and dress codes for men softening globally," Marguerite Le Rolland, a consultant in beauty and fashion at Euromonitor, said.

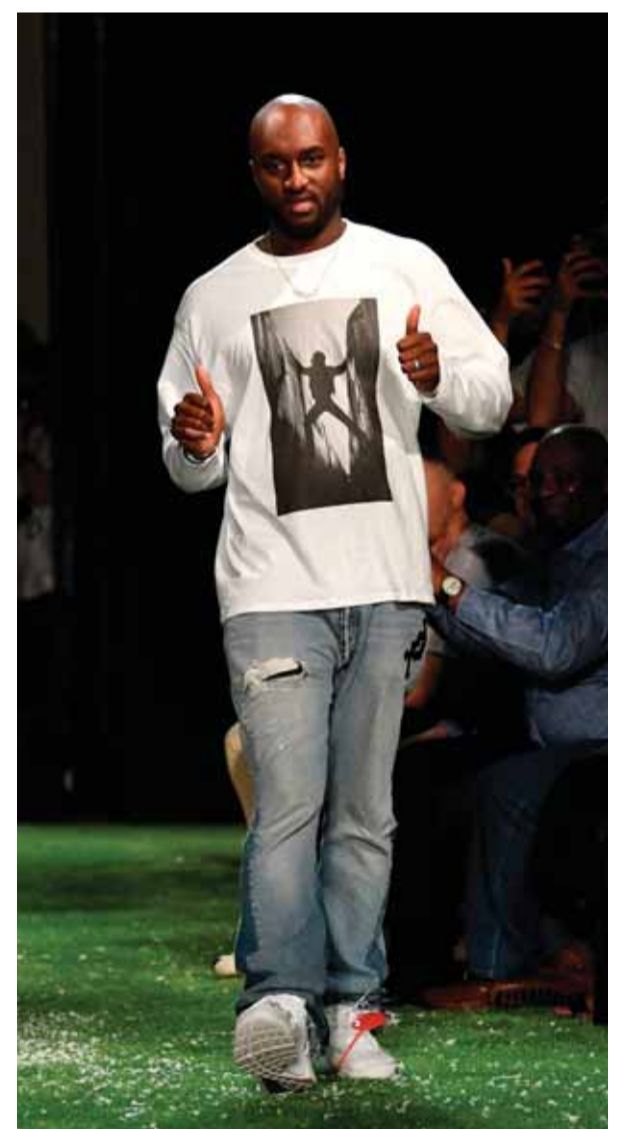


Photo shows US fashion designer for Louis Vuitton, Virgil Abloh.



Models present creations by Lanvin, during the Men's Spring/Summer 2019 fashion show.



Photo shows writer Cain Burdeau using a scythe to cut the grass on a property in Contrada Petrarò near Castelbuono, Sicily where he lives with his wife and two boys.



Writer Cain Burdeau sharpening a scythe he uses to cut the grass.



Writer Cain Burdeau using a scythe to cut the grass. — AP photos

SCYTHING ZEN: ANCIENT WAY TO CUT GRASS ALSO A STATE OF MIND

Spring is ending and summer approaches. The grass is now long, finished growing. For us, it's time to scythe. This is a beautiful, and slightly sad, time of year for my wife and me, when the fields of grass and flowers on our 3 acres of farmland in the mountains of northern Sicily must be cut. We would prefer to let them live on: There are deep pink French honeysuckles, purple thistles, yellow dandelions, pale pink and white acanthus, and wispy and lazy grasses. But that's not prudent in the dry Mediterranean summer, when fires are an annual threat and long grasses fuel flames. The idea of our olive, almond, ash and fruit trees - not to mention a hundred grape vines I planted this spring - catching fire is a ghastly one.



Giuseppe Piro, an agronomist and naturalist, standing with an old scythe in Contrada Marcatagliastro near Castelbuono, Sicily.

So, off into the fields we go to scythe - an ancient method of cutting grasses that few people do anymore here in Sicily or elsewhere. Landowners here have many ways to prevent fires from raging across the countryside. Some use a tractor to "pulire il terreno" ("clean the land"). Many take out weed whackers, masks and gasoline cans to tackle the grasses. Old-timers used to sim-

ply pull plants out by the roots and cut grasses by sickle and scythe. This is our second year of "cleaning up" our land - and we do it the old-fashioned way. I chose to scythe because that's how my father, Bob Burdeau, has been cutting his grass in Puglia for years. He swears by it, both because he dislikes using machines but also because there is something therapeutic in scything.

State of mind

On cool spring evenings, we talked by telephone about the differences between scything and using a weed whacker. "With a weed whacker, the aim is to get the work done," my father told me. "And you get it done as efficiently as possible ... Because you're trying to earn money, you're trying to do something, and you've got other things to do." "But it's not as efficient really because you have to get your machine fixed all the time; you've got to buy gas and additives for the gas," he said. "But the sensation is that you're getting it done. And when you're doing the scything, you're not really in that same state of mind. You're in another state of mind."

Surprisingly, I found many local farmers of the same mind - even though they use weed whackers and tractors. I helped a friend cut grass in a beautiful olive orchard inside a valley that runs into the Tyrrhenian Sea. "This is the part of the work I hate the most. I despise weed whackers," my friend said. And sure enough it was stressful: Both machines we used broke down, starting and stopping, needing a mechanic's hand. Clothes got ruined. We smelled of gasoline. I had to wear a mask, safety goggles and ear muffs. After using a weed whacker for a while, your arms are numb from the vibrations.

I have a weed whacker, and I might buy gasoline and raze the edges of the property to make solid firebreaks. But other than that, our grass is being cut by an Austrian scythe I bought last year from a hardware store in nearby Castelbuono. I am also using a pair of long clippers for cutting around trees and rocks. When I told Giovanni

Spallina, who runs an agriculture shop in Castelbuono, that I used a scythe, he approved. "The work is better with a scythe," he said. "It comes out better."

Sure enough, as we spoke, a farmer showed up at his busy shop, Spallina Natura, with a weed whacker in need of fixing. This year, I've taken a different approach to cutting grass: I decided not to panic about the encroaching sea of grasses and let them grow. Last year, urged by locals and overwhelmed by fast-growing grass, I went out scything in May, in the very heart of flowering - and the experience was excruciating. I suffer from allergies, and after scything for a few hours I'd return to our little farmhouse drenched in sweat and with stinging rashes and welts on my calves and arms. My nose ran without pause, my throat felt like a sandpaper rattle and my eyes were blurry from tears.

Old scythe

The same happened this May when I attempted to cut. But then I realized that the grass didn't need to be cut in May. In fact, it is better, local agronomist and naturalist Giuseppe Piro told me, to wait until grasses have reached their maximum growth. Piro showed me an old scythe among the rusty tools on a property where he makes olive oil with his son. He took the scythe in his hands and demonstrated how old-timers used them, in particular in the higher mountains where vast fields of wheat, barley and other cereals are grown. Sicily was the breadbasket of the Roman Empire.

"Look at the blade," he said. He ran his finger along it. "Fifty centimeters. With every stroke, 2 meters by 50 centimeters (of grass) go down." He talked of the ancient culture of cereal cultivation in the mountains, where he worked as a boy. He remembered seeing men, women and children cutting grass by hand and with the help of mules, working through "waves of grass which sway like the ocean." The grasses are used for animal feed and human consumption. Piro said cutters sheathed their fingers with pieces of bamboo to

prevent them from getting cut as they used sickles. He remembered how bales of hay were made, how he piloted an ox-pulled sled piled high with hay.



Writer Cain Burdeau's father, Bob Burdeau, cutting grass on his property near Martina Franca in Puglia, Italy.

As for the machines, he scornfully pointed out patches along the road where one had been used. "When you go with a weed whacker, you destroy the grass. You can't use it for forage," he said. "It's all in pieces." By the end of May, I was ready to start. I'd had a grip put on our scythe by a blacksmith friend. I'd purchased a big straw hat at the market, and sunglasses. My father had visited and given us some tips on how to dampen the whetstones and sharpen the blade. I had loose-fitting clothing and rubber boots. And thus, as the deep quiet of June descended, I waded off into the fields. One stroke at a time, I cut. Sweat beaded on my brow. The slash of the scythe was soothing. Every 10 minutes, I paused to sharpen the blade and listen to summer's sounds. — AP



A photo spot inside a Shinkansen train for passengers to pose with popular character Hello Kitty, as seen at the Hakata car maintenance center in Fukuoka prefecture.



The interior of a Shinkansen train adorned with images of popular character Hello Kitty, at the Hakata car maintenance center in Fukuoka prefecture.

Peak Japan: Hello Kitty bullet train debuts this week

Resplendent in shocking pink, a sleek "Hello Kitty" bullet train, complete with special carriages festooned with images of the global icon from Japan, has been unveiled before it chugs into service this week. The special shinkansen or bullet train will run for the next three months between the western cities of Osaka and Fukuoka from Saturday, the West Japan Railway firm said, hoping that one of the country's most famous exports will boost tourism.

Passengers will be in left in no doubt what train they are on, with Hello Kitty smiling down from the shades of every window and adorning every passenger seat cover. One car will feature a "life-sized Hello Kitty doll" - the character is "five apples" tall, according to creator Sanrio - so fans can take selfies, a West Japan Railway spokesman told AFP. Another car will have no passenger seats but offer regional specialties, including a selection of goods and foods, in a bid to boost the local economy and tourism. Hello Kitty, the mouthless character, has spawned a multi-billion-dollar industry since Sanrio introduced it in 1974. It adorns everything from pencil cases and pyjamas to double-decker buses and airliners. — AFP



Picture shows a Shinkansen train adorned with special livery bearing popular character Hello Kitty, at the Hakata car maintenance center in Fukuoka prefecture. — AFP photos

Kuala Lumpur 'living library' bridges generation gap in aging Asia

A "living library" project in Malaysia's capital is lending out older people's knowledge to the young, to improve the lives of pensioners and bridge Kuala Lumpur's generation gap. It links groups of students with retirement homes so older people can discuss the challenges they face living in the city. The project is run by the World Economic Forum's Global Shapers Community, an international network of young professionals from business, academia and civil society, seeking to make a positive impact in local communities.

"We rotate the students around the elderly," said Renard Siew, a "curator" with Global Shapers, which has more than 375 hubs around the world. "We allocate about one and a half hours for the Living Library session, and then we all eat together." "Some of the elderly folks were lonely and isolated because they felt their next-of-kin had dumped them at this old folks' home," the 32-year-old told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. As well as sharing their life stories, the elderly participants also discuss safety issues in Kuala Lumpur, such as how long pedestrians get to cross roads and uneven pavements.

The young people draw on those chats at workshops where they chew over solutions to the problems troubling older people. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) last year warned the rapidly growing number of elderly in Asia's economies is set to create a demographic "tax" on growth. Asia's population growth rate is projected to

fall to zero by 2050, and the proportion of working-age people - now at its peak - will decline over the coming decades, the IMF said. The share of the population aged 65 and over will soar to nearly two-and-a-half times its current level by 2050, it said.

The average age of Malaysia's population will be 60 years or more by 2030, said Siew, a sustainability advisor at Malaysian conglomerate Sime Darby Berhad. "Malaysia is not prepared for this," he said, adding that few nonprofit groups champion the issue. "Aging is still seen as quite a taboo subject in many Asian countries." The students have developed projects, including handicrafts and coding classes and an agency to help older people find part-time work, and are seeking funding partners.

Set up in 2016, the Living Library project organizes up to three sessions with retirement homes each year, but would like to hold them monthly to meet demand. The retirement homes involved declined requests to interview elderly participants. Marcus Lim, 39, one of 23 "Global Shapers" in Kuala Lumpur, said the Living Library conversations start with pensioners' life stories and move on to present-day challenges. "Most of the young people feel inspired by the old people - what can they do to help them to live better?" said Lim, head of the business school at Swinburne University in Sarawak. — Reuters

Classifieds

Wednesday, June 27, 2018



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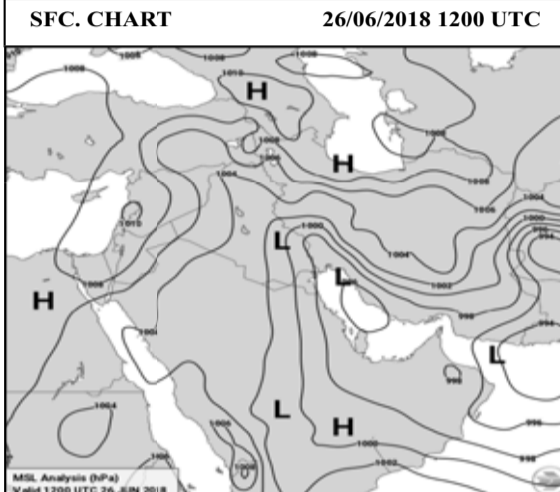
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot with moderate to fresh north westerly wind, with speed of 20 - 50 km/h causing rising dust.

BY DAY: Very hot and Dusty with moderate to fresh, strong at times north westerly wind, with speed of 25 - 65 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			Fresh wind + dust	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 26/06/2018 1200 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	47 °C	35 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	49 °C	36 °C		
ABDALY	49 °C	33 °C		
BUBYAN	---- °C	---- °C		
JAHRA	49 °C	35 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	45 °C	33 °C		
SALMIYAH	42 °C	35 °C		
AHMADI	42 °C	37 °C		
NUWASIB	44 °C	33 °C		
WAFRA	48 °C	34 °C		
SALMY	45 °C	33 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	06/27	Very hot and Dusty	48 °C	36 °C	NW	25 - 65 km/h
Thursday	06/28	Very hot + rising dust	49 °C	36 °C	NW	20 - 55 km/h
Friday	06/29	Very hot + rising dust over open areas	48 °C	35 °C	NW	15 - 50 km/h
Saturday	06/30	Very hot + rising dust over open areas	48 °C	34 °C	NW	15 - 45 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:15
Sunrise	04:50
Zuhr	11:51
Asr	15:25
Sunset	18:51
Isha	20:24

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	46 °C
MIN. Temp.	33 °C
MAX. RH	27 %
MIN. RH	09 %
MAX. Wind	N 46 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

URGENT REQUIRED

1. Mechanic for Mercedes Trailers
2. Auto Electrician for Heavy Vehicles

- (Salary depends on experience)
- Any nationality & Visa - 18
- Transferable residence

مطلوب موظف

- 1- ميكانيكي لمقطورات مرسيدس
- 2- كهربائي سيارات للمركبات الثقيلة (يعتمد الراتب على الخبرة)
- أي جنسية & تأشيرة - 18
- إقامة قابلة للتحويل

جهة الاتصال
Contact:

99085843 / 51781343

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Ali Asger, Passport No: L3856867, Civil ID No: 287012400395, has changed my name to Aliasger Najmuddin Hakimiwala. (C 5405) 27-6-2018

MATRIMONIAL

RC boy from Trichur working as Accountant in Kuwait, seeking suitable alliances from qualified girls who work in Kuwait, preferably preparing for marriage in July or August. 30 years old, height 5.7. B.Com., MBA. For details E-mail: jkumarath@gmail.com (C 5404) 26-6-2018

I Busneni Kumar S/o Busineni Ramachandriah, holder of Indian Passport Number L4907858 and Civil ID 281051204453 have changed my name as Busineni Sivaprasad S/o Busineni Ramachandriah. Hereafter in all my dealings and documents. (C 5403) 24-6-2018

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- Bachelor's degree in business administration
- Carry out all managerial tasks
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- Fluent in English language

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Flight Schedule

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 27/6/2018				Departure Flights on Wednesday 27/6/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MSC	405	Sohag	00:05	AZG	566	Baku	00:05
JZR	513	Sharm el-Sheikh	00:10	CLX	675	Hong Kong	00:05
THY	772	Istanbul	00:15	AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	WAN	341	Sohag	00:05
KAC	102	London	00:50	BBC	044	Dhaka	00:10
JZR	539	Cairo	01:00	MSC	502	Alexandria	00:10
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:15	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30
MSR	618	Alexandria	01:25	FDB	072	Dubai	00:30
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	MSR	2615	Cairo	00:30
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	JZR	504	Luxor	01:00
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	MSC	406	Sohag	01:05
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:00	KAC	417	Manila	01:45
JZR	267	Beirut	02:10	JZR	528	Asyut	01:45
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	THY	773	Istanbul	01:45
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	363	Colombo	01:50
AEE	956	ATH	02:25	KAC	285	Dhaka	01:50
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	DLH	625	Frankfurt	01:50
THY	768	Istanbul	02:40	JZR	502	Luxor	01:55
KAC	414	Bangkok	02:40	KAC	677	Dubai	02:00
THY	1404	AYT	02:45	WAN	9337	Alexandria	02:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:25
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	MSR	619	Alexandria	02:35
RJA	648	Amman	03:05	THY	765	Istanbul	02:50
RBG	215	Sohag	03:05	KKK	1269	Istanbul	02:55
KAC	418	Manila	03:05	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
KAC	382	Delhi	03:10	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:10
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	AEE	957	ATH	03:15
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:25	JZR	142	Doha	03:20
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	UAE	854	Dubai	03:30
KAC	796	Madinah	03:45	THY	769	Istanbul	03:35
JAI	572	Mumbai	04:00	RBG	216	Sohag	03:45
KAC	544	Cairo	04:25	OMA	644	Muscat	04:05
JZR	609	Hyderabad	04:30	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15
JZR	1541	Cairo	04:35	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	PGT	831	Istanbul	04:25
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	JAI	571	Mumbai	05:00
THY	770	Istanbul	05:15	QTR	1077	Doha	05:15
JZR	603	Mumbai	05:25	JZR	902	Baku	05:30
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	KAC	303	Mumbai	05:35
KAC	154	Istanbul	05:35	KAC	103	London	05:45
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	THY	1465	Istanbul	06:00
JZR	561	Sohag	05:55	FDB	070	Dubai	06:00
BAW	157	London	06:10	JZR	786	Riyadh	06:05
WAN	342	Sohag	06:20	THY	771	Istanbul	06:30
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:25	GFA	212	Bahrain	06:50
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:25	RJA	649	Amman	07:00
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:40	JZR	164	Dubai	07:15
KAC	678	Dubai	06:45	JZR	356	Mashhad	07:15
JZR	505	Luxor	06:55	KAC	167	Paris	07:20
JZR	143	Doha	07:00	WAN	133	Doha	07:20
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	KAC	171	Frankfurt	07:50
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	WAN	311	Asyut	07:55
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	501	Beirut	08:00
KAC	384	Delhi	08:05	JZR	778	Jeddah	08:00
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	JZR	238	Amman	08:00
JZR	529	Asyut	08:10	BAW	156	London	08:20
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	KAC	165	Rome	08:25
SAW	703	Damascus	08:30	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35
WAN	9338	Alexandria	08:45	KAC	511	Mashhad	08:45
IRC	6552	ABD	08:50	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:05
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	KAC	117	SNN/New York	09:05
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	WAN	415	Beirut	09:10
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:25	KAC	671	Dubai	09:15
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	KAC	521	Al Najaf	09:30
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	SAW	704	Damascus	09:30
IRM	1188	Mashhad	09:55	KAC	561	Amman	09:40
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	IRC	6553	ABD	09:40
JZR	787	Riyadh	10:30	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	773	Riyadh	09:45
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	JZR	534	Cairo	09:45
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	UAE	856	Dubai	09:50
JZR	903	Baku	11:10	JZR	482	Istanbul	09:55
WAN	134	Doha	11:10	KAC	541	Cairo	10:00
JZR	165	Dubai	11:45	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:00
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	KAC	101	London	10:00
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	KAC	617	Doha	10:10
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:30	JZR	750	Madinah	10:15
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:25
THY	766	Istanbul	12:45	IRA	664	Shiraz	10:25
CLX	792	Luxembourg	12:45	QTR	1071	Doha	10:40
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	FDB	056	Dubai	10:40
JZR	239	Amman	13:00	IRM	1189	Mashhad	11:10
KAC	222	Al Najaf	13:00	AXB	890	Mangalore	11:20
JZR	357	Mashhad	13:05	JZR	124	Bahrain	11:20
RJA	644	Amman	13:20	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:30	JZR	503	Jeddah	23:45
				MEA	405	Beirut	11:55



MOSCOW: Denmark's goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel dives to make a save during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group C football match between Denmark and France at the Luzhniki Stadium yesterday. — AFP (See Page 27)

Ethiopia greets Eritreans with flowers for first talks since war

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia's prime minister greeted an Eritrean delegation yesterday at the start of the first high-level visit in nearly two decades that has

raised hopes of ending one of Africa's most intractable military stand-offs. Olympic athletes, singers, actors and religious leaders were also at the airport where Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh and other top officials were presented with garlands of flowers.

The flags of both countries fluttered from lamp-posts in Addis Ababa along with a banner reading "Welcome!" Eritrea won independence from Ethiopia in 1993 following a three-decade liberation war but conflict erupted between them once again in 1998 over their disputed border, with diplomatic relations broken off ever since.

Yesterday's visit comes after Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said this month he would honor all the terms of a peace deal, suggesting he might be ready to settle the border dispute. Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki welcomed Ethiopia's "positive messages" and decided to send the delegation that includes his adviser Yemane Gebreab and his envoy to the African Union, according to a Reuters witness who saw them arrive at Bole Airport. Abiy's chief of staff tweeted that the prime minister "hopes the visit will lay the foundation for a much brighter future for #Ethiopia #Eritrea."

The border war killed some 80,000 people and

the sides remain at odds over the status of the frontier town of Badme. The border remains militarized. Abiy was at a rally hit by a grenade that killed two people on Saturday an attack that government-affiliated media blamed on opponents of reforms announced since he took office in April, including airline and telecoms privatizations and the rapprochement with Eritrea. Eritrea and Ethiopia broke off diplomatic relations two decades ago, although Asmara has a permanent delegation in Addis Ababa representing it at the African Union, whose headquarters are in the Ethiopian capital. — Reuters

In Israel, Prince William tastes...

Continued from Page 1

The 36-year-old, who is the second in line to the British throne, also toured the museum at the site perched on a forested hillside.

His visit comes at a particularly sensitive time after US President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as capital of Israel, outraging Palestinians and sparking deadly clashes on the border with Gaza. Britain governed the region under a League of Nations mandate for almost three decades until Israel's independence 70 years ago, and is still blamed by both sides for sowing the seeds of the ongoing conflict. William met with two Holocaust survivors, Paul Alexander and Henry Foner, who as children had escaped from Nazi Germany to Britain as part of the "Kindertransport" program.

"We must never forget the Holocaust," the prince wrote in the visitors' book in neat italic script.

'True horrors' of Holocaust

"We all have a responsibility to remember and to teach future generations about the horrors of the past so that they can never reoccur." While in Jerusalem, William will also visit the grave of his great grandmother, Princess Alice, who was honored as among the "Righteous among the Nations" by Yad Vashem in 1993 for sheltering Jews in Greece from the Nazis during World War II.

"I am honored that my own great-grandmother is one of these Righteous among the Nations," he wrote in the book. He later met Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife Sara and then called on President Reuven Rivlin, where he spoke of the deep impression his visit to the Holocaust memorial had made upon him. "I had a very moving tour round Yad Vashem this morning which really taught me quite a lot more than I thought I already knew about the true horrors of what happened to the Jews in the war," he told Rivlin in front of journalists. William arrived



JERUSALEM: Britain's Prince William (left) rekindles the eternal flame during a memorial ceremony at Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem yesterday. — AFP

in Israel from Jordan on Monday evening without his wife Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, who gave birth to their third child two months ago.

He is staying in Jerusalem at the King David Hotel, former headquarters of the British administration during the mandate in Palestine before the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Today he is scheduled to meet Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah, before meeting Palestinian refugees and young people. "I know that you are going to be meeting president Abbas," Rivlin told him. — AFP

Trump administration has rolled back its "zero tolerance" border policy that had triggered international outcry over family separations. Five days after halting the separation of children from their parents, on Monday it suspended its policy of automatically arresting and prosecuting every adult who crosses the border from Mexico without authorization.

US Attorney General Jeff Sessions was scheduled to address a criminal justice foundation in Los Angeles yesterday, with rights groups planning protests. Sessions, who announced the "zero tolerance" policy in May, has said violent Central American gangs send children across the border illegally. The House of Representatives intends to vote today on a broad immigration bill to end family separations, but its fate is in doubt. Should the bill fail, it would be a dramatic embarrassment for Republicans, who control Congress. — AFP

MPs target expats in govt, oil sector....

Continued from Page 1

KPC budget shows projected revenues at KD 18.66 billion while spending at KD 17.9 billion leaving a surplus of KD 760 million. The final accounts for 2016/2017 show that actual revenues at KD 17.1 billion and expenditures at KD 15.67 billion with a surplus of KD 1.44 billion. A number of MPs protested for KPC keeping billions of dinars in accumulated profit and called for transferring them to state finances.

MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said that KPC should not be allowed to keep around KD 17 billion of state

funds and should send them to state reserves. Oil Minister Bakheet Al-Rasheedi said that KPC and its subsidiaries have plans for mega projects costing over KD 30 billion over the next few years and accordingly will need the money. He told the house that production of crude oil from the neutral zone with Saudi Arabia had been suspended for technical reasons for the past few years. But he expected that production will resume soon.

The Assembly also approved the budget of Kuwait Investment Authority which manages state investments worth over \$600 billion. It also approved the budget for small and medium enterprises authority.

The Assembly is due to discuss today a presentation by the finance minister on the state of government finances. It will also debate a report to scrap the road authority. The Assembly winds up this term tomorrow after debating state budget for 2018/2019.

India 'most dangerous country...

Continued from Page 1

worse in Afghanistan, which puts the lives of women and girls at increasing risk," said US-based Otis, a survey participant.

Afghanistan's Public Health Minister Ferozuddin Feroz said the deteriorating security situation was making life difficult for women, with large parts of the country still in the control of Taliban fighters after nearly 17 years of war. "Nowadays, suicide bombings and armed conflict is the third (highest) cause of deaths and disability in Afghanistan," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview in London. "Instead of focusing (spending) on maternal health, on nutritional status, we spend it on trauma." The impact of a seven-year war drove Syria into third place in the survey, amid concerns over access to healthcare and both sexual and non-sexual violence.

"There are so many dangers for girls and women," said Maria Al Abdeh, executive director of Women Now For Development, which supports women's centers in Syria. "There is sexual violence by government forces. Domestic violence and child marriage are increasing and more women are dying in childbirth. The tragedy is nowhere near an end." Somalia, where more than two decades of war has fuelled a culture of violence and weakened institutions meant to uphold the law, was again named as one of the five most dangerous countries for women.

Saudi Arabia ranked fifth, with women's rights experts saying there had been some progress in recent years, but the recent arrests of female activists ahead of the lifting of a ban on women driving showed much more needed to be done. "One of the worst laws that

prevent women from having equal opportunities is guardianship - because every woman is subjected to a male guardian. She cannot get a passport, cannot travel, sometimes she cannot work," said Ahlam Akram, founder of BASIRA (British Arabs Supporting Universal Women's Rights) in the UK. "We need to completely obliterate this system. I think change is coming, but it takes time."

#METOO puts US on list

Experts said the surprise addition of the United States in the top 10 most dangerous countries for women came down to the #MeToo and Time's Up campaigns against sexual harassment and violence that have dominated headlines for months. "People want to think income means you're protected from misogyny, and sadly that's not the case," said Cindy Southworth, executive vice president of the Washington-based National Network to End Domestic Violence.

"We are going to look back and see this as a very powerful tipping point ... We're blowing the lid off and saying #MeToo and Time's Up." Rounding out the top 10 most dangerous countries for women were Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen and Nigeria. India, Libya and Myanmar were considered the world's most dangerous nations for women exploited by human traffickers in a global crime worth an estimated \$150 billion a year.

"In many countries the simple fact of being female creates a heightened risk of becoming a victim of slavery," said Nick Grono, chief executive of the Freedom Fund, the first private donor fund dedicated to ending slavery. The poll of 548 people was conducted online, by phone and in person between March 26 and May 4 with an even spread across Europe, Africa, the Americas, South East Asia, South Asia and the Pacific. Respondents included aid professionals, academics, healthcare staff, non-government organization workers, policy-makers, development specialists and social commentators. — Reuters

US court upholds Trump's...

Continued from Page 1

standing up to it. History has its eyes on us-and will judge today's decision harshly," it tweeted. Omar Jadwat, director of the ACLU's Immigrant Rights Project, said the ruling would "go down in history as one of the Supreme Court's great failures."

"This is a backward and un-American policy that fails to improve our national security," said top Democrat, US Senator Chuck Schumer. Immigration has been one of the thorniest issues in American politics for decades and the

Sports



Iran coach Queiroz blasts VAR as Ronaldo escapes sending off

'I don't want to talk too much, it's about my country and a player'

SARANSK: Iran coach Carlos Queiroz said Portugal captain Cristiano Ronaldo was fortunate to escape a red card despite a VAR review following an elbow in Monday's 1-1 draw at the World Cup. Portugal will face Uruguay in the last 16 after advancing as runners-up of Group B, but Queiroz insisted Ronaldo deserved to be sent off for catching Iran defender Morteza Pouraliganji with an elbow to the face. "I don't want to talk too much, it's about my country and a player. I know it'll be a war against me," said Queiroz, who coached his native Portugal at the 2010 World Cup. "But the reality is you stopped the game for VAR, there is an elbow. An elbow is a red card in the rules. In the rules it doesn't say if it is (Lionel) Messi or Ronaldo..."

It was a busy evening for the video assistant referee in Saransk as two penalties were awarded upon review, on top of the Ronaldo altercation. "We accepted human mistakes before, that was part of the game. Players make mistakes, coaches make mistakes and referees make mistakes," said Queiroz.

"But now you have one system that cost a fortune. It's high-tech with five, six people inside and what happens? Nobody takes responsibilities. We need to be like rugby. When there is a decision by VAR I need to know what the referee is saying to them, people need to know what is going on."

"So in my opinion, Mr. Infantino and FIFA, everybody agreed that VAR is not going well," he added. "That's the reality, there's a lot of complaints." Ricardo Quaresma struck a brilliant opening goal with a trademark curling

effort using the outside of his right foot on the stroke of half-time. Ronaldo had the chance to double the lead with a penalty five minutes into the second half after he was upended by Saeid Ezatolahi, but his effort was saved by Iran goalkeeper Ali Beiranvand.

RONALDO FRUSTRATED

Portugal defender Cedric was then penalised in stoppage time for a handball, and Karim Ansarifard converted from the spot to give Iran a lifeline. Mehdi Taremi nearly snatched a dramatic winner after a deflected shot rolled into his path, but he fired into the side netting as Iran were eliminated in agonising fashion.

Ronaldo cut a frustrated figure after failing to add to his four-goal tally at the Mordovia Arena, suffering the same penalty misfortune as Lionel Messi earlier in the competition. "I understand, it's normal. The best players in the world face that when there isn't an opportunity to really make it happen," said Portugal boss Fernando Santos.

"That hurts a lot more to them than to other players. They always want to win. They want to be the best and refuse to fail, and when they fail they get very upset." Santos said he thought the referee made the right decision in terms of the Ronaldo flashpoint.

"An elbow is a red card in the rules"



SARANSK: Paraguayan referee Enrique Caceres (R) speaks to Iran's Portuguese coach Carlos Queiroz (L) during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group B football match between Iran and Portugal at the Mordovia Arena in Saransk on Monday. —AFP

watch it again to talk about it, but I think the VAR did its job." A late equaliser from Iago Aspas that earned Spain a 2-2 draw with Morocco pushed the European champions down into second place. "To us what is important is to be

in the last 16 and we want to carry on in this tournament," Santos said. "Uruguay have high quality and top-notch players. They're excellent but Portugal are too and we're going to try and find a way to win." — AFP

Sweden seek win over Mexico with off-field issues behind them

YEKATERINBURG: Sweden have moved on from the off-field issues that dominated the headlines after their defeat by Germany and are determined to beat Mexico for a place in the last 16, coach Janne Andersson said yesterday.

The Scandinavians conceded a goal in the 95th minute in their Group F match on Saturday, with winger Jimmy Durmaz later subjected to racial abuse on social media for giving away the free kick that led to Toni Kroos's goal. Sweden were also incensed by the reaction of two German team officials to the goal, accusing them of "rubbing it in". FIFA opened disciplinary proceedings against the pair. "We are coming into tomorrow's game expecting to perform at the top level. We have everything to gain and we are mentally strong ahead of the match," Andersson told a news conference. "We have a good feeling within the squad. We showed that we were able to play against the defending champions all the way with the exception of the final few minutes." Sweden, who have rallied behind Durmaz, can qualify with a victory or a draw against Mexico if Germany lose to South Korea. If Sweden and Germany both win, Andersson's team could advance on goal difference.

However, the 55-year-old coach is not taking Mexico lightly, with "El Tri" having already beaten Germany and South Korea. "They are a good team and we have great respect for them," Andersson added.

"They have a lot of skilled players in the team and are technically gifted. But we're well prepared and we will do everything to get the result we need."



EKATERINBURG: Mexico's defender Miguel Layun heads the ball during a training session at Ekaterinburg Arena in Ekaterinburg yesterday, on the eve of their Russia 2018 World Cup Group F football match against Sweden. — AFP

Andersson said that set-pieces could play an important role for Sweden today.

"Let's hope the height of the players will play a part because we're good in those situations," Andersson said, adding that he may not make too many changes to

the team that started the last match. "We showed in the matches against South Korea and Germany that we're very good at set-pieces, both in attack and defence," skipper Andreas Granqvist added. "I think that's going to be a big component tomorrow." — Reuters

'Green Falcons' claimed a surprise victory over Egypt in their last World Cup game.

Saudi Arabia have had a high turnover of coaches, and there was speculation Argentine-born Pizzi could be on his way out after the team suffered a 5-0 thumping at the hands of Russia in their opening game.

But the Asian side showed a marked improvement in their subsequent Group A matches, despite failing to progress from the group stage. "The Saudi Arabian Football Federation extends the Saudi national team manager Juan Pizzi's contract until the end of the Asian Cup tournament," the FA said on Twitter.

Pizzi began coaching Saudi Arabia in November and his contract was due to expire at the end of the tournament in Russia. — Reuters



Juan Antonio Pizzi's

Saudi FA extends coach Pizzi's contract until February 2019

VOLGOGRAD: Saudi Arabia have extended coach Juan Antonio Pizzi's contract until the end of the Asian Cup in February 2019, the FA said yesterday, a day after the

World Cup sees Iranian women score spot in the stands

TEHRAN: For many of the thousands of joyful women packed into Tehran's largest football stadium, their first ever chance to watch a game at a sports arena was a victory for freedom despite Iran's agonising World Cup elimination.

Cheering and with their cheeks painted with the national colours, women showed they were just as caught up in the World Cup fever sweeping the country as they seized the opportunity to attend a live screening at the 100,000 capacity Azadi (Freedom) Stadium, which, like other sports arenas, has been off-limits to them since the Islamic revolution of 1979. While the exuberance turned to tears when Iran missed the chance to snatch a last gasp winner against Portugal, ending their tournament dreams, some in the mixed gender stands said they would still treasure the landmark night watching an open-air screening of the national team. "It felt weird to buy my ticket online, it's so exciting to come to the stadium," said Arezou, a psychologist in her thirties. "When I felt the heat of the crowd in the stadium, I told myself I really wanted to remember this moment as one of the best of my life."

The decision to throw open the gates of the iconic stadium came after Iran's opening victory over Morocco, when tens of thousands took to the streets of the capital in rare and wild celebration, many of them women. Many Iranian clerics oppose women attending football matches, saying they must be protected from the masculine atmosphere, though the ruling is frequently criticised from across the political spectrum. "It's the first time I have come to the stadium. I really wanted to be here and I am so happy! Even if we don't win, it will still be a victory and we are proud of our players," said Raana, a flight attendant.

A good natured family atmosphere prevailed among the young crowd in the stands, who watched the crunch match in Russia on a screen placed below twin portraits of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and the founder of the Islamic republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The match was one of nail-biting drama and controversy after Portugal captain Cristiano Ronaldo caught Iran defender Morteza Pouraliganji with an elbow to the face. —AFP

Sports

Washington Nationals blown out by Rays in series opener in Tampa Bay

Ozzie's solo home run give Atlanta a walk-off win over Cincinnati

ST PETERSBURG: Tampa Bay left-hander Blake Snell allowed one hit over seven shutout innings as the Rays rolled to an 11-0 victory over the visiting Washington Nationals on Monday night. Kevin Kiermaier belted his second career grand slam and Wilson Ramos smacked two homers as Tampa Bay drubbed the Nationals in the opener of a two-game set. The Rays have won four straight games and five of their past six. Snell (10-4) took a no-hitter into the seventh before Washington's Anthony Rendon broke it up with a leadoff double. Snell struck out 10 and walked four. Rookie Jake Bauers went 4-for-5 with two runs scored and capped Tampa Bay's 12-hit assault with an RBI single in the eighth. Washington, which had just two hits, has dropped eight of its last 11 contests.

BLUE JAYS 6, ASTROS 3

Curtis Granderson recorded a multi-homer game before Randal Grichuk supplied some insurance with a titanic blast in the eighth inning as Toronto held off host Houston. Granderson struck twice against Astros right-hander Justin Verlander (9-3), delivering a leadoff shot to right field in the fifth inning before golfing a two-out homer to left in the seventh. The second Granderson blast snapped a 3-all tie. Grichuk preserved the lead when he scaled the wall in right field and gloved what would have been a three-run homer by George Springer with no outs in the bottom of the ninth.



A's extend their major league record streak

MARLINS 9, DIAMONDBACKS 5

Brian Anderson smashed a go-ahead, two-run double in the fourth inning as host Miami poured it on late in defeating Arizona. The Diamondbacks had their four-game win streak snapped by the Marlins, who were coming off their first winning road trip (5-4) of the season. The Marlins have won three games in a row and are 12-11 in June. Shelby Miller (0-1), making his first major league appearance since elbow surgery 14 months ago, took the loss, allowing five runs, six hits and two walks with five strikeouts in 3 2/3 innings.

BRAVES 5, REDS 4 (11 INNINGS)

Ozzie Albies led off the 11th inning with a long solo home run to give Atlanta a walk-off win over visiting Cincinnati. Albies connected for his 17th homer on the first pitch he saw against Cincinnati reliever Dylan Floro (2-2). It was the third extra-base hit of the game for Albies and his first walk-off homer. The defeat snapped a season-long seven-game win streak for the Reds, who got a solo home run from Scott Schebler in the fifth inning.

DODGERS 2, CUBS 1

Kenta Maeda dominated for seven innings and Enrique Hernandez and Chris Taylor hit home runs as Los Angeles held on to defeat visiting Chicago. Maeda (5-4) gave up just three hits, all singles, with nine strikeouts. He walked one batter as he recovered from a rough start at Chicago last Tuesday in which he lasted 3 2/3 innings and gave up three runs on five hits. Kenley Jansen gave up a run in the ninth inning on a sacrifice fly from Javier Baez, but was able to complete his 20th save in 22 chances.

YANKEES 4, PHILLIES 2

Jonathan Loaisiga pitched 5 1/3 strong innings, Aaron Judge homered and visiting New York defeated Philadelphia. Giancarlo Stanton added a two-run single for the Yankees. Judge and Stanton each had two hits. Loaisiga (2-0) struck out eight and allowed just one hit. He was perfect through four innings before allowing a walk to Carlos Santana to open the bottom of the fifth and had a no-hitter going through five until Jorge Alfaro singled to open the sixth, one of three Phillies hits.

ROYALS 2, ANGELS 0

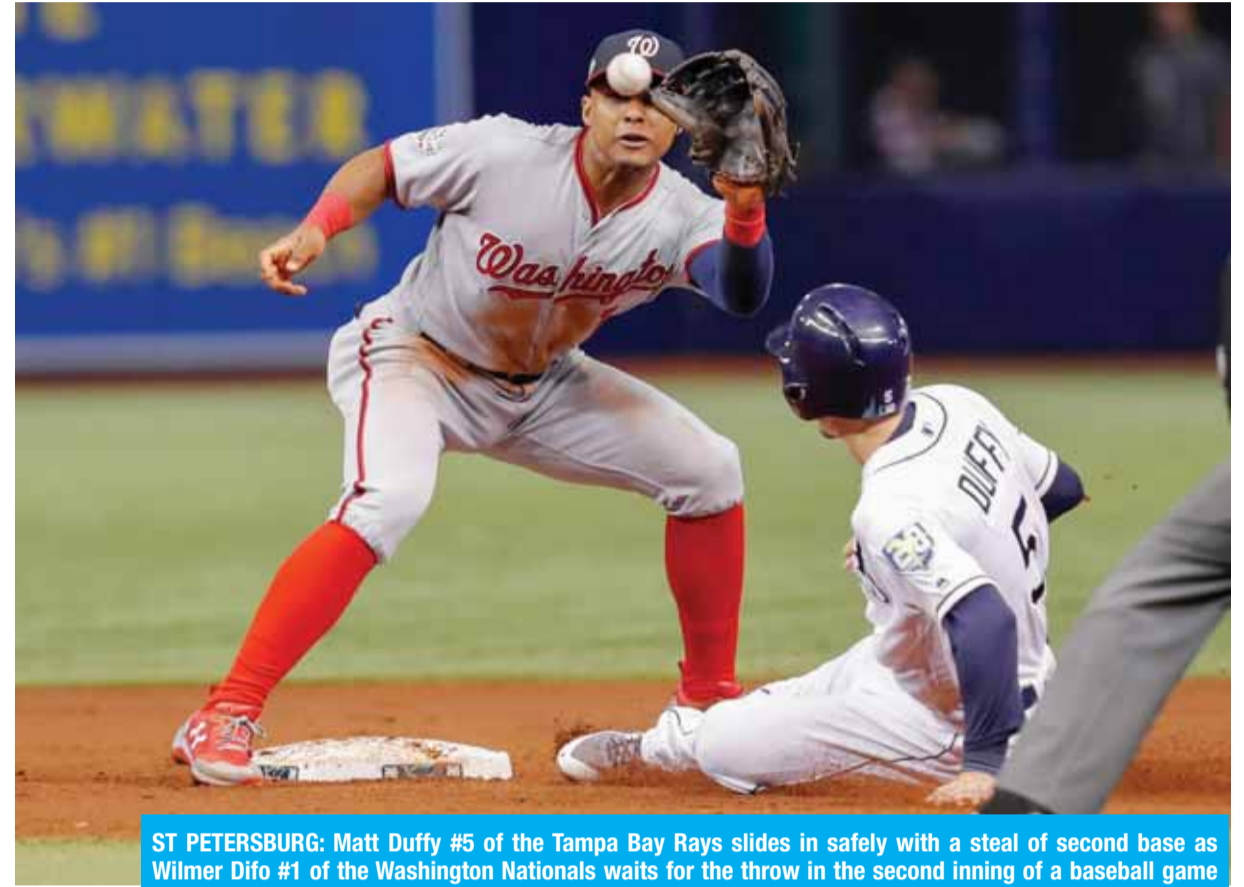
Brad Keller allowed just two hits in seven shutout innings, and host Kansas City beat Los Angeles in the makeup of an April game postponed by cold weather. Lucas Duda and Rosell Herrera each had RBI singles, helping the Royals win for only the second time in their last 13 games, and the third time in their last 20. The Angels dropped their third straight game and have their next nine on the road. They couldn't get anything going against Keller (2-2), who struck out six and issued two walks.

ATHLETICS 5, TIGERS 4

Jed Lowrie hit a tiebreaking home run in the top of the ninth, and visiting Oakland rallied from a late three-run deficit to defeat slumping Detroit. Lowrie's 12th homer down the right field line came off Detroit closer Shane Greene (2-4). Stephen Piscotty had three hits, including a solo homer, and scored twice. The A's extended their major league record streak of homering in consecutive road games to 26. Edwin Jackson was called up from Triple-A Nashville to start the game for Oakland and made a record-tying return to the majors, matching Octavio Dotel's mark by playing for his 13th different major league team. Jackson gave up one run on six hits and didn't issue a walk while striking out seven in six innings.

CARDINALS 4, INDIANS 0

St Louis right-hander John Gant allowed just an infield single over seven shutout innings, teaming with three relievers for a victory that snapped visiting Cleveland's



ST PETERSBURG: Matt Duffy #5 of the Tampa Bay Rays slides in safely with a steal of second base as Wilmer Difo #1 of the Washington Nationals waits for the throw in the second inning of a baseball game at Tropicana Field on Monday. — AFP

seven-game winning streak. Making just his fourth start of the season, Gant (2-2) surrendered an infield single to catcher Yan Gomes with two outs in the second inning en route to his first win as a starter since June of 2016 for Atlanta against the New York Mets. The game was the first meeting between the Indians and Cardinals in St. Louis since 2012. The Indians finished with four hits, all singles.

MARINERS 5, ORIOLES 3

Guillermo Heredia scored the tiebreaking run on a wild pitch, Dee Gordon drove in two runs and Denard Span homered as Seattle defeated host Baltimore. Seattle scored twice in the seventh inning to snap a 3-3 tie. The Mariners loaded the bases with no outs against Miguel Castro (2-3), and Heredia scored when the right-hander bounced a wild pitch to Mitch Haniger. Haniger followed with a sacrifice fly to center that gave the Mariners a 5-3 lead. Jean Segura returned to the Seattle lineup after missing the last four games with an infection in his right forearm, while Tim Beckham rejoined the Orioles after two months on the disabled list following a groin strain and subsequent surgery in late April. Both

infielders went hitless.

PIRATES 6, METS 4

Starling Marte scored three runs and stole two bases as visiting Pittsburgh raced out to a big lead before hanging on to defeat New York. The Pirates snapped a five-game losing streak. The Mets have lost seven straight and are 4-18 this month. Jameson Taillon (5-6) earned the win after allowing two runs on four hits and three walks while striking out five over six-plus innings. Taillon carried a two-hitter into the seventh, when the Mets rallied for four runs.

RANGERS 7, PADRES 4

Texas took advantage of several breaks to score five runs in the bottom of the sixth and wipe out a 4-1 deficit en route to beating visiting San Diego. The win was the Rangers' eighth in their last nine games, while the Padres are 1-8 over the same time period. Five different Rangers drove in runs during the sixth, with the hosts also taking advantage of a missed strike-three call, a dropped fly in right by Padres right fielder Hunter Renfroe and a botched play on a slow grounder by second baseman Cory

Sri Lanka closing in on victory over Windies

BRIDGETOWN: Sri Lanka were 63 runs away from a first ever Test victory over the West Indies at the Kensington Oval on Monday following an action-packed third day of the final Test. A stunning day's play which saw 20 wickets fall in the day/night Test saw Sri Lanka be set a target of 144 to level the series and become the first Asian team ever to win at the venue.

At stumps however, Sri Lanka's hopes of victory remained in the balance with the tourists stumbling to 81 for five in their second innings. Sri Lanka's hopes of victory were dealt a further blow after an injury to batsman Kusal Perera.

Perera had to be taken from the field in an ambulance after he crashed into an advertising board attempting to take a catch on the long-on boundary which would have ended the West Indies second innings on 82.

As it was, they added just 11 more runs to be dismissed for 93, their lowest-ever total in a Test innings at the ground. Still, with a lead of 50 runs after the Sri Lankans folded swiftly in the first session to be dismissed for 154 in reply to the hosts' first innings total of 204, the task was expected to be a challenging one on a pitch that continues to be very helpful to faster bowlers.

So it has proved with Jason Holder leading the way with the ball yet again in what is turning out to be personal tour de force for the West Indies captain on his home ground. He topscored in the West Indies first innings with 74 and polished off the Sri Lankan tail in the first innings to finish with the excellent figures of four for 18.

Sri Lanka will rely on Kusal Mendis (25 not out) to guide the tourists to their target in partnership with off-spinning all-rounder Dilruwan Perera. In a match where batsmen have struggled throughout, Niroshan Dickwella's topscore of 42 was the only effort of note in Sri Lanka's first innings as Shannon Gabriel and Kemar Roach combined for five wickets before Holder took over to clean up the tail.

But he had very little time to reflect on his effort as the visitors hit back hard in having the West Indies tottering at nine for three in their second innings just before the day's first interval. This was the first time in 90 years of Test cricket that the West Indies lost their first three wickets with less than ten runs on the board in both innings. —AFP

Buttler to open for England in Australia T20

BIRMINGHAM: Jos Buttler will be promoted to open the innings in England's lone Twenty20 international against Australia at Edgbaston today, team management have confirmed. Buttler was one of the stars of this season's Twenty20 Indian Premier League after being promoted to open and scored a tournament record-equalling five successive fifties for the Rajasthan Royals.

He has opened once before for England in his 61 T20 internationals, making an unbeaten 73 off 49 balls - his highest T20 score for England - when Sri Lanka were beaten by eight wickets at Southampton in 2016.

Buttler has usually been deployed as a middle-order batsman by England but, having been recalled to the Test side earlier this season, they are now determined to cash in on his recent brilliant form in white-ball cricket. The wicketkeeper-batsman was named man-of-the-series after England's 5-0 rout of world champions Australia, with his brilliant 110 not out sealing a dramatic one-wicket win in the fifth

one-day international at Old Trafford on Sunday. That century crowned a brilliant series where Buttler scored 275 runs in total, including scores of 91 not out and 54 not out, at an extraordinary average of 137.50. Paul Farbrace, deputising as head coach in place of Trevor Bayliss for this one-off match and next month's three T20s against India, confirmed the 27-year-old Buttler's promotion by telling reporters at Edgbaston yesterday: "He will open today (Wednesday). "In 120 balls in an innings, you want to get your best strikers facing as many balls as possible. The form he's in, the way he's playing, it makes sense to get him at the top of the order."

'CALM AT THE CREASE'

Farbrace added: "He's using the experience he's gained to make himself more consistent, whatever colour the ball, whatever form of the game. "On Sunday, I thought that was as good an innings as I've seen him play for England - probably on a par with the hundred he got in Dubai against Pakistan."

"One was exciting shots and just pure skill, and the other day he showed how much he's learnt, how much calmer he is at the crease." Farbrace is already the assistant coach of the England side. His brief spell in charge has been seen as a possible audition for the full-time job when Australian coach Bayliss makes good on his long-announced plan to stand down after next year's World Cup and Ashes,



MANCHESTER: File photo shows England's Jos Buttler (CR) celebrates with England's Jake Ball (CL) on England's victory over Australia during the fifth One Day International (ODI) cricket match between England and Australia at Old Trafford cricket ground in Manchester. — AFP

both of which will be in England.

But Farbrace said: "I don't see it as an opportunity for me. I just see it as an opportunity for the players to keep playing well." Asked if he could succeed Bayliss, Farbrace replied: "Who knows? "Even if I was lucky enough to be considered come next September, then that would be a great

position to be in."

The 50-year-old former Kent and Middlesex wicket-keeper added: "I count myself very fortunate even to be in this position, as an assistant coach to the England team. "I wasn't good enough to get anywhere near it as a player, so to be involved as a coach is fantastic." —AFP

Joshua told to face Povetkin or lose WBA heavyweight title

LONDON: Britain's world heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua has been given a 24-hour deadline to agree a fight with Russia's Alexander Povetkin or risk being stripped of one of his titles. Joshua added the World Boxing Organisation heavyweight belt to the World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation straps he already held when he beat New Zealand's Joseph Parker in Cardiff in March. Since then Joshua's promoter, Eddie Hearn, has been trying to set up a unification bout with World Boxing Association heavyweight champion Deontay Wilder, but has not yet managed to do a deal with the American's camp. But the WBA are tired of waiting and have now told Joshua he must fight Povetkin, their mandatory challenger.

WBA president Gilberto Mendoza, in a statement issued Tuesday, said: "Today the WBA requested an answer from Anthony Joshua's team regarding his fight with the mandato-

ry challenger Alexander Povetkin. "The WBA have allowed over a month extension to negotiations with Povetkin and also ongoing discussions with Deontay Wilder. "It appears the Wilder team have not returned the contract for the fight and therefore we are requesting a date for the Joshua versus Povetkin fight with immediate effect."

Given talks with Wilder appear to be stalled while his management seek "clarification" over the terms of a fight contract, a contest with Povetkin may well represent the "next best bout" for London 2012 Olympic champion Joshua, who is unbeaten as a professional.

Joshua, 28, won his first world title in 2016 and has made five defences, taking his record to 21-0 with 20 knockouts. Wilder, 32, improved to 40-0 with 39 knockouts when he knocked out previously unbeaten Cuban Luis Ortiz in the tenth round in Brooklyn, New York, on March 3.

Povetkin demonstrated his considerable punching power with a fearsome knockout of Britain's David Price on the undercard of Joshua's win over Parker at Cardiff's Principality Stadium. Best known for staging Wales rugby union internationals, the Principality — which has a capacity of over 73,000 — could also play host to a Joshua-Povetkin clash.

Were that fight to take place later this year, it would likely mean any bout between Joshua and Wilder would be delayed until 2019 at the earliest. — AFP



Anthony Joshua



SNIPPETS



25 Iran coach Queiroz blasts VAR as Ronaldo escapes sending off

26 Jos Buttler to open for England in Australia T20

27 Dull Danes and flat French play out mutually beneficial 0-0 draw



Rojo rescues Argentina from early exit

Nigeria denied a second penalty after a controversial VAR review



SAINT PETERSBURG: Argentina's forward Lionel Messi (C) and Nigeria's midfielder Oghenekaro Etebo watch the ball during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group D football match between Nigeria and Argentina at the Saint Petersburg Stadium in Saint Petersburg yesterday. — AFP

SAINT PETERSBURG: Marcus Rojo's stunning finish four minutes from time kept Lionel Messi and Argentina's World Cup hopes alive to see off Nigeria 2-1 yesterday and set up a last 16 meeting with France.

Messi's first goal of the tournament got the two-time winners off to a perfect start in Saint Petersburg, but Victor Moses's 51st minute penalty had Jorge Sampaoli's men headed for a humiliating group stage exit until Rojo's late intervention.

The Manchester United defender, who had escaped conceding a second Nigerian penalty moments earlier after a controversial VAR review, thundered home Gabriel Mercado's cross to send the under-fire Sampaoli running down the sidelines amid wild scenes of celebration.

Messi missed a penalty in a 1-1 draw with Iceland and was largely bypassed in a 3-0 thrashing by Croatia that saw calls for Sampaoli to be sacked before their final

group game. However, Argentina avoided the abyss by the skin of their teeth to fight another day against the highly-fancied French in Kazan on Saturday.

Sampaoli made five changes from the Croatia game, with veterans of the Albiceleste's run to the final four years ago Gonzalo Higuain and Angel di Maria returning, but it was the recall of Ever Banega in midfield that provided the launchpad for Messi.

The Sevilla playmaker was restored to bring some order to an Argentine midfield overrun by Croatia's Ivan Rakitic and Luka Modric and proved his worth inside 15 minutes.

Banega's brilliant pass over the top of the Nigerian defence picked out Messi's run perfectly and, after cushioning the ball on his thigh, the five-time world player of the year erased the frustrations of his World Cup so far with an arrowed right-foot finish into the far corner.

Modric claimed Croatia "cut off Messi" in Nizhny

Novgorod five nights ago, but he was back to close to his Barcelona best at the heart of all Argentina's best moves in a positive first 45 minutes.

Higuain just couldn't flick the ball beyond the onrushing Francis Uzoho from a defence splitting pass before Uzoho then tipped a Messi free-kick onto the post. Argentina escaped just before the break when no penalty was given for Rojo's high challenge on Kelechi Iheanacho.

Nigeria felt that injustice was rectified just five minutes after the break, though, when this time Turkish referee Cuneyt Cakir did point to the spot when Javier Mascherano tangled with Oghenekaro Elebo at a corner.

Moses confidently stepped up to send Franco Armani the wrong way on his international debut and Argentina back to square one. Messi produced a magical performance in Argentina's final qualifier with a hat-trick in Ecuador just to get his country to Russia.

But he couldn't recreate those heroics as Nigerian defenders swarmed around him everytime he was hopefully shovelled the ball by Argentine team-mates.

There was further VAR controversy when Nigeria were denied a second penalty when Rojo headed onto his own arm before substitute Odion Ighalo fired wide.

Ighalo missed another glorious chance when he shot too close to Armani and Nigeria were made to pay for their profligacy from the most unlikely source.

Sergio Aguero had been thrown on from the bench to join Messi and Higuain in attack, but it was Rojo who produced a striker's finish on his weaker right foot to spark delirious scenes of celebration among the tens of thousands of Argentines in the stands.

Chief among them was legendary 1986 World Cup winning captain Diego Maradona who reacted by raising the middle finger of both hands in just his latest controversial moment as a spectator in Russia. — AFP

Iceland crash out of World Cup after Croatia loss

ROSTOV-ON-DON: Croatia secured first place in Group D yesterday after a hard-fought 2-1 win over gallant Iceland in Rostov, setting up a last-16 tie with Denmark. While most eyes were on Argentina and their do-or-die match with Nigeria in Saint Petersburg, Croatia wrapped up top spot in Group D in Rostov-on-Don thanks to a slick second-half volley by Milan Badelj and a late strike by Ivan Perisic, sandwiching a penalty equaliser by Gylfi Sigurdsson.

Croatia were already through to the last 16 and coach Zlatko Dalic rested most of the side that thumped Argentina 3-0, with only captain Luka Modric and the winger Perisic keeping their places. Needing a point to make certain of

top spot, Croatia dominated early on, with Real Madrid pair Modric and Mateo Kovacic dictating the tempo without creating clear chances. Midway through the period it was the Nordic side, who had beaten Croatia in qualifying for Russia, who took control, threatening from set-pieces and interceptions.

On 25 minutes a trademark long throw from Iceland captain Aron Gunnarsson was headed dangerously across the goalmouth by the industrious Magnusson. Everton's Sigurdsson tested Lovre Kalinic from a free-kick, while Birkir Bjarnason, who suffered a nosebleed early on, had shots blocked in quick succession.

Just before the break, a drive by Alfred Finnbogasson whistled past the post. Then on the stroke of half-time Gunnarsson forced an acrobatic save from Kalinic. Ten minutes into the second period the match turned when Fiorentina striker Milan Badelj first clipped the bar with a long-range drive, then made no mistake a minute later.

The 29-year-old got his right foot over a deflected cross and fired a superb volley wide of Iceland goalkeeper Hannes Halldorsson to give Croatia the lead. Iceland had to claim their

first ever World Cup victory to have a chance of advancing and, urged on by fans chanting their famous Viking thunderclap, almost equalised within minutes.

First, a flick-on from another Gunnarsson long throw found Sverrir Ingason whose header was tipped over by Kalinic. Moments later Ingason, who plays for Rostov, went even closer but his header hit the crossbar.

On 73 minutes Bjarnason fluffed a close-range opportunity but Iceland's lifeline arrived a minute later when Dejan Lovren handled a cross by Sigurdsson in the penalty area.

Sigurdsson had ballooned a penalty over the bar against Nigeria, but this time dispatched his shot into the roof of the net with Kalinic diving the wrong way. But as Iceland strained for the winner and a berth in the last 16 it was Croatia who threatened, free-kicks by Perisic and Rakitic worrying Halldorsson.

Then on 90 minutes, Perisic delivered the final blow. Sent into space on the left of the area the Inter Milan winger blasted a shot that ended both the game and Iceland's World Cup and put Croatia through to a match against the Danes in Nizhny Novogrod on Sunday. —AFP



ROSTOV-ON-DON: Croatia's midfielder Mateo Kovacic (L) vies with Iceland's midfielder Emil Hallfredsson during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group D football match between Iceland and Croatia at the Rostov Arena in Rostov-On-Don yesterday. — AFP