



**3** Qatari leader receives letter from HH the Amir



**11** IMF warns Arab states against debt complacency



**30** West sparks new outrage in calling slavery 'choice'



**16** Liverpool join Real Madrid in Champions League final



# Amir lauds democratic exchange between parliament and Cabinet

Voting on no-confidence motions next week • Oil minister denies resignation

conspiracy theories

## Our wasted potential

By Badrya Darwish  
badrya\_d@kuwaittimes.net

Sajid Javid was appointed home secretary a few days ago in the UK. Javid is the child of immigrants from Pakistan who landed in Britain in 1960 - of course a Muslim family. His father worked as a bus driver in Bristol and the family lived in a modest two-bedroom flat for most of his youth. But despite his humble beginnings, British Prime Minister Theresa May chose him to serve as home secretary (sort of like the interior minister in the Arab world) - not a small position. Of course, Javid is a highly-qualified young man. He served as an investment banker and held several high positions in the government, including as a parliamentary and cabinet minister.

I was laughing when I heard about his appointment, and I thought how people in the Arab states would be able rise to such a high position if their parents had been immigrants who arrived even as far back as 100 years previously. Everyone will be mocking, saying: What's this wafed holding this position? Are there no original nationals worthy of this position? Does it have to be given to a newcomer whose father was a bus driver?

I didn't see one article in the British press or one WhatsApp or one social media message on Instagram or Snapchat or Facebook, etc. This is pure democracy, guys. And this is how countries advance on all levels. First you have to advance in your mentality, in your head, in your culture, in your education and in your behavior. Then you have to respect and honor merit over wasta or connections.

This is why the Arab world continues to stagnate and we are still importing from A to Z from outside. There isn't a country among us which has developed significant new technologies, let alone old ones like cars. Even the needles we sew our clothes with are made outside, be it China, Turkey or the US. Forget airplanes, cars, industries, medical equipment, medicines, manufacturing, etc. I'm not talking about things we've licensed and replicate like simple mathematics. I'm talking about what we innovate or rather don't innovate.

You see guys what's the reason. Sit nicely in your home and think wisely and think without racism or without grudges and ask yourself: Am I lying? Am I exaggerating? Or being unrealistic? Or just want to criticize? It is sad, I tell you, the situation we in the Arab world are in. I hope the younger generations will comprehend life better and figure out a way to develop us beyond this stagnant situation.

We have all the potential to do far better than the West, and most of all we have our guiding light from our Prophet (PBUH) and Islam. But we need a new mindset and a new way of doing things.

Have a good day. And congratulations to Mr Javid!

By B Izzak and Agencies

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah lauded yesterday the healthy democratic exchange between National Assembly MPs and Cabinet members. In his letter to HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Amir congratulated the head of the Cabinet on his outstanding performance during his interpellation session. HH the Amir also commended lawmakers on displaying high democratic values during their interpellations of the prime minister and two other ministers. Sheikh Sabah hoped for more progress in Kuwait's democratic experience, wishing welfare and stability for the country and its people.

HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable yesterday to Sheikh Jaber, also praising his performance in response to the interpellation. Sheikh Nawaf said the process was done in a fair democratic atmosphere, displaying a responsible exchange between the Cabinet and parliament.

After a marathon grilling session that lasted almost 24 hours, MPs submitted no-confidence motions against the

two ministers, while they fell short of filing a non-cooperation motion against the prime minister. National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said voting on the two no-confidence motions against Oil Minister Bakheet Al-Rasheedi and Social Affairs and Labor Minister Hind Al-Sabeeh will take place next Thursday.

Lawmakers need 25 votes to automatically oust the two ministers, but Ghanem expressed belief that the two ministers will survive and remain as Cabinet members. He also said that a proposal to form a committee to investigate the allegations in the oil minister's grilling will be put for voting in the same session. Ghanem said the grilling of HH Sheikh Jaber by MP Hamdan Al-Azemi ended without any non-cooperation motion, and therefore the grilling is over. Parliamentary sources said the non-cooperation motion against the premier was signed by eight lawmakers, short of just two members to become legal.

The oil minister meanwhile denied reports that he has decided to quit his post after the no-confidence motion against him. He told reporters he is staying in his post and said he is proud of the Amiri confidence in him. It

was not the first time that two ministers and the prime minister were grilled on the same day. About a decade ago, former prime minister HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and three other ministers were grilled in the same session, which also lasted for almost 24 hours.

MP Ali Al-Deqbsi said yesterday he was confident that the oil minister will survive the no-confidence motion and continue in his post, adding that the grilling against him was unconstitutional because he was held responsible for the actions of his predecessors in the ministry, which is not in line with the constitution. He said that the grilling had in fact targeted senior oil executives and the minister paid the price of infighting in the oil sector. Deqbsi said that the vote against Rasheedi will not succeed as he was grilled for violations committed by previous ministers.

Parliamentary sources said that from the outcome of the grillings, it appears that the government will manage to defeat the two no-confidence votes against the two ministers, and that the dissolution of the Assembly now appears a remote possibility.

## Kuwait continues role as Islamic finance pioneer; Fitch affirms AA

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf yesterday said the CBK-IFSB conference was an opportunity to meet Islamic finance industry experts, who contribute to the development of the industry by proposing solutions and recommendations. He pointed out that Kuwait is a leader in launching and developing the Islamic finance industry regionally and globally, adding that these efforts are not limited to moral or legislative support, but rather due to the keenness of Kuwait to build government institutions on which the modern economy is based. Meanwhile, Fitch Ratings affirmed Kuwait's

sovereign credit for 2018 at "AA" with a stable outlook, the agency said yesterday. (See Page 5)

In his opening speech at the conference organized by the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Islamic Financial Services Board, Hajraf stressed that Kuwait is keen to find the necessary infrastructure for the functioning of the banking system, both conventional and Islamic. "This is represented by a stable financial and monetary system and a regulatory environment that adopts policies that support growth and stability.

Regarding the importance of this role, the government is sparing no effort to enhance the independence of the Central Bank of Kuwait in the management of monetary policy, the performance of its oversight role and all its functions stipulated in the law of its establishment," Hajraf said. He added that the conference coincides with the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Central Bank of Kuwait.

Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Mohammed Al-Hashel said many countries have followed the model set by Kuwait's successful experience in Islamic finance, adding that Islamic finance has grown at the international level over the past four decades at an



Mohammed Al-Hashel

Nayef Al-Hajraf

exceptional rate to reach \$2.2 trillion.

He affirmed that Kuwait has achieved within a decade a financial system among the strongest, most secure and stable in the region and a dual banking system that stimulates the flourishing of Islamic and conventional banks alike.

Continued on Page 11

## Filipino envoy returns home

MANILA: The Filipino ambassador expelled by Kuwait, which protested the rescue of abused Filipina housemaids in the country as an affront to its sovereignty, returned home yesterday, with the Philippines insisting it did not commit any infraction. Philippine Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano welcomed Ambassador Renato Villa at Manila's international airport. Both expressed hope that the diplomatic row could be resolved soon.

Cayetano said 35 of 38 rescue efforts of Filipina housemaids by Philippine officials last month were coordinated with Kuwaiti authorities but three were conducted by Filipino officials themselves because rapid action was needed. The

move, Cayetano said, "is acceptable and is a duty under international law but it caused commotion to them." "That's why I said I apologize if our actions seemed to violate your sovereignty but let me assure you it's in the spirit of protecting our nationals," Cayetano told reporters at the airport.

Kuwait's foreign ministry accused the Philippine Embassy last week of a "flagrant and grave breach of rules and regulations that govern diplomatic action where staff helped Filipina house helpers run away," and ordered Villa to leave within a week. Kuwait also recalled its ambassador from Manila. Four Filipinos associated with the embassy were also arrested in Kuwait for allegedly convincing maids to flee their employers' homes.

Despite the dispute, Cayetano said a resolution of what he called a "miscommunication" between the two

Continued on Page 11



MANILA: Philippines' former ambassador to Kuwait Renato Pedro Villa speaks to members of the media shortly after arriving at the airport yesterday, while Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Cayetano looks on. — AFP

## Chhota Rajan sentenced to life in prison

MUMBAI: An Indian court yesterday sentenced notorious gangster Chhota Rajan and eight others to life in prison for murdering a journalist in a drive-by shooting in Mumbai seven years ago. Jyotirmoy Dey, a crime reporter who specialized on gangland activities for the Mid-Day tabloid, was shot dead in broad daylight on June 11, 2011. Prosecutors said Rajan had ordered the hit because he was unhappy about negative articles that Dey had written about him. A special court in India's financial capital Mumbai found Rajan guilty of ordering the contract killing of the 56-year-old.

The underworld don, who was appearing by video link from a New Delhi jail where he is being held, sim-

ply said "theek hai" ("OK") after Judge Sameer Adkar read out his verdict. The court also convicted eight henchmen, including four shooters. They and Rajan, who is in his late 50s, were later sentenced to life imprisonment. Prosecutor Pradeep Gharat had called for a life term, saying Dey represented "the fourth pillar of democracy". "The punishment must act as a deterrent," he told the courtroom.

Reporters in the world's largest democracy often face harassment and intimidation by police, politicians, bureaucrats and criminal gangs. More than forty journalists have been killed in India since 1992, according to the US-based Committee to Protect Journalists. The judge acquitted two others of involvement, including a female journalist who had been accused of conspiring with and abetting Dey's killers.

Jigna Vora, who worked for the Asian Age newspaper, was accused of passing on Dey's home address and motorcycle registration number to gangsters working for Rajan. She maintained her innocence throughout the trial and broke down in tears following her acquittal on all charges. Police said Rajan's gang

followed Dey and shot him five times from behind near his home in the northern Mumbai suburb of Powai. Officers said the gang was paid 500,000 rupees (\$11,000) for the killing.

They fled to towns around the country in the aftermath, where most of them were arrested. Mid-Day said at the time of his death that Dey was "a victim of his fearless journalism". His murder provoked outrage among Indian journalists, hundreds of whom took to the streets of Mumbai to demand greater protection from the state government and a swift inquiry. Rajan, whose real name is Rajendra Sadashiv Nikalje, was once one of India's most wanted men and is accused of dozens of gruesome crimes.

Yesterday's ruling was his first major conviction since he was deported from Indonesia in Oct 2015 after two decades on the run. Rajan was allegedly the right-hand man of Mumbai crime boss Dawood Ibrahim before an acrimonious split following the 1993 bomb blasts in Mumbai that killed 257 people. Yesterday's verdict came on the eve of World Press Freedom Day. — AFP



DENPASAR: In this file photo taken on Nov 5, 2015 Indonesian police escort Indian national Chhota Rajan from Bali police headquarters to Ngurah Rai Airport during his deportation from Bali island. — AFP

# Zain participates in 'Social Responsibility in Supporting Human Rights' seminar

As part of its Strategic Partnership with the UN High Commissioner

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, participated in a seminar entitled 'Social Responsibility of the Private Sector in Supporting Human Rights' held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights under the patronage of Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah and with the attendance of Director-General of the Kuwait Diplomatic Institute Ambassador Abdulaziz Al-Sharekh and the Assistant Foreign Minister on International Cooperation Affairs and Development Ambassador Nasser Al-Sabeeh.

Zain took part in the seminar that witnessed the attendance of a number of the UN's partners from the civil community, private sector, international organizations, as well as a number of public figures. The seminar discussed the social responsibility of private sector institutions in supporting human rights. Zain participated in the seminar as part of its Strategic Partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner.

During his participation in the seminar, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti said: "Zain is keen on enriching its commitment towards collaborative efforts that support human rights by aligning its initiatives alongside the UN's programs. The company will always be committed to supporting and fulfilling the needs of human rights".

Khashti continued: "Zain believes in the importance of committing to human rights through its sustainability strategy. The company achieves this by collaborating with its many partners in their various social and humanitarian contributions within the community, including social media campaigns, sponsoring humanitarian conferences and initiatives, and more".

Khashti explained: "Zain has a long list of



KUWAIT: Ambassadors Abdulaziz Al-Sharekh and Nasser Al-Sabeeh, as well as Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti pose with seminar speakers at Zain's booth.



Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti (left) speaks during the seminar.

programs and contributions that serve noble causes through the support of entities that adopt humanitarian work. Our latest humanitarian contribution was our Strategic Sponsorship of 'One Roof' campaign to raise awareness on domestic workers and employers rights in partnership with the Human Line Organization and the Social Work Society in partnership with the Ministry of Interior."

Khashti further added: "our support came as part of our Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility Strategy, through which we aim at supporting such humanitarian initiatives that achieve equality between all members of the society. This is part of our duty, and Zain will always stay committed to building a better future for everyone."

The seminar also witnessed the organization of a special exhibition where the participating private sector companies took part in. Zain showcased a number of its sus-

tainability projects to the visitors through its own dedicated booth. The seminar also aimed at highlighting the State of Kuwait's contributions and efforts into achieving the 2030 sustainable goals, including Kuwait's



Held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

leading role in humanitarian aid, crisis and emergency aid, global developmental efforts, and more.

Zain's participation came as an extension of the signing of a memorandum of under-

standing (MoU) between the company and the UNHCR during April of 2016. The agreement considered the best ways in which to contribute to the improvement of the living and social conditions of refugees and any other individuals who the UNHCR provides assistance to, and is considered an embodiment of the spirit of cooperation between private and global humanitarian sectors. Through its dedicated booth, Zain showcased its most prominent contributions in humanitarian fields during the past two years, including its #ZainWithRefugees campaign, field trips to refugee camps, online donation campaigns, strategic partnerships with local and global humanitarian entities, and more.

Last year, Zain launched its humanitarian campaign #ZainWithRefugees in collaboration with the UNHCR. The campaign aimed at improving the living conditions of thousands of refugees in the region who suffer

from the lack of essential supplies during the harsh winter season. Donations were utilized to provide families with financial support, winter clothing, thermal blankets, heaters, and more. Zain prides itself in its long list of joint collaborations with the UNHCR, including the extension of mobile telecommunications coverage to reconnect displaced families in the Middle East, offering telecom services in deprived areas, as well as awareness campaigns through SMS services and social media channels.

In relevance to the international refugee situation, Zain partnered with Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) to organize a humanitarian trip that saw 12 of its volunteered employees visiting and supporting Syrian refugees in Lebanon to distribute food, clothes, blankets and cater to a number of KRCS-supported projects. Zain also continued its annual Clothes Donation Campaign and extended it this year to Kuwait University, where over 10.5 tons of clothes were donated and sent by Kuwait Society for Relief to displaced Syrian families.

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Local

# Amir, Crown Prince receive senior officials

## Sheikh Nawaf thanks those inquiring about his health



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness the Amir also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh received Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister, as well as President of the Supreme Judicial Council, head of the Constitutional Court, and head of the Cassation Court, Justice Yousef Al-Mutawa'a. His Highness the Crown Prince also received Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh and Minister of

Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh.

In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince thanked all those who inquired about his health and wished him well on his medical checkup trip abroad. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf said that he was touched by the sincere sentiments towards him, wishing Kuwait and its people evermore success and welfare. His Highness the Crown Prince had returned home Tuesday evening after two private visits to the United States and France during which he had undergone successful medical checkups. His Highness the Crown Prince was received at the airport by senior sheikhs, Deputy National Guard Commander Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and senior state officials. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with President of the Supreme Judicial Council, head of the Constitutional Court, and head of the Cassation Court, Justice Yousef Al-Mutawa'a.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Cabinet Affairs Minister Anas Al-Saleh.

## Qatari leader receives Amir's letter

DOHA: Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani received a letter from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday, dealing with bilateral ties and issues of mutual concern. The Qatari Emir was given the letter by His Highness the Amir's envoy and Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, who arrived in the Qatari capital earlier yesterday. —KUNA



DOHA: Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani meets with Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah. —KUNA

## Rohingya's ethnical cleansing confirmed: Kuwait's representative

NEW YORK: The organized destruction of Rohingya villages confirms what was said by the United Nations that this Muslim minority was being ethnically cleansed, said the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi.

This came in a statement Otaibi made yesterday after a delegation from the UN Security Council concluded its visit to Bangladesh and Myanmar to view the Rohingya refugees' situation. This visit reflects the international community's concern over the crisis of the Rohingya, Otaibi said, as he expressed deep concern over the continued crossing of Rohingya into Bangladesh due to violence and hunger.

Otaibi said that during the visit, the Security Council had met with the Government of Myanmar, adding that the delegation urged them to create right environment for safe return to refugees and the other minorities. The Security Council received assurances from officials in the Government of Myanmar that they are working to implement bilateral agreements with the Government of Bangladesh for the return of refugees to their areas, he added.

Otaibi had urged the government of Myanmar to address the causes of the Rohingya crisis and stressed the need to allow the entry of humanitarian organiza-



Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi

tions and the UN into the Rakhine State without restrictions and promote the freedom of religion and peaceful living.

The council would continue to follow up the implementation of its presidential statement issued on November 2017 and the recommendations of the Rakhine State Advisory Committee headed by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Kuwait, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Peru led the Security Council on a field visit to Bangladesh and Myanmar, to meet with officials from both countries and to keep a close eye on the situation of 700,000 refugees. Since Kuwait entry into the Security Council earlier this year as non-permanent member, it has been working to defend Arab and Islamic issues. — KUNA

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## Local

# Hundreds arrested in crackdowns around Kuwait

## Ishbeliya service center's shooting suspect detained



This picture released by the Interior Ministry yesterday shows the weapon used by a man who fired gunshots inside an Ishbeliya citizen service center recently.



Drugs found with a suspect during an inspection campaign.



KUWAIT: This photo released by the Interior Ministry yesterday shows vehicles lined up at a police checkpoint.

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

**KUWAIT:** Security authorities carried out several campaigns that included 118 checkpoints in all governorates over two consecutive days (Apr 30 and May 1), resulting in the arrest of 145 wanted people in addition to 244 violators of the residency law and others who did not have any ID. Seven vehicles were impounded, while police dealt with 14 drugs cases, four liquor cases, three theft cases and 10 roaming laborers. Authorities also dealt with 135 fights and issued 652 traffic citations.

### Shooting suspect caught

Criminal security men arrested a citizen in his diwaniya in Jahra after he fired three rounds in front of an Ishbeliya citizen service center following a dispute with an officer. He was found to be a former soldier and has a criminal record. He said his actions were due to the offi-

cer insulting him. He was charged with attempted murder.

### Arsonist arrested

A citizen accused of starting a fire at a co-operative society refused to give any information to Ahmadi detectives after they arrested him, and did not give any reason for his action. Detectives identified him after reviewing surveillance footage. A warrant was obtained and he was arrested while he was driving in Mangaf. The suspect confessed to starting the fire and he was detained on arson charges.

### Search for swindler

A citizen was swindled by a man who convinced him to become partners in a cafe. He took KD 5,300 from him and disappeared, Al-Rai reported. The citizen went to the man's apartment and discovered he had moved. Detectives are working on the case.



A sports car impounded during a crackdown.



Liquor bottles busted with a person during a police campaign.

## Court upholds terror suspect's death sentence

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** The appeals court upheld the death sentence against a citizen in a state security case, as he is accused of

running over policemen during national day celebrations. The suspect confessed to committing the crime and said he belongs to a terrorist movement based in Afghanistan. He said he wanted to get closer to God with this act. Separately, lawyer Abdulaziz Al-Enezi filed a lawsuit for KD 100,000 in compensation against a plastic surgeon for leaving a needle in the cheek of his client. Meanwhile, the appeals court exonerated a lawyer of the charge of forging official documents to get KD 2 million.

## KD 200 million saved since petrol prices' hike

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has made KD 200 million in savings since the increase of gasoline, kerosene and diesel prices in Sept 2016. The state, by reevaluating oil product prices as part of the economic reform policy it adopted in March 2016, seeks to increase non-oil revenues, and has set a savings target of KD 120 million per year. So that the total savings in the budget during 20 months is nearly KD 200 million. Prices have settled at KD 0.105 per liter for super grade gasoline, KD 0.085 for premium and KD 0.115 for diesel. The UAE has the highest petrol prices, followed by Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait.

### Islands development

A government study revealed that Kuwait will allocate nearly \$15 billion annually for salaries for nearly 250 Kuwaitis in the islands development project, with the aim to have 75 percent of jobs filled by Kuwaitis. The study, which was done by the council of ministers, shows that available job opportunities in the project will reflect positively on citizens' standard of living. It said the project will give the country the opportunity to reduce reliance on oil as a major source of revenue, so that oil revenues drop from 89 percent to 51 percent of the country's general revenue in the annual budget.

### Environmental violations

The Environment Public Authority (EPA) filed citations against three tankers in Sulaibiya for dumping combustible material on soil and not in designated areas. The fine for such a violation may reach KD 51,000. The EPA cited violation of article 53, as "the owner or operator of the facility did not commit to periodical maintenance of equipment and machinery, and taking all the necessary precautions to prevent leakage of any pollutants in the environment."

Meanwhile, the EPA, represented by Deputy Director General for Environment Supervision Affairs Mohammad Al-Ahmad, toured Failaka Island to check on the requirements of the island's development in the presence of Minister of Public Works and State Minister for Municipal Affairs Hossam Al-Roumi.

### Mass transportation

Director General of the Public Authority for Roads and Transport Ahmad Al-Hossan said the authority is planning to activate a mass transportation project within the plan of developing road systems. Hossan, speaking during the partial opening of the development of the western part of Jamal Abdullnasser Street, said the authority has a major plan to carry out 31 openings - partial or complete - during the current year. He said the project saw the opening of flyovers of the main road in front of the Public Institute For Social Security's building from the eastern side towards Kuwait City, and on the other side, with a length of 1,400 meters and three lanes' width.

## Official meets IOM representative

**KUWAIT:** Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lt Gen Mahmoud Al-Dousary held talks with mission head of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to Kuwait Eman Oraikat on Tuesday. The talks dealt with ways to strengthen cooperation between both sides and issues of common interest, according to a statement by the Ministry's Public Relations and Security Media Department. The two sides share a great interest in addressing the humanitarian aspects of migration-related issues, the statement said.—KUNA

Startups in Kuwait

## Talents for startups

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed



Establishing a business can be a very challenging experience, yet rewarding in many ways. Support is very much needed in the initial stages - from technology experts to marketing assistance. Thankfully, Kuwait is now a hub for startups with a wide range of support services. I am thankful for the Kuwait National Fund and how they have supported small businesses, not just financially, but also by providing valuable resources for the startup community, such as training and access to consultations.

I am also very excited to share information on Erada, a 12-week intensive program for startups. Erada is a business incubator that is fully accredited by the Kuwait National Fund, where participants will be automatically qualified for financing once they graduate successfully from the program. Participants will benefit highly from the support of talent, such as legal expertise, marketing support, sale strategies, business solutions and so on. The program is free and is open to all Kuwaitis - you can register on [www.erada.io](http://www.erada.io)

Since having a well-rounded talented team is important, I have chosen to speak about talents for startup, answering questions as requested by my readers.

### Hiring talent

**Question:** Should I hire talent or acquire talent through service providers? What should I watch out for from a legal perspective for both options?

**Fajer:** Deciding how or who to hire can be very tricky, but at the end of a day, it's a purely business decision that I should not really interfere with as a lawyer. But I can assist with things to keep any eye out for as a small business when making those decisions. There are a few options to look at:

**1. Acquiring services through a specialized firm:** If you need to hire a specialized firm, you need to be careful with the agreement that you sign. Many startups make the mistake of not signing an agreement with a service provider that includes detailed information of what they need, like how many hours of services, the exact services needed or expertise required. For example, let's say you are looking to hire a company for developing a mobile application. It is important to specify if the development will be for Google Play or the App Store. My advice is to be as detailed as you can.

**2. Freelancer:** Hiring a freelancer can be a blessing and a curse at the same time. With freelancers, you will be able to get work devotion for a very low cost, but many legal issues arise. Things to watch out for is how to make sure this person is liable for submitting the work required, and how to avoid a legal employment relationship where the startup may be responsible for employment responsibilities and obligations towards the freelancer.

**3. Hiring talent:** This may be a great option but expensive as well. Things that you might need to think of as a startup when hiring is non-completion of work, training, employment share plan and so on.

### Vesting schedule

**Question:** As a startup we do not have the funding to hire employees, and therefore we have offered partnerships for the team that will initially set the company up. I have heard of something called a vesting schedule. How can we include this in the articles of association of a company when establishing it?

**Fajer:** A vesting schedule is very important if you have founders working for the startup. A vesting schedule in simple terms is when a founder receives shares for working, so for example for every month of work, the founder will receive 500 shares from the company. Unfortunately, this is not something you can include in the articles of association of a Kuwaiti company.

If you have a concern, please email us at [info@fl-legal.com](mailto:info@fl-legal.com)

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Local

# Govts use Islamic finance as strategy to diversify income, boost growth: Marzouq

## KFH Participates in CBK-IFSB Conference - Islamic Finance A Universal Value Proposition

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Chairman Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq said in the CBK-IFSB conference: Considering the current economic fears, Islamic finance, with all its high capabilities, may be used widely by governments and financial institutions as a strategy to diversify their sources of income and drive the wheel of economic growth and social development.

He added in the first session titled "Leveraging Islamic Finance to Build a Diversified and Sustainable Economy" that governments may use Islamic finance to strengthen their financial infrastructure and increase global cooperation via various Islamic finance means. Islamic finance is based on the real economy and is asset backed therefore providing a more solid base for economic growth.

Current economies have proven to be vulnerable to the emerging risks, slower growth and volatility due to lack of diversified financial systems. This coupled with the changing macroeconomic markets conditions including policy normalization, plunging oil prices and increasing budget deficits have provoked more thoughts for diversification.

Islamic finance offers a universal value proposition with inclusive growth that appeals to all, with its adherence to real economic transactions and its specificities including restrictions on speculation, synthetic transactions and industries that are not deemed to be good for the community. It can help in macro-economic diversification, sustainability and financial inclusion.

Marzouq said "Sustainable growth shall

establishing the first Islamic bank in Germany KT Bank AG which opened its doors in July of 2015. There is a large population of Turkish and Muslim immigrants there almost 4 million in number. This segment or minority has specific religious standards with regards to their financial needs which were not met prior to the establishment of this Islamic institution. Not only that, but the acceptance of this bank by BaFin (The Federal Financial Supervisory Authority) in essence is allowing for better social integration for those originally Turkish citizens of Germany.

By using Islamic financial instruments, countries can have access to a wider variety of debt instruments and at the same time support the efforts when it comes to infrastructure and development projects which will serve the needs of society. This will promote growth and job creation as well.

Sukuks have been widely successful as financial instruments and more so in recent years especially for infrastructure finance. They provide long-term sustainable financial solutions due to several factors including being asset backed and tradable. Islamic Sukuks have spread rapidly. Banks have started to arrange syndicated Islamic finance transactions. 17 percent annual growth in Sukuk issuance which have doubled over the past 10 years to reach \$100 Billion in 2017 compared to \$42 Billion in 2008.

Islamic financial markets have been offering finance Sukuks in locally and globally to diversify financial tools on one hand and finance infrastructure projects of all types and activities and participate in financing water,

agricultural, industrial and real estate sectors. May be used by the central banks in open market operations in the same way debt bonds are used. Tools for Islamic banks to achieve harmony between the time duration of resources compared to the durations of funds employment. Sukuks will improve the efficiency and expansion of money markets.

Governments need to ensure that the proper legal and regulatory framework is there for the full utilization of Islamic finance as part of any public private partnership. Laws must be in place to protect the rights of all stakeholders. The right balance must exist between the amount of regulations or restrictions versus incentivizing the market to use Islamic finance tools and instruments. For example, setting the appropriate risk rating for government backed projects.

In general there needs to be a strong effort to enhance the understanding of Islamic finance building blocks and their role in financing infrastructure PPP projects.

A clear partnership structure is needed between the private and public sector in order to promote the use of Islamic banking products. Islamic Finance can play and has played a strong supporting role in the development of local economies, improving the infrastructure project support through long term government finance.

The support of development and infrastructure projects through Islamic finance tools has brought about the improvement in clean water through the financing of desalination plants. Recently in Kuwait, Islamic Finance made up a good portion of the 1.2 Billion KD Clean Fuels project with KNPC; and KFH was the lead for the Islamic Tranche. This is in line with providing clean energy as part of the UN Sustainable Goals. Key Stakeholders taking the lead should include the Banking Industry, Government and Regulatory Authorities, Parliament members, Finance Ministers, and Central Banks.

### Young industry

KFH-Group CEO Mazin Saad Al-Nahedh said in the session titled "Islamic finance-What lies Ahead that Islamic Finance is still a relatively "young" industry and this inherent challenge comes from the fact that since their inception stage in the early 1970s particularly in the GCC and Middle East region, Islamic banks had to confirm the micro level demand for their products and services. This was overcome by focusing on key markets where Sharia compliant products were wanted and accepted for example Turkey, Malaysia, and GCC etc.

He added that awareness and understanding of key Islamic finance principles remains one of the key challenges still facing the industry. Although a great deal has been done in the pioneering era of Islamic banks in the 90's and early 2000's where a trend has been set with relatively higher growth rates and expansion in local market shares which was supported by the development of better regulatory and legal environments. For example, the establishment here in Kuwait of the Islamic banking laws overseen by the Central Bank of Kuwait has witnessed the increase of Islamic finance market share to be made up almost half of the banking industry.

Nevertheless, more needs to be done on the local, regional, and international level to improve the practical application of Islamic finance tools from the legal and regulatory side to enhance its acceptance.

Education and awareness about Islamic



KFH Chairman Hamad Al-Marzouq



KFH-Group CEO Mazin Al-Nahedh

finance principles and sharing the concepts of Islamic banking and finance with those in government needs to take place since there is a disparity between the level of understanding from region to region and from specific individuals in key positions either regulatory or supervisory.

Nahedh continued: "There are specific laws and regulations that need to be enacted in order to organize and standardize Islamic finance and this is a key success factor. Political or social barriers may hinder the acceptance of Islamic finance in some countries, and this is part of having more global awareness."

"In general there needs to be a strong effort to enhance the understanding of Islamic finance building blocks and their role in financing infrastructure PPP projects. And a clear partnership structure is needed between the private and public sector in order to promote the use of Islamic banking products."

"Islamic banking can help foster and promote Fintech growth either through financing

disclosure policies, since the stakeholders will shy away from those companies who do not provide consistent and timely information. With the advancement in communications and technology most stakeholders are sophisticated enough to be able to evaluate the level of openness, honesty and transparency in the Islamic finance industry. There are also multiple sources of information which can be used to validate the data.

"Today we have the example of the new Premier Market in Boursa Kuwait which Kuwait Finance House is proudly a leader. Part of the commitment to this segment of the stock exchange and the market is to provide transparent updates to the market including quarterly analyst calls that are in multiple languages. In this case we see the stock exchange setting the guidelines and standards for listed companies. Islamic finance by virtue of its moral focus should by default be transparent and disciplined with all key stakeholders."

"Governments need to ensure that the proper legal and regulatory framework is there for the full utilization of Islamic finance segments such as Takaful and Islamic capital markets. Laws must be in place to protect the rights of all stakeholders. These segments are quite complex and require specialized skills and that can be scarce in some regions."

"The Islamic alternatives to conventional insurance and capital markets. Some of the challenges include having the right resources and human capital who have the know-how and expertise in these specific fields under the umbrella of Islamic finance. There is a limitation in this regard and this must be addressed by having more and more universities and colleges with specialized degrees in Islamic finance. "The right balance must exist between the amount of regulations or restrictions versus incentivizing the market to use Islamic finance tools and instruments. In general there needs to be a strong effort to enhance the understanding of Islamic finance building blocks and their role in financing infrastructure. A clear partnership structure is needed between the private and public sector in order to promote these segments of the market."

"Overall I believe the outlook is positive in the next 5 to 10 years due to the continuing demand and sustained above average growth rates for the Islamic Finance industry. This is especially true when we focus on Youth who make up a large portion of the population. This will be a key driver for development in the future and it will drive demand for all types of Islamic financial services. One of the main tenets of Islamic finance is its focus on 'development of the land' and supporting the real economy. These factors are in line with the needs of the developing world."

"There are challenges to FinTechs in fulfilling the regulatory requirements which can be prohibitive. This puts pressure on entrepreneurs to avoid certain countries due to the lack of financial infrastructure to promote the establishment and operation of FinTechs. New laws are needed to support this trend and give banks, Islamic banks especially the flexibility to fully utilize these new technologies."

"Transparency is part and parcel of top tier financial institutions. The markets today require more and more transparency and clear



## Islamic banking fosters growth

or setting up specialized funds. KFH already has started investing in Fintech through a dedicated fund and the goal is to benefit the group. We don't see FinTech as a threat to Islamic Finance quite the contrary it is a source of major support especially in the digital age we live in. Furthermore, KFH actually owns a dedicated IT company (ITS) and part of our overall strategy going forward is to include FinTech in future operations. We see it as an evolution rather than a revolution, where the industry can benefit from cost savings, and to be able to better serve its customers. We believe the Islamic finance industry has already begun to adapt to this new reality.

"There are challenges to FinTechs in fulfilling the regulatory requirements which can be prohibitive. This puts pressure on entrepreneurs to avoid certain countries due to the lack of financial infrastructure to promote the establishment and operation of FinTechs. New laws are needed to support this trend and give banks, Islamic banks especially the flexibility to fully utilize these new technologies."

"Transparency is part and parcel of top tier financial institutions. The markets today require more and more transparency and clear



KUWAIT: Kuwait Central Bank Governor Mohammad Al-Hashel (center) poses with KFH's senior officials.

fulfill present needs without affecting future generations' ability to fulfill their needs. The concept of sustainable development has extended to include corporate sector where companies build new sustainable, responsible and effective investment strategies. There needs to be more awareness in terms of sharing the concepts of Islamic banking and finance with those in government since there is a disparity between the level of understanding and awareness from region to region and from specific individuals in government."

There are specific laws and regulations that need to be enacted in order to organize and standardize Islamic finance and this is a key success factor. Political or social barriers may hinder the acceptance of Islamic finance in some countries, and this is part of having more global awareness.

Islamic finance can help foster financial and social inclusion by virtue of catering to the needs of a specific segment or minority in a society. KFH Group has a live example of

electricity and drainage stations, clean energy projects, expansion of banks and corporate activities and finance governments through real projects that would contribute to sustainable growth and development.

GCC countries are qualified more than other countries to develop and adopt Islamic Sukuks provided that sufficient sellers and buyers are available in the market and provided that investment companies and institutions are able to be a market maker.

The adoption of economic development plans will necessarily require expansion in the issuance of Sukuks and creating a secondary market in a way that would contribute significantly to the enhancement and orientation of savings and expansion of investment circle.

Islamic Finance Sukuks provide the following advantages: Innovation of financial and investment vehicles and trading the same in stock exchanges. Different types and validity. Sukuks may be used as per the sector project i.e. they may be used to finance projects in

post a surplus of around KD 900 million (\$2.9 billion), 2.4 percent of GDP, for FY 17/18, including estimated investment income of around KD 4.6 billion (\$15.1 billion) and excluding the statutory annual transfer of revenue to the RFFG, worth around KD 1.6 billion (\$5.2 billion). The government does not count investment income and treats the RFFG transfer as expenditure in its own presentation, resulting in a deficit figure of nearly KD 5.3 billion (\$17.4 billion).

It also expects modest surpluses of around KD 300 million (\$995 million), around 0.7 percent of GDP, in FY 18/19 and FY 19/20, under the baseline Brent oil price assumption of \$5 7.5/bbl. According to the According to the government's reporting convention, the forecast deficit would be nearly KD 5.9 billion (\$19.5 billion), which roughly corresponds to the financing need, as the government does not intend to touch the RFFG. The government's draft budget proposal plans for an even higher deficit, but this is based on a more conservative oil price assumption of \$50/bbl and the government usually spends less than it budgets. In FY 17/18, the government issued domestic debt of more than KD700 million (\$2.3 billion), meeting the rest of its KD 5.3 billion (\$17.5 billion) financing need by drawing down on the GRE.

The absence of foreign borrowing in the last fiscal year reflects the government's struggle to win parliamentary approval for a new public debt law. If passed, the debt law will pave the way to more debt issuance in FY 18/19 and FY19/20. Under our forecasts, the government issues just under \$16 billion in foreign debt in the coming two years, and the debt/GDP ratio rises to around 38 percent by 2019. Real GDP fell by 2.9 percent in 2017 as Kuwait's oil output cut in line with an OPEC agreement outweighed a recovery in non-oil growth. Kuwait's oil production has been at the reference level of 2.7 million barrels per day since the start of 2017.

Fitch does not "factor in any recovery in production volumes in 2018, although there are plans to boost production capacity to 4 million barrels per day by 2020." The completion of the 615,000-barrel-per-day Al-Zour Refinery in 2019 should provide a boost to oil GDP in 2019, on the back of expected completion in 2018 of upgrades to two existing refineries as part of the Clean Fuel Project. The agency expects non-oil growth of around 3.5 percent in 2018-2019 amid continued growth of government spending on wages and investment. — KUNA

## Fitch Rating affirms Kuwait at 'AA' with stable outlook

**KUWAIT:** Fitch Ratings has affirmed Kuwait's sovereign credit for 2018 at "AA" with a stable outlook, the agency said yesterday. Kuwait's key credit strengths are its exceptionally strong fiscal and external metrics, and, at a forecast \$56/ oil barrel (bbl), one of the lowest fiscal breakeven Brent oil prices among Fitch-rated oil exporters, Fitch added in a statement on its website. It noted that these strengths are tempered by Kuwait's heavily oil-dependent economy, geopolitical risk, and weak governance and business environment. "A generous welfare state and the large economic role of the public sector present increasing challenges to public finances, given robust growth of the Kuwaiti population," it said. Fitch estimated assets and performance of the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) at \$580 billion or 460 percent of GDP in 2017. "Of this amount, the Reserve Fund for Future Generations (RFFG) accounted for almost \$490 billion and has continued to increase, due to favorable asset market returns and the statutory annual transfer of 10 percent of government revenue," the statement noted.

Although tapping the RFFG would allow Kuwait to sustain current deficit levels for decades, it estimates that estimate that the General Reserve Fund (GRF) "could be depleted within around five years in a hypothetical scenario where fiscal deficits remain at the level expected for the fiscal year ended March 2019 (FY18/19)." The transfer to the RFFG continues, there are no valuation gains or losses and the GRF is the sole source of financing. We estimate that Brent oil prices of over \$80/ bbl would have to be sustained to eliminate the central government's drawdown of the GRF.

We believe that if the GRF were to approach depletion, the government could tap the RFFG for debt repayments and other budgetary needs. Fitch expects the state budget to

## Burgan Bank continues supporting KACCH activities

**KUWAIT:** As part of its firm Corporate Social Responsibility strategy that is dedicated to supporting humanitarian causes, Burgan Bank reaffirmed its support to the Kuwait Association for Care of Children Hospital (KACCH) by presenting its annual donation. This year is the bank's 17th consecutive year of commitment to KACCH.

KACCH is a non-profit organization that operates Child Life Programs supported by Child Life Specialists and Play Leaders across 6 government hospitals in Kuwait. KACCH staff work closely with nurses, doctors, and other healthcare professionals to reduce the negative impact of hospitalization and create a positive experience for sick children and their families.

Burgan Bank's initiative in supporting these children over the past 17 years stems from its firm belief in creating a lasting difference and contributing to the development of healthcare within pediatric facilities at various health institutions. By doing so, Burgan Bank is assuring that children and their families in the hospitals are receiving fundamental support. Burgan Bank's support to this initiative falls under its recently launched full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important



aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural, social and health initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the Kuwaiti society.



Iraq's Maliki poses as Shiite champion in race for top job

## Lebanese city, election feel the effect of Saudi cold shoulder



GUJARAT: Dogs growl at each other as they fight over the remains of a dead calf on the outskirts of Wadhvan, some 140km from Ahmedabad in Gujarat state. Angry Indian villagers have killed a dozen dogs, some of them by gunfire, in revenge attacks for the mauling to death of three children by stray canines in northern India, officials said. — AFP

# Angry Indian villagers kill 13 stray dogs

## Indian villagers take revenge; 3 kids killed by dogs

NEW DELHI: Angry Indian villagers killed 13 stray dogs after three children were mauled to death by the animals on the same day, officials said yesterday. Villagers in Khairabad in Uttar Pradesh state took the law into their own hands after being gripped by panic over daily attacks that according to media reports have now left 14 children dead since January. The three children, all aged under 12, were killed by packs of dogs in separate incidents on Tuesday as they collected mangoes in fields outside the village.

A 2001 animal welfare law outlawed the killing of stray dogs. But the Khairabad villagers shot dead three and beat to death at least 10 others. "Our investigations revealed the children were alone at the time of attacks," district police chief Suresh Rao A Kulkarni told AFP, confirming the three latest deaths. He said there had been several previous deaths since January but did not give a figure. The officer said a team of vets and forest officials had been set up to control the rampaging canines.

Authorities linked the surge in attacks to the closure of a slaughterhouse in the area in November, where most of the dogs previously fed on animal carcasses. India has an estimated 30 million stray dogs, with roughly 17 million dog bites reported each year. Nearly 20,000 people die of rabies in the country each year,

according to World Health Organization figures from 2014. Incidents of angry residents attacking strays are growing across India. Last month two men were arrested in New Delhi after they beat a stray to death because they were annoyed by its barking. A video of the incident was widely shared on social media.

In another development, the World Health Organization said yesterday that India should follow China's example and clean up the air in its cities, which are among the world's worst for outdoor pollution. The WHO's database of more than 4,300 cities showed Indian cities such as New Delhi, Varanasi and Patna were among the most polluted, based on the amount of particulate matter under 2.5 micrograms found in every cubic meter of air.

Chinese cities such as Xingtai and Shijiazhuang and

the Saudi refining hub at Jubail were also highly polluted, but the data for those places was 4-5 years old, and Maria Neira, WHO's head of public health, said China had made big improvements that India should follow.

"There is a big step at the government level (in China) declaring war on air pollution," Neira said. "One of the reasons for that is that the health argument was very strongly presented, and the fact that the citizens were really breathing air that was totally unacceptable."

"We would be very happy if we would see a similar movement now in India which is one of the countries for which we are particularly concerned, although there are good initiatives which can be put in place quickly, still the levels are very high and we would like to see a similar decision and leadership." The WHO says nine out of 10 people on the planet breathe polluted air, and it kills 7 million people each year, almost all

of them in poor countries in Asia and Africa. About a quarter of deaths from heart disease, stroke and lung cancer can be attributed to air pollution, the WHO says.

Globally, outdoor air pollution has remained high and largely unchanged in the past six years, while household air pollution has got worse in many poorer countries, as people continue to cook with solid fuel or kerosene, instead of cleaner fuels such as gas and electricity. "The transition to clean fuels and technology in the home, clean household energy, is too slow. It's been three decades and we still have three billion people primarily relying on (polluting) fuels and technologies, and that's for cooking alone," said WHO technical officer Heather Adair-Rohani.

WHO's global assessment is based on satellite data and modeling overlaid on the database of cities, which is self-selecting because it is based on voluntary reporting, with numbers that have been hugely revised since the previous report. The most polluted city in 2016's report, Zabol in Iran, has had its pollution level cut fourfold in the latest version of the database, and now appears to be cleaner than Australia's capital Canberra. "The data we are presenting today is I think the most accurate you can expect at the moment," Neira said. — Agencies



Through a fog of data, air of Indian cities' looks dirtiest

## Too many cancer drugs? Crowded market gives investors pause

LONDON: In London's world-famous Great Ormond Street children's hospital, Dr. Karin Straathof is excited about a new cell-based medicine that offers hope for toddlers with incurable nerve tissue cancer. Her progress with a handful of children for whom standard care does not work reveals the promise of modern cancer drugs, an increasingly crowded pharmaceutical field from which investors must try to select future winners.

The new therapy using engineered white blood cells has shown anti-tumor activity in the hardest to treat neuroblastoma patients. "The beauty is that it is very specific in targeting the cancer cells, while leaving healthy tissue unharmed," Straathof told Reuters, after presenting her early findings at a science meeting in Chicago in April. "It's an important step forward." Autolus - the small British biotech company developing the chimeric antigen receptor T-cell or CAR-T treatment - is equally excited, and is planning a potential IPO on Nasdaq.

But Autolus is far from alone in pursuing CAR-T therapy. In fact, CAR-T treatment - part of the wider field of cancer immunotherapy - is one of the hottest areas of drug research today, with multiple firms piling in. The biotech dollars are flooding in not only in Europe and the United States but also in China which, with 162 clinical trials, now boasts more CAR-T studies than the United States, according to a Reuters analysis of the latest data.

With over 2,000 drugs in the cancer immunotherapy space, the competitive landscape has never been more crowded as each firm seeks its own proprietary version of often similar drugs. Overall, researchers are working on more than

5,200 cancer drugs, up 7.6 percent from a year ago, according to the Pharmaprojects database. The sheer number is stretching the ability of scientists to find enough patients to test them on. Cancer now makes up 34.1 percent of the total drug industry pipeline, up from 26.8 percent in 2010, as companies divert resources into a promising sector where new treatments can often fetch more than \$100,000 a year.

### 'More circumspect'

With the first two CAR-T treatments from Novartis and Gilead Sciences winning US approval last year for rare blood cancers, the promise of such smart medicine is real and life-changing - especially if it can be made to work in solid tumours, as Straathof's work suggests is possible. However, the wholesale rush by pharmaceutical and biotech companies into the cancer area poses a dilemma for investors. A flood of similar products makes it hard for investors to pick those companies that will achieve commercial success. "More competition means you should be more circumspect," said Nooman Haque, head of life sciences at Silicon Valley Bank in London, which provides financing for start-ups and venture capitalists.

"The traditional investment thesis in biotech is to have a differentiated medicine with not many competitors, which helps drive value. Here the problem is that even if there is a big patient benefit, there are questions as to how long your advantage lasts and what your commercial edge will be." Pharmaceutical executives are not blind to the issue, although each hopes to find a winning formula in immunotherapy - the fastest-growing part of the \$100 billion-a-year cancer drug market, with sales expected to top \$25 billion by 2021, according to analyst forecasts compiled by Thomson Reuters.

Roche CEO Severin Schwan, head of the world's top cancer company, says he expects "an enormous drop-out", while Sanofi's outgoing research head Elias Zerhouni warned analysts last week that duplication of effort would shrink the

time available for drugmakers to recoup their R&D investments. "The cycle of innovation has been shortened significantly," agrees Aiman Shalabi, chief medical officer at the non-profit Cancer Research Institute. "There is no doubt we are seeing fast follow-on and many identical agents hitting the same targets." The good news for society is that patients will find out much faster than in the past if new approaches work. But that means doctors can rapidly switch to alternatives, leading to increased product chum and uncertainty over future sales.

Twenty years ago, when Roche launched its state-of-the-art cancer drugs Herceptin and Rituxan, it enjoyed years without rivals. Today, there are multiple versions of new drugs targeting molecular pathways with acronyms such as PD-1/L1, PARP and CDK, as well as CAR-T. "You're either first or you're best or you're nowhere because it has become such a race," said Paul Major, an investment manager at BB Healthcare Trust, who is cautious about investing in cancer immunotherapy.

Lydia Haueter at Pictet Asset Management is also wary, pointing out there are already five PD-1/L1 drugs on the market - from Merck, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Roche, AstraZeneca and Pfizer - and more are coming. "It seems everybody has a PD-1, so we especially don't go for those kind of cancer companies," she said. Some drugmakers like GlaxoSmithKline and Novartis that missed the initial PD-1/L1 wave are trying to make a virtue of looking ahead to the next phase of cancer immunotherapy, particularly drug combinations.

Yet last month's failure of a combination study using a next-generation drug from Incyte with Merck's PD-1 Keytruda shows that adding a new agent is no slam dunk for expanding the reach of immune-boosting medicine. At Great Ormond Street, Straathof is less concerned about doubling up on research and more focused on getting effective, affordable cures - and she hopes automated processes will eventually bring down today's sky-high drug prices. "I'm not too worried about duplication." — Reuters

## Netanyahu accuses Palestinian leader of anti-Semitism

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused Mahmoud Abbas of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial yesterday after the Palestinian leader suggested in a speech that historic persecution of European Jews had been caused by their conduct. Jewish groups also condemned Abbas' comments, made in a speech on Monday to the Palestinian National Council, that Jews had suffered historically not because of their religion but because they had been bankers and money lenders.

"It would appear that, once a Holocaust denier, always a Holocaust denier," Netanyahu said on Twitter. "I call upon the international community to condemn the grave anti-Semitism of Abu Mazen (Abbas), which should have long since passed from this world." Abbas said in his speech that Jews living in Europe had suffered massacres "every 10 to 15 years in some country since the 11th century and until the Holocaust". Citing books written by various authors, Abbas argued: "They say hatred against Jews was not because of their religion, it was because of their social profession. So the Jewish issue that had spread against the Jews across Europe was not because of their religion, it was because of usury and banks."

Netanyahu's criticism was echoed by Jewish leaders around the world. "Abbas' speech in Ramallah are the words of a classic anti-Semite," said Marvin Hier and Abraham Cooper of the US-based Jewish human rights

organization the Simon Wiesenthal Center. "Instead of blaming the Jews, he should look in his own backyard to the role played by the Grand Mufti in supporting Adolf Hitler's Final Solution," they added. They were referring to Muslim Grand Mufti Haj Amin Husseini, a World War Two ally of Adolf Hitler, whose "Final Solution" led to the killing of six million Jews in Europe.

US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman tweeted that Abbas had "reached a new low in attributing the cause of massacres of Jewish people over the years to their 'social behavior'". Abbas' spokesman Nabil Abu Rdainah declined comment on the criticism. Abbas, 82, made his remarks in the West Bank city of Ramallah at a rare meeting of the Palestinian National Council, the de facto parliament of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which Abbas heads. A veteran member of Fatah, the dominant faction of the PLO, Abbas served for decades as a loyal deputy of his predecessor, Yasser Arafat. He assumed the leadership of Fatah, the PLO and the Palestinian Authority after Arafat died in 2004.

Abbas was born in 1935 in Safat, a town in the north of what was then British-ruled Palestine. His family became refugees in 1948, fleeing across the border to Syria as violence intensified between Jews and Arabs, culminating in war between the newly created State of Israel and its Arab neighbors in May 1948. — Reuters

International

# Lebanese city, election feel the effect of Saudi 'cold shoulder'

## Hariri's birthplace hit by Saudi Oger collapse

**SIDON:** The last time Lebanon held a parliamentary election, Youssef Sanjar enjoyed a paid flight home from Saudi Arabia to vote for Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri's party. As an employee of the then thriving Saudi Oger construction company owned by the Hariri family, there was no question whom he would support. He helped with campaign logistics and his mother nagged neighbors in the southern Lebanese city of Sidon to make sure they voted.

displeasure by not voting in Sunday's parliamentary election, the first since 2009. "We felt we were almost like government employees," Sanjar said. "We didn't have a plan B."

Saudi Oger could not be reached by email or telephone for comment. Its demise has also left Hariri and his Future Movement in the lurch financially. The fortune generated by the construction giant helped establish the Hariri family as the dominant Sunni force in

and the company's demise has hurt the Mediterranean city. The challenge facing Future in Sidon is compounded by a new voting system that means a Hezbollah ally is well placed to win one of the two Sunni seats held by Future since 2009. "I would not be speaking the truth if I said we were not affected. We have, as a society, been affected," Nasser Hammoud, the Future coordinator for southern Lebanon, said in Sidon.

Hammoud estimates the crisis has had a direct impact on between 3,000 to 3,500 people in Sidon—some 800 Saudi Oger workers and their families—though he still believes they will support Future in the election. Hammoud said Rafik al-Hariri, who was born in Sidon, and his sister Bahiya Al-Hariri, a member of parliament in Sidon since 1992, regularly sent unemployed locals to work for Saudi Oger.

Rami Qasem Madi, who runs a Sidon building company, said house purchases by Saudi Oger employees once generated over a third of his business. Lebanon's economy as a whole is ailing but he sees Saudi Oger's collapse as the main cause of his firm's problems. Its workforce has halved since 2016. "It was a big shock," said Madi. "We all thought that the Lebanese who goes to the Gulf collects money in bags." Hariri-run charities have also been hit in Sidon. Two clinics that provided heavily subsidized health care have closed. Hammoud said one would reopen after the vote.

Sanjar left for Saudi Arabia in 2003. His job in logistical support services at Saudi Oger allowed him to top his children in an interna-

Lebanese politics, and was a vehicle of Saudi support for late Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri, who was assassinated in 2005. Though he is likely to remain prime minister, Hariri is expected to lose seats to rivals including some candidates allied to Tehran-backed Hezbollah, another small shift in Saudi Arabia's regional rivalry with Iran.

One of Hariri's losses could be in Sidon. For decades, Saudi Oger recruited heavily there



### Hariri party likely to lose seats under new election law

Since then, Saudi Oger has collapsed because of Saudi state spending cuts, waste, mismanagement and corruption, and Sanjar has fallen on hard times. He says he will never vote for a Hariri again. The loss of faith mirrors the break in the once-tight relationship between Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, much of it channeled through the Hariri family. With Riyadh focused more on Yemen, where it is involved in a proxy war against Iran, Tehran has cemented its influence over Lebanon through unfettered backing for the heavily armed Shi'ite group Hezbollah.

The change is tipping the balance of power in Lebanese politics, and Sanjar and his family reflect that shift. Saudi Oger stopped paying his salary in 2015, he said, and he returned to Sidon the following year. He struggles to get by and he plans—along with several dozen members of his extended family—to show his



**BEIRUT:** A giant electoral billboard showing parliamentary elections candidates, hangs on the wall of a building in Beirut yesterday. As its first parliamentary vote in nearly a decade nears, Lebanon has been swept into campaign fever: posters on every corner, televised debates, and neighbors bickering over new electoral procedures. — AFP

tional school, support his family in Lebanon and buy a house in Sidon. When he stopped being paid, Sanjar found informal work in Saudi Arabia, sold his laptop, moved his children to a cheaper school, then sold his furniture. One of his sisters had to pay his airfare

when he eventually flew home. He could not keep up payments on his mortgage and his home in Sidon was reposessed. Sanjar says he is owed between \$50,000 and \$60,000 in unpaid salary and compensation. His goal is to emigrate to Europe. —Reuters

## In Mosul's ruins, Iraq election candidates vow bright future

**MOSUL:** Election posters plastered on the bullet-riddled wall of a girls' school in the Old City of Iraq's Mosul pledge a better future for those casting their ballot at a nationwide vote. But the scenes of devastation that surround them almost 10 months after the Islamic State group (IS) was forced from the country's second city belie the hopeful claims.

"Iraq is moving forward," reads an advert for candidate Laith Ahmad Hassan, standing for Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi's Victory Alliance at the May 12 parliamentary poll. "We will continue the process of reconstruction and offer the benefits to the people," says a poster for contender Fares Sheikh Sadik from a Kurdish party. The scars left from the months of grueling fighting it took to oust IS from Mosul—the Iraqi capital of their so-called "caliphate"—are still visible all over the city. Streets lie in ruins, decomposing bodies rot beneath rubble and unexploded ordnance poses a constant threat.

Despite this backdrop of devastation, candidates are trying their hardest to drum up support. They have staged sporting and cultural events, handed out free cake to passersby and hired convoys of cars to cruise around the city blasting out music. The prize is an attractive one and 938 hopefuls are vying for power in Nineveh province, where some 80 percent of the 2.3 million registered voters live in Mosul. Thirty-four seats, including three for minority groups, are up for grabs in this melting pot region that has seen ethnic and religious differences often fuel conflict.

### 'National duty'

While those on the campaign trail are doing their best to sell themselves and their positive vision of Iraq, the people they are trying to convince seem split about the vote. Mechanic Abu Fayed, 41, has been waiting for hours to receive his voter registration card. "After the liberation of Mosul it is a national duty to vote to change our lives and not just take advantage of the day off as during previous elections to have a holiday," he tells AFP, his hands and trousers stained with oil. "We must... elect people who will genuinely represent us and obtain compensation for the material and moral damage we suffered." After the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, Mosul—a majority Sunni Muslim city with Kurdish and Christian minori-



**MOSUL:** An election campaign poster is seen near a destroyed building in the former embattled city of Mosul ahead of the upcoming Iraqi parliamentary elections. —AFP

ties—became a stronghold for Al-Qaeda and supporters of deposed dictator Saddam Hussein. At the last elections in 2014 — just before IS seized control—only 50 percent of voters in the city cast their ballots, with many put off by threats made by jihadists. This time around unemployed Ammar Raad says he will skip the elections again. "I came to collect my voter card so that others can't use it illegally, but I am going to destroy it," he says, standing in front of his wrecked house. "I turned down 75,000 dinars (\$60, 50 euros) that one candidate offered me to vote for him. No one inspires my confidence." This lack of trust in the politicians is palpable, as many consider that they simply fled when IS swept into Mosul in June 2014 and abandoned residents to their fate.

### 'New alliances'

"I am going to vote, but to kick out the corrupt and the

old faces who have done nothing," says Abu Ahmad, a 55-year-old retiree. As a sign of the upheavals in the province since the last vote, this time round some 75 percent of candidates are newcomers and the traditional Sunni parties have changed their names to avoid past associations.

"There is the risk that there could be a political earthquake that could shake up the province," says political analyst Hamed Ali. "New alliances supported by the security forces on the ground will create a new reality." The victory over IS—which Abadi declared across Iraq in December—was achieved with the help of paramilitary groups fighting alongside the armed forces as part of the Hashed al-Shaabi Popular Mobilisation Units. The groups—who followed a call from top Shiite cleric Ayatollah Ali Sistani to battle IS—are still entrenched around the region and retain major clout. —AFP

## Dissent a perilous path in Mozambique

**MAPUTO:** Abductions, beatings, surveillance, threats and even fatal shootings—critics of the government in Mozambique say that voicing dissent is increasingly dangerous. The latest victim is media commentator Ericino de Salema, who in March was bundled by gunmen into a vehicle outside the offices of the Mozambican Union of Journalists in Maputo. Two hours later, he was dumped on the outskirts of the city with a broken arm, fractured legs and severe bruising. Salema, who had received threatening phone calls, is an analyst on "Pontos da Vista" (Points of View), a leading show aired by the private STV channel, on which he often criticises government policies.

His assault came less than two years after another commentator on the program, Jose Jaime Macuane, was abducted, shot four times in the legs and also dumped outside Maputo. "Is it coincidence that these two people are victims of brutal violence and abandoned in the same area, without anything stolen from them?"

Jeremias Langa, the program's moderator said. "The most visible cause is their public opinions." Salema is still recovering in hospital abroad and unable to discuss his ordeal, but Macuane spoke out against his attackers. "I was the victim of my words," Macuane, a politics professor at Eduardo Mondlane University, said.

"My kidnappers said that 'We have orders to make you lame'. Of course, life cannot be the same for me, but I continue to go about my life in public." The police investigation of Macuane's attack soon ground to a halt—as in several other similar cases. "There was no progress. Investigators recently asked me for my medical report and nothing else was done," he said. Other cases include the fatal shooting of French-Mozambican lawyer Gilles Cistac, a law professor at the same university. He was gunned down in 2015 as he caught a taxi outside a cafe in the centre of Maputo. Cistac was a vocal critic of the government and had recently spoken on STV in favour of political decentralisation-attracting harsh criticism from government supporters.

Paulo Machava, editor of an independent news website, was also shot dead in 2015 while he was jogging along a busy street in the capital. Activists have demanded that police halt the attacks and investigate and arrest the perpetrators. President Filipe Nyusi recently made a rare comment addressing the issue. "I do not want to say that Mozambique is a country where human rights are fully



**MAPUTO:** A protester holds a placard reading 'I am Gilles Cistac' during a march through the streets of Maputo to protest against the killing of French-Mozambican constitutional law expert Gilles Cistac. —FP

observed," he admitted during a speech in London last month. "(But) we have many radios, many televisions, many private newspapers that write and do everything."

### Press freedom

For the opposition Renamo party, his words disguise what it alleges are murky links between the assaults and Nyusi's Frelimo party, which has ruled since 1975. "There are political motivations," Jose

Lopes, a Renamo lawmaker, told AFP. "There can be no freedom when people are abducted, beaten and killed for expressing their thoughts." Mozambique had one-party rule in the first 15 years of independence between 1975 and 1990. Private newspapers were not allowed until after the new 1990 constitution was adopted. Edmundo Galiza Matos, a Frelimo MP, told AFP that Mozambique "has one of the best laws on the press." —AFP

## Land shortages drive conflict over Kenya's wetlands

**CHUKA:** Phyllis Mugeni was watering her greens when she spotted a dozen armed men advancing from the lowlands to attack farmers working on the banks of the River Naka in the foothills of Mount Kenya. Mugeni, a member of the Chuka community, living some 200 km northeast of the capital, Nairobi, saw that the men were Tharaka herders, who rely on the river to water their goats and cattle — and ran. "They came early in the morning, armed with bows and arrows," said the 44-year-old mother of three. "They were shouting war cries, saying that people from the upper region were killing their families and livestock because there was no water in the river."

At least 10 people were injured during the August attack, said Ngai Mutuoboro, chairman of Atiriri Bururi ma Chuka, a conservation group that lobbies for Chuka land rights. Land and water-related conflicts are flaring up across Kenya, amid drought, population growth and high unemployment. Climate change is worsening tensions, as erratic rains push farmers and herders deeper into poverty. Clashes over land are common across east Africa's biggest economy, from Sengwer and Ogik hunter gatherers fighting to return to their ancestral forests to coastal squatters trying to hold on to land that has been sold to developers. Gun battles between herders in Kenya's arid north over access to grazing and water is linked to communal ownership, said Kamau Nguni, head of the Nairobi-based National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders, which supports land rights activists.

### Borrowed space

Millions of Kenyans are landless. Many were displaced during the colonial era. Others lost their land due to ethnic clashes, corruption or because their parents did not write a will, said National Land Commission chairman Muhammad Swazuri. One of the underlying problems is that most people do not have title deeds to their land, while some plots are registered to multiple owners due to corruption in the lands ministry.

"The government is working with communities and legal experts to ensure that more Kenyans own a title deed as a way of reducing poverty and conflicts," said Swazuri, head of the independent government body set up in 2012. Mugeni's husband died without a title deed, like many men in Kenya, where two-thirds of land is owned by communities without formal documents, usually passed down from father to son. Before Mugeni was widowed in 2014, she lived on a 4-acre plot, which had been in her husband's family for generations, in Kanjau, 7 km east of Chuka in central Kenya.

The couple could not get a title deed because some relatives refused to sign a document agreeing on subdivision, she said. "Some of my husband's brothers wanted a larger share of the land because they were older than him," said Mugeni, adding that others did not want their sisters to receive a share as women traditionally do not inherit land. "His brothers and cousins chased us out of our homes claiming that we were living on borrowed space," she said. She rented a small house in Chuka and set up a market stall where she sells vegetables. "I make my money from here to feed my family, pay school fees and hospital bills," she said as she stooped to water her ankle-high rows of green kale.

Land, climate and population pressures are driving many landless Kenyans like Mugeni to encroach on nearby rivers, wetlands and other natural resources to survive, experts said. "Land tenure and destruction of natural resources is interlinked," said Violet Maturu, a conservationist with Millennium Community Development Initiatives, which works to restore ecosystems in Kenya. "Without land ownership, people will adopt available solutions." Kenya's wetlands — areas like marshes or swamps that are often covered with shallow water — make up between 3 and 6 percent of its land surface, according to the environment ministry. —Reuters

## International

## Iraq's Maliki poses as a Shiite champion in race for top job

## Ex PM faces incumbent Abadi, Shiite militia leader Amiri

**BAGHDAD:** Former Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki fulfilled his life-long goal of wresting power from the country's minority Sunnis after the fall of Saddam Hussein but his drive to entrench Shiite dominance proved his downfall. Blamed for the widespread corruption and divisive policies that contributed to the collapse of the Iraqi military and the rise of Islamic State, Maliki lost the premiership to fellow Dawa Party member Haider Al-Abadi after a 2014 election.

Now, after four years sidelined as one of three largely ceremonial vice-presidents, Maliki is taking on Abadi in a May 12 election in a bid to win a third term as prime minister, and is posing again as Iraq's Shiite champion. Posters of Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir Al-Sadr who was executed by Saddam in 1980 fly at Maliki's rallies, the dominant color of his campaign banners is the green of Islam and he is proposing to do away with the power-sharing formula that has ensured government roles for the dominant non-Shiite groups.

Sentenced to death under Saddam for being part of the outlawed Shiite Islamic Dawa Party, Maliki spent nearly a quarter of century in exile mainly in Syria and Iran, continually agitating for the dictator's downfall. After returning in 2003, Maliki joined Iraq's interim government and became prime minister in 2006, establishing a reputation as a shrewd political operator and the Shiite leader who pulled Iraq back from the brink of civil war.

Maliki's supporters praise him for signing Saddam's death warrant in 2006 and for refusing to allow US forces to stay in Iraq beyond 2011. But during eight years in office, Maliki was also perceived as an inveterate sectarian who alienated the minority Sunnis and Kurds by shutting them out of key security positions and undermining power-sharing. "When he became prime minister, he continued to function as an underground Dawa operative. He put in place shadow Dawa cells in each ministry reporting directly to him, and not the minister," said a non-Shiite who served in Maliki's cabinet.

"It wouldn't be far-fetched to say that he created a parallel government and parallel security services reporting

directly to him," the former minister told Reuters. Responding to accusations Maliki ran a parallel government, his media adviser, Abbas Al-Musawi, said the former prime minister was at times forced to launch initiatives directly to boost the economy when he felt ministers from other groups were delaying or obstructing the work of government. Blamed for letting Islamic State seize a third of Iraq in 2014, Maliki was blocked from winning a third term by Iraq's top Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, opening the door for Abadi to become prime minister.

**'Political majority'**

On the face of it, Maliki's campaign call for a multi-ethnic "political majority" government to make the administration more efficient and cohesive could be seen as a break with his past. Maliki is proposing to replace the system whereby the cabinet must reflect the parliamentary representation of political parties with a multi-ethnic governing majority and a multi-ethnic opposition minority.

But non-Shiite politicians fear the plan could keep the main non-Shiite groups out of government and reduce their influence, in contrast to the more inclusive policies of Abadi. "Shiite religious parties have been controlling the key positions of the state, public administrations and security services since 2003. Having a political majority rule under these conditions will remove all the checks and balances non-Shiite parties have," said Jaber Al-Jaberi, a Sunni MP. Opponents say the proposed system would, in practice, allow a prime minister to choose Kurd or Sunni ministers who are not representatives of the main Kurdish or Sunni parties, as long as they were qualified and agreed on a common program.

"The claims that there is a deep state controlled by the Dawa is a big lie," said Saad Al-Muttalbi, a lawmaker from Maliki's group in parliament. "The previous (Maliki) governments were partnership cabinets and the political forces that took part in them share the credit of success and the blame of failure," he said. Maliki's followers see his removal in 2014 as a conspiracy because he champi-



### Maliki has little support outside Shiite community



**BAGHDAD:** An Iraqi woman and a girl walk past an electoral banner for former Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki that was damaged by a storm the day before, in the capital Baghdad. —AFP

oned Shiite interests in Iraq and the region. "He is a strong leader, he is not afraid of confrontation," said Mohamed Ghabbar, a student in the Shiite holy city of Kerbala, south of the capital Baghdad.

In Syria, Maliki sided with Shiite neighbor Iran and Bashar Al-Assad in the civil war pitting the Syrian president against predominantly Sunni opponents backed by Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. Like many Iraqi Shiite leaders Maliki is closely tied to Iran, where he built relationships during his exile. In his election campaign, Maliki continues to advocate an anti-Saudi line, implicitly criticizing Abadi for rebuilding bridges with Riyadh and other Sunni capitals. "I had told these countries that I won't allow the regime in Syria to fall," he said in an April 24 interview to Al Mayadeen, a Lebanese TV channel close to Assad, who belongs to the Alawite sect which is an off-

shoot of Shiism.

"Saudi Arabia failed (in Syria) and it is trying now to bring Iraq to the Saudi alliance. Iraq can't be part of this alliance," he said, in an apparent reference to a conference in Kuwait in February to raise funds for Abadi to rebuild Iraq. As the leader of the Dawa Party, Maliki will command a solid base of Shiite support in the election, especially from religious Shiites wary of power-sharing. But this time round, the Shiite vote looks set to be split between three frontrunners: Abadi, Maliki and another ally of Iran, militia leader Hadi al-Amiri, whose stature and popularity rose after he commanded the fight against Islamic State. If no clear winner emerges, Maliki will have to call on all his negotiating skills again to secure a governing alliance, or risk being sidelined once more. —Reuters

## News in brief

## Suicide attack kills 11

**TRIPOLI:** A suicide attack on Libya's electoral commission killed at least 11 people in the capital Tripoli yesterday, authorities in the violence-wracked country said, after witnesses reported thick smoke and gunfire. The internationally backed Government of National Accord (GNA) said it was dealing with "the consequences of the cowardly suicide attack" after the health ministry put the toll at 11 dead and two wounded. Eyewitnesses earlier said shots were heard and black smoke could be seen rising from the headquarters of the national election commission. The United Nations mission in Libya condemned the "terrorist attack" and said it extended "its condolences to the families of the victims who lost their lives". —AFP

## Iran denies accusation

**TEHRAN:** Iran yesterday denied that it was involved in a weapons delivery to the Polisario Front movement seeking independence for Western Sahara, after Morocco cut diplomatic ties with Tehran over the allegations. Morocco, which has close relations with Iran's regional rival Saudi Arabia, on Tuesday accused Tehran of using its Lebanese militia ally Hezbollah to deliver weapons to the Polisario Front. Tehran hit back, saying the North African nation had used the allegations as a "pretext" to break off diplomatic ties. —AFP

## Telegram ban 'unjustifiable'

**BEIRUT:** Human Rights Watch yesterday hit back at Iran's "unjustifiable" decision to ban the Telegram messaging app, warning Tehran against stifling access to information. "The Iranian judiciary's blocking of the messaging application Telegram is an unjustifiable restriction on freedom of expression and access to information," the US-based rights organization said in a statement. Human Rights Watch accused Tehran of "stifling access to information to try to make its problems go away" and said such censorship "should never be used to protect leaders from scrutiny". —AFP

## Nigeria bans codeine syrups

**ABUJA:** Nigeria has banned cough syrups containing the painkiller codeine because of concern about misuse and addiction, the government said. Health Minister Isaac Adewole said the ban was introduced because of "the gross abuse codeine usage has been subjected to in the country". The announcement late on Tuesday followed a BBC investigation into the illicit sale of the medicine to young people and the dangers of addiction. But Adewole said in a statement the new measures were the result of recommendations by a working committee set up in January to look into the misuse of prescription drugs. The ban applies to all "sales of codeine containing cough syrup without prescription across the country", he said. —AFP

## Nigeria deadly bombings

**ABUJA:** Nigeria yesterday ordered increased security around markets and places of worship after a twin suicide bomb attack killed scores of people in the country's restive northeast. The emergency services said at least 26 people died in the blasts in the town of Mubi, Adamawa state, on Tuesday but local residents said they buried more than 60 victims. —AFP

## Armenians protest on 'day of disobedience'

**YEREVAN:** Armenian protesters blocked roads in and around the capital yesterday, responding to a call from opposition leader Nikol Pashinyan for a campaign of civil disobedience to force the ruling elite to relinquish its grip on power. Ex-Soviet Armenia is locked in a political crisis after the ruling party, severely weakened after days of protests that forced its nominee for prime minister to quit, dug in its heels and refused to back Pashinyan to replace him. The standoff is being watched closely by Russia, which sees Armenia as a close ally and is wary of it going the same way as Ukraine, where an uprising swept to power new leaders who pulled the country out of Moscow's orbit.

In the capital, Yerevan, all the main streets were blocked by cars, minibuses and garbage bins. The road to the international airport was blocked. A spokesman for the civil aviation authority said one flight had been cancelled. Reuters reporters in Yerevan said shops and offices were open, and some people were still trying to get to work, despite the roadblocks. Protesters marched through the streets, shouting "Niko! Victory!", waving flags and blowing horns. Police tried to persuade protesters to open roads, but did not use force. Local media reported that there were also protests in several other cities in Armenia, a country of three million people that is home to a Russian military base.

Tiny Armenia is strategically valuable for Russia, nestled in mountains between NATO-member Turkey and energy exporter Azerbaijan, with which Armenia has been

## French government under fire after the 'May Day' violence

**PARIS:** France's interior minister promised yesterday to boost security at protests after hooded youths ran amok at a May Day rally in Paris, torching cars and a McDonald's restaurant. Police said 109 people were in custody after the violence, which has sparked criticism that the government was unprepared for the 1,200 black-clad troublemakers who joined the traditional May 1 march for workers' rights.

"The authority of the state, reduced to statements of 'strong condemnation', has been tarnished once again," read a column in the right-leaning Figaro newspaper. Regional daily L'Est Republicain deplored "the sight of these 1,200 thugs dressed in black on the Austerlitz bridge", while the L'Alsace newspaper declared: "Governing means planning ahead." Interior Minister Gerard Collomb pledged to look again at how to police protests given the rise of far-left "black bloc" protesters who turn up with the intention of attacking police or property.

"For the next demonstrations there will be even more security forces, this time with the intention of totally separating protesters from those who have come to smash things up," Collomb told France 2 television. But he defended the way police had handled the violence, saying little could be done to stop trouble-makers from infiltrating the crowds. "We can only detain a certain number of people who turn up like you or I in civilian clothing and then suddenly are dressed in black bloc outfits in the middle of the crowd," he said. "We cannot keep up, even with 21 police units mobilized against



**YEREVAN:** Women demonstrate with strollers in Yerevan yesterday, as popular anger exploded over the ruling party's rejection of opposition leader's premiership bid. —AFP

in a state of conflict since both emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union. Pashinyan, in an interview with Reuters at a protest in Yerevan where he was surrounded by cheering supporters, said he would keep the pressure on the ruling party. "My only power is my people. We are not going to give up," said Pashinyan, dressed in his trademark camouflage T-shirt and cap. "We will continue our strike and disobedience."

Armenia's president, Armen Sarkissian, called for talks

this week to try to find a way out of the crisis. The presidency is largely ceremonial, with most authority resting with the prime minister, under a new system that opponents say was devised to let veteran leader Serzh Sargsyan keep his grip on power after his second presidential term expired last month. "I deeply regret that the political crisis continues despite the fact that everyone is talking about how dangerous it is for the future of the country," Sarkissian said in a statement. —Reuters

movements which all of a sudden appear on a scale we've never seen before."

**'Day of the hooligans'**

Radical leftist groups had issued a call on social media both in French and English for people to take part in a "revolutionary May 1" on the 50th anniversary of the 1968 student and worker protests which nearly brought down the government of the day. President Emmanuel Macron, on a visit to Sydney, deplored the clashes in the French capital, one of several cities around the world where May Day protests turned violent. "May 1 is Workers' Day, not the day of the hooligans," he told a press conference. "Shouting 'Rise up, Paris' and 'Everyone hates the police', anti-capitalist protesters in black jackets and face masks had tried to hold up the Paris march. They lobbed projectiles at security forces along the route, who responded with volleys of tear gas and water cannon."

Youths ransacked and then set fire to a McDonald's restaurant near the Austerlitz train station, east of the city centre, and torched vehicles at a car dealership, leaving smoke billowing into the air. Leftist firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon, leader of the France Unbowed party, was heavily critical of their methods. "Smashing the window of a McDonald's is not a revolutionary act," he said, accusing them of hijacking May Day and "playing into the hands of our adversaries". The leader of the Socialist Party, Olivier Faure, pointed a finger of blame at Macron's government.

By pursuing "all-out victory" over trade unions in negotiations on public-sector reforms it was "feeding radical behavior", he said. Police said 31 shops and businesses had been damaged, while six cars were burned and another 10 smashed up. On Tuesday, nearly 300 people had been detained. Four people were injured, including a riot police officer hurt when a stone was thrown at his back. "We are sick of this capitalist system that destroys everything, of brutal police repression of those who oppose them," one masked protester, identifying



**PARIS:** A protester throws a stone towards unseen police officials as teargas clouds rise during a demonstration on the sidelines of a march for the annual May Day workers' rally in Paris. —AFP

himself as a 19-year-old student said. The violence marred the larger peaceful demonstration by union activists and others - 20,000 according to the police, 55,000 according to the CGT union demonstrating against Macron's public-sector reforms.

The business-friendly centrist has implemented controversial labor reforms designed to make it easier to hire and fire in France, and pledged to cut 120,000 public-sector jobs. Some students object to his bid to make university access more competitive, while rail workers have unleashed three months of rolling strikes over his planned shake-up of state operator SNCF. While the French support those reforms, a new Ipsos/Sopra Steria survey published yesterday showed that nearly two-thirds of voters - 64 percent - were disappointed with Macron's overall performance a year after his election. His fiscal policies, seen as weighted in favor of business and the rich, were the greatest source of dissatisfaction, the poll showed. —AFP



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baron roils US  
Senate race,  
alarming Reps

West Virginians came embarrassingly close to picking a prison inmate over president Barack Obama in the 2012 Democratic primary. Six years on, will the state's Republican voters make an ex-con Trumpist their party's US Senate nominee? The provocative dark horse in next week's Republican primary in West Virginia - the heart of Donald Trump country - is a coal baron who spent a year in prison after an explosion at his company's mine killed 29 people.

Don Blankenship's surprisingly strong traction has establishment Republicans terrified that a tarnished conservative could trigger another political debacle as they struggle to maintain control of Congress. With November's mid-term elections now six months away, and President Trump's poor approval ratings an anchor around the necks of many Republican lawmakers, party grandees are closely watching what transpires in West Virginia.

The impoverished Appalachian state has veered Republican over the last decade. But having an ex-con on probation as the party's nominee could make it harder to oust incumbent Democrat Joe Manchin, and paint the party as unable to control its rebellious wing at a time when political discipline is crucial.

And yet there Blankenship was Tuesday night, one week before the primary, on stage debating two other main candidates: state Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, deemed by some as a carpetbagger from New Jersey; and US congressman Evan Jenkins, a onetime Democrat who, along with much of West Virginia, turned Republican. "I'm up here with two guys that's never created a job," Blankenship, 68, told the audience in his soft drawl, as he promoted his former role as chief executive of Massey Energy.

He also dismissed charges he was responsible for the Upper Big Branch Mine disaster of 2010, instead accusing the federal government of taking action that led to the explosion and then creating a "fake prosecution" that convicted him of skirting safety standards. "They sent me to prison for a misdemeanor," he said. Blankenship has expressed admiration for Trump's ability to confound expectations and win the White House. The latest GOP underdog and political rebel made clear he will take no orders from political heavyweights in Washington. "I'm not going to DC to get along," he said. "You can't drain the swamp being like the swamp."

## 'Cocaine Mitch'

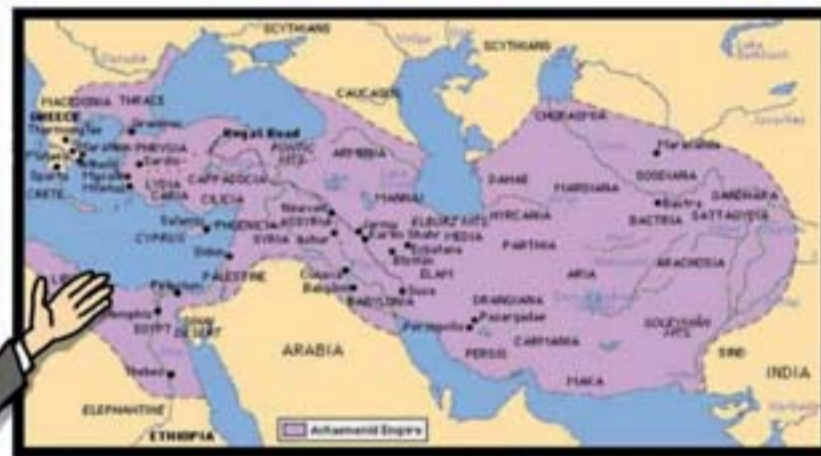
Republicans have been here before. Senate candidate Roy Moore lost to a Democrat in last December's special election in conservative Alabama amid accusations by women that Moore assaulted, molested or pursued them when they were teenagers. And Republicans missed two pick-up opportunities in 2012 and 2010 when tarnished Senate candidates deeply embarrassed the party. Stung by such failures, a political group allied with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has pumped at least \$1.3 million into anti-Blankenship ads, including branding the fellow Republican a "convicted criminal" whose company was "contaminating water supplies".

Blankenship countered, using his personal fortune to launch ads blasting his Republican rivals as insufficiently conservative, and brazenly attacking the party's leaders. "One of my goals as US senator will be to ditch 'Cocaine Mitch,'" Blankenship said in an ad on Facebook, explaining later that he was referring to McConnell's father-in-law's Chinese company, whose ship was allegedly used to smuggle \$7 million of drugs from Colombia to Europe.

McConnell's wife, Elaine Chao, is US Secretary of Transportation. A recent poll shows Blankenship, who backs Trump's positions on illegal immigration, trailing the other two top candidates, but a quarter of respondents remained undecided. "The concern of the Republican National Committee about a Blankenship nomination appears real," Robert Rupp, political science professor of West Virginia Wesleyan College, told AFP, noting that party intervention may solidify Blankenship's claim as the outsider taking on Washington. Given that ultimate outsider Keith Judd got 41 percent of the vote against Obama in West Virginia's 2012 Democratic primary despite sitting in prison, "no possibility is beyond expectation," Rupp said. —AFP

## OLD NEWS FROM NETANYAHU

ISRAEL HAS VERY NEW INTELLIGENCE THAT THE PERSIAN ACHAEMENID EMPIRE UNDER CYRUS THE GREAT IS TRYING TO EXPAND AND ASSIMILATE THE NEIGHBORING LYDIAN AND NEO-BABYLONIAN EMPIRES...



## Gulf states scrambling for Somalia

A battle for access to seaports is underway in one of the world's unlikeliest places: Somalia, now caught up in a regional struggle between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates on one side, with Qatar backed by Turkey on the other. At stake: Not just the busy waters off the Somali coast but the future stability of the country itself. Somalia has been at war for decades and until the last few years it has struggled to attract foreign investment. But rivalries in the nearby Arabian peninsula are resulting in serious inflows into Somalia.

A year ago, a company owned by the United Arab Emirates government signed a \$336 million contract to expand the port of Bosaso, north of Mogadishu in the semi-autonomous Somali region of Puntland. Less than a year before that, another UAE-owned firm took control of the Berbera port in the breakaway northern region of Somaliland and pledged up to \$440 million to develop it. In March, Ethiopia took a stake in the port for an undisclosed sum.

At the same time, Turkey, an ally of UAE rival Qatar, is ramping up a multi-billion dollar investment push in Somalia. A Turkish company has run the Mogadishu port since 2014, while other Turkish firms have built roads, schools, and hospitals. The rivalries have intensified since June, when the most powerful Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia and including the UAE, cut diplomatic ties with Qatar, accusing it of supporting Iran and Islamist militants.

That Middle Eastern feud is driving the desire to control the Horn of Africa and its waters, according to diplomats, businessmen, scholars and Somali officials. Somalia is close to vital oil routes and its ports could also serve landlocked Ethiopia, which has a population of 100 million. Gulf nations have had trade and religious ties with Somalia for centuries, but those relationships are now up in the air as new rivalries emerge. "Somalia has been caught in the middle of this effort to try to expand influence, commercial and military, along the coast," said Rob Malley, president of the International Crisis Group, a think-tank.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE increasingly view the Somali

coastline - and Djibouti and Eritrea to the north - as their "western security flank", according to a senior western diplomat in the Horn of Africa region. Qatar and Turkey, whose investments are almost all in Mogadishu, are focused on supporting President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed. He and his chief of staff are widely viewed in Somalia and by western diplomats as loyal to Doha after receiving funds for their 2017 election campaign.

A Qatari official told Reuters Doha had provided \$385 million in infrastructure, education and humanitarian assistance to the central Somali government. The official said

Rivalry in  
region drives  
new interest

making deals directly with regional governments in Somalia, as the UAE has done, undermined the central government. Somali finance minister Abdurahman Duale Beileh agreed. "The Gulf region has a lot of money and if they want to invest in Somalia we welcome them with open arms," he told Reuters. "But it's a question of going through the right doors."

The federal government in Mogadishu has long been at odds with the semi-autonomous regions of Puntland and Somaliland. The latter operates virtually as an independent state and has for years sought to secede from Somalia, but has not won international recognition.

## Detrimental effect

Less than a decade ago there was virtually no commercial interest in Somalia. That began to change in 2011 when Al Qaeda-backed Al-Shabaab militants retreated from Mogadishu. Months later, Turkey launched famine relief operations, opening the door for projects that now make it Somalia's biggest foreign investor.

The government hopes new investment, especially in infrastructure, can help the country rebuild. Better tax collection is boosting government revenues, but this only covers public sector salaries. Huge amounts of capital are needed for roads, schools and other basics. Middle Eastern companies and charities could provide some of it. However, the money could also destabilize the country further by deepening tensions between the central government, aligned with Turkey and Qatar, and Puntland and Somaliland, which both receive money from the UAE.

"These investments are having a detrimental effect on our political stability and worsening the relationship between our federal government and the regions," said former national security adviser Hussein Sheikh-Ali. "This could cause a constitutional crisis that only Al Shabaab will benefit from." The Gulf crisis has already deepened rifts in Somalia. The central government has stayed neutral, to the annoyance of the UAE and Saudi Arabia, which Puntland and Somaliland have backed against Qatar. "Getting out of this mess is very difficult," Sheikh-Ali said. "Without unity we cannot."

The Somali presidency and the UAE government did not immediately respond to requests for comments. Western nations fear the Gulf rivalries playing out in Somalia could sideline their multi-billion dollar, UN-led efforts to build a functional Somali army to fight Shabaab before the withdrawal of African Union peacekeepers in 2020. Political crises between Mogadishu and the regional authorities are undermining government efforts to strengthen financial systems and embark on other core tasks of a state, diplomats say. —Reuters

Pedal power:  
Rise of Germany  
cargo bikes

Whether they're hauling parcels or children, cargo bikes are becoming a familiar sight in German cities as the nippy, clean alternative to cars and delivery vans - and shaking up urban transport in the process. A desire to go green has been key to the rise of cargo bikes in a country where dozens of smog-choked cities are considering diesel driving bans to combat air pollution. "The diesel scandal is a major incentive," said Arne Behrens, one of the top promoters of cargo bikes in Germany, a mode of transport as old as the bicycle itself, which refers to a two- or three-wheeled bike with a fixed load carrier, usually at the front.

Financial incentives, more choice in models and the promise of zipping past rush-hour traffic in the bike lane have added to the appeal. "In the '90s, we were happy to sell one a year," said Gaya Schuetze of Berlin's Mehrlinghof bicycle shop, one of the capital's leading cargo bike centers. "Then we noticed more and more interest, first from families and then companies."

Commonplace in northern Europe until the mid-20th century, freight bikes were used to deliver everyday essentials such as milk, bread and newspapers. But these heavy, unwieldy bikes quickly fell out of favor and into oblivion as motorized vehicles gained ground. The cargo bike's revival began some two decades ago in cycling-mad Denmark and the Netherlands, blessed with flat landscapes and comfortable bike lanes, before reaching Germany. Today Germany is Europe's largest market for cargo bikes in terms of volume - with industry data showing

sales for electrically assisted cargo bikes alone surged to 21,000 in 2017, 42 percent over the previous year.

## No sweat

Over the years, cargo bikes have evolved from bulky two-wheelers that required serious leg muscle. Modern upgrades offer lighter frames and more spacious carriers, while e-cargo bikes have allowed the less physically active or those living in hilly areas to also jump in the saddle. Cargo bikes "now reach a wider audience, people who don't want to arrive at work sweaty or aren't especially sporty," said Sophia Becker, a researcher at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) in Potsdam near Berlin.

According to the European CycleLogistics project, a staggering 174 models of cargo bikes are now available, while some 50 brands vied for attention at Berlin's International Cargo Bike Festival in April. Industry observers say the cargo bike craze has yet to run its course because "they can handle situations where a car previously seemed indispensable", says Becker. "In an average European city, half of all motorized trips related to goods transport could be shifted to bicycle or cargo bikes," Karl Reiter of the CycleLogistics project calculated in a 2014 study, based on journeys of a maximum of seven kilometers with loads of less than 200 kilos.

## Florists, chimneysweeps

But the "workhorse of the 21st century", as the Frankfurter Rundschau newspaper dubbed it, has yet to win over the masses. Just one percent of Germans own a cargo bike, a study released by the transport ministry in March found - although seven percent said they considered buying one. Becker believes this will change "in the next few years". "First people need to be able to try it out" without spending €1,300 to €5,000 (\$1,500-\$6,000) depending on the model, she said.

Keen to promote the climate-friendly cargo bikes, several initiatives have emerged to



This file photo taken on April 15, 2018 shows people inspecting cargo bikes during a bicycle fair in Berlin. —AFP

lend them to companies and individuals for free trials. Last year, German firm Velogut began loaning them out to 150 companies in Berlin. Among the sign-ups have been photographers, coffee and pastry vendors, florists, chimneysweeps, beekeepers, Christmas tree deliverers and even a travelling anaesthetist. The federal government has also got in on the act by introducing a rebate of up to €2,500 for the purchase of an e-cargo bike with a load of more than 150 kilos, while Berlin authorities offer subsidies of €500 to €1,000.

## 'Protect us'

But experts say the biggest roadblock to cargo bikes going mainstream is the lack of adapted infrastructure: Safe cycle lanes, secure parking and easy-to-find repair shops. "If they want clean air, they have to protect us," said Antje Merschel, co-initiator of a

recent Berlin referendum on cycling policies. "We're not going to risk our lives on a bike." Online retailer Amazon has started using cargo bikes for deliveries, while shipping giant UPS has been running battery-powered freight bikes in German cities since 2012.

But the big players in delivery are still waiting for bike manufacturers to catch up and mass-produce reliable low-maintenance models, which are so far mostly made by small, independent companies. There is also the complication of needing "micro-hubs" in often high-rent urban areas from where couriers can collect trucked-in goods for the final kilometres to the client's front door. "For families, the bikes are here and they're reliable," said urban planner Francisco Luciano of the French cargo bike manufacturer Douze Cycles. "When it comes to cycle logistics, we're still learning." —AFP



A wooden jetty is surrounded by melting sea ice in the UNESCO-protected islands of Merenkurkku (Kvarken) Archipelago near Vaasa in western Finland at the beginning of spring on April 26, 2018. The landscape, featuring thousands of islands, is largely the result of the last Ice Age. — AFP

## IMF warns Arab states against debt complacency

**DUBAI:** The International Monetary Fund yesterday warned Arab states against complacency over a looming debt crisis, urging continued economic reforms despite a rise in oil prices. Crude prices have rebounded in the region thanks to a deal by producers to trim production, but the IMF said such a change in fortunes should not get in the way of overhauling state spending. "Required reforms include further steps toward full elimination of energy subsidies, and changes to pension and social security systems - including revisions to retirement age and benefits," the IMF said in its Regional Economic Outlook for May.

Jihad Azour, director of the IMF's Middle East and Central Asia department, told AFP higher oil prices should spur change. "We should not be complacent... oil prices are going up. That definitely does not mean that we should not introduce the reforms. On the contrary, the current environment offers the opportunity to accelerate some of these reforms," Azour said. Oil prices have reached around \$75 a barrel from under \$30 a barrel in early 2016. Overall growth in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, which includes all Arab countries and Iran, was forecast by the IMF to reach 3.2 percent this year compared to just 2.2 percent in 2017.

The partial recovery in oil prices will be a boost for the Gulf Cooperation Council states - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates -

which supply almost a fifth of global crude oil. After the GCC saw their economic growth shrink by 0.2 percent last year, impacted by a 0.7 percent contraction by the Saudi economy, their economy is expected to return to growth in 2018. The Council's economy is forecast to grow by 2.2 percent this year and 2.6 percent in 2019, the IMF said.

Following the oil price slump in mid-2014, GCC members undertook fiscal measures and reforms to cut public spending and boost non-oil revenues. Azour said that Saudi Arabia's economic consolidation measures to cut a persistent budget deficit and diversify the economy away from oil remains the correct policy. "The current strategy that is based on reaching a balanced budget by 2023 is the right one," he said.

Despite the improved economic forecast, the IMF estimated cumulative overall fiscal deficits in the region to be \$294 billion in 2018-22. Around \$71 billion of government debt is expected to mature during the same period. "The rapid buildup of debt in many of them (MENA countries) is a cause for concern. Debt has increased by an average of 10 percentage points of GDP each year since 2013, with countries financing large fiscal deficits," the IMF report said.

An impending increase in interest rates, making borrowing more expensive, will complicate the problem, it added. According to the IMF, the economy of oil-importers should grow by 6.2 percent annually to maintain unemployment at the current rate of 10 percent. MENA countries need to create 25 million new jobs over the next five years, Azour said, while warning of the negative consequences of unemployment coupled with rising debt levels. "The average debt in the region for oil-importing countries exceeds 80 percent," of gross domestic product (GDP), he said, stressing such a figure is "beyond what is acceptable". — AFP

## Kuwait continues role as Islamic...

Continued from Page 1

"The Islamic financial industry, which started in Kuwait, has grown to constitute 40 percent of the banking sector in Kuwait. There are now five Islamic banks in Kuwait with consolidated assets of \$96 billion and 600 branches with 12,000 employees," he said.

Hashel pointed out that the most prominent chal-

lenges are fluctuations in commodity prices, which are a fundamental concern to the global economy, highlighting the need for countries to invest in diversifying their economies in order to sustain growth in this economically volatile period, adding that the cost of financing infrastructure projects to support economic diversification efforts in Asia, Middle East and North Africa by 2020 exceeds \$10 trillion.

He revealed that the Islamic financial industry will reach \$7 trillion during the next decade, which means that the Islamic financial industry will triple its size and will contribute \$4 trillion each year globally, equivalent to 4 percent of the world's gross output and will provide 150 million jobs distributed over various economic sectors.

## Filipino envoy returns home...

Continued from Page 1

governments was in the offing. "We're getting near to understanding each other," he said. Cayetano also welcomed statements by Kuwaiti officials that they were ready to cooperate with the Philippines to resolve the misunderstanding and address labor issues facing Filipino workers in the nation. "The positive response we have received from Kuwait now provides us with an excellent opportunity to write a new chapter that should allow us to overcome any and all future challenges between the two countries," Cayetano said.

The Philippines banned the deployment of workers to Kuwait after the body of a Filipino housemaid was discovered in a freezer in a Kuwaiti home in February. In late March, Lebanese officials said a Lebanese national confessed to killing the woman with his Syrian

wife, who remains at large. Authorities say the man faces a possible death sentence.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte said Sunday that the employment ban, which has been in effect since February, will become permanent, but his spokesman later said it could still be lifted if a labor agreement ensuring the protection of Filipino workers is signed. Since becoming president, the populist Duterte has repeatedly accused Kuwait of not properly addressing the abuse of Filipino workers.

More than 260,000 Filipinos work in Kuwait, many of them as housemaids. Kuwait and the Philippines have been negotiating new rules governing Filipino workers there. The Philippines is a major labor exporter, especially to the Middle East. About a tenth of the population works abroad, and the earnings they send home have bolstered the Philippine economy for decades. It's likely both sides want to negotiate an end to the dispute, especially ahead of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which begins this month. Kuwaitis particularly rely on Filipina house helpers during the period as they abstain from water and food during daylight hours. — AP



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## Sports

# Sanchez breaks a scoreless tie as Yankees down host Astros

## Walker homers to push Diamondbacks to their best start

**HOUSTON:** Gary Sanchez broke a scoreless tie with a three-run home run in the ninth inning, and the New York Yankees downed the host Houston Astros 4-0 on Tuesday at Minute Maid Park. Sanchez smashed the first pitch from Astros closer Ken Giles 423 feet to straightaway center field, plating Aaron Judge and Didi Gregorius. Judge opened the ninth with a leadoff single, and Gregorius followed with a double to left-center off Giles (0-1). Yankees starter Jordan Montgomery logged a perfect first inning but departed due to left elbow tightness. Five relievers completed the shutout, with Aroldis Chapman striking out the side in the ninth. The Astros wasted an exceptional effort from starter Justin Verlander, who worked eight shutout innings and matched his career high of 14 strikeouts.

### MARLINS 2, PHILLIES 1 (10 INNINGS)

Yadiel Rivera hit a pinch-hit, walk-off single in the 10th inning as host Miami defeated Philadelphia. Cameron Maybin sparked the rally by lining a one-out triple to left center, beating an outfield shift. Miguel Rojas was intentionally walked to get to Rivera, who smoked a line drive over a drawn-in infield for his first walk-off hit as a Marlins player. Miami's bullpen pitched four scoreless innings, led by Junichi Tazawa (1-1), who earned the win by working out of a bases-loaded jam in the top of the 10th inning.

### DIAMONDBACKS 4, DODGERS 3

Daniel Descalso put Arizona ahead with a two-run triple in the seventh inning, and A.J. Pollock and Christian Walker homered to push the Diamondbacks to their best start in franchise history with a victory over visiting Los Angeles. Deven Marrero and John Ryan Murphy singled off left-hander Adam Liberatore (1-1) to open the seventh before Descalso tripled down the right field line to lift Arizona (21-8) to its seventh victory in eight games against the Dodgers this season. Cody Bellinger hit a two-run homer and Chris Taylor had two hits for the Dodgers, who have lost four in a row and seven of their last eight. Bellinger's homer in the third inning was the last of the Dodgers' four hits.

### RANGERS 8, INDIANS 6 (12 INNINGS)

Joey Gallo and Isiah Kiner-Falefa hit back-to-back homers with one out in the 12th inning as Texas recovered from blowing a six-run lead including four runs in the ninth-for a victory at Cleveland. Gallo hit his ninth homer of the season and Kiner-Falefa hit his second off Nick Goody (0-2), who entered with two outs in the 10th inning. Nomar Mazara and Delino DeShields also homered for the Rangers, who won for the fourth time in six games.

### NATIONALS 12, PIRATES 4

Matt Adams hit two home runs, Bryce Harper smacked a three-run shot and Trea Turner chipped in with a bases-clearing double, powering Washington to a victory over visiting Pittsburgh. Max Scherzer won his fifth consecutive start, taking a shutout into the seventh inning. He wound up allowing two runs in 6 1/3 innings. Wilmer Difo also homered for Washington, which jumped out to a 12-0 lead.

### BRAVES 3, METS 2

Mike Soroka tossed six solid innings to earn the win in his major league debut, as he and four relievers made a three-run first inning by Atlanta stand up in a victory at New York. The Braves have won three straight and five of six. The Mets have lost nine of 15 since a franchise-best 11-1 start. Soroka, who was recalled from Triple-A Gwinnett earlier Tuesday, allowed one run on six hits and no walks while striking out five. The 20-year-old, who is the third-youngest player in the majors, threw a first-pitch strike to 15 of the 23 batters he faced.

### BREWERS 7, REDS 6

Orlando Arcia had three hits, and Travis Shaw and Jesus Aguilar hit back-to-back home runs as Milwaukee held on for a victory at Cincinnati. With the Reds rallying late, Brewers reliever Jeremy Jeffress protected a one-run lead by striking out Joey Votto and getting Scott Schebler on a ground out with runners on first and third in the eighth inning. Jeffress then pitched a perfect ninth inning for his first save of the season. Ryan Braun hit a go-ahead, two-run double in the fifth inning. Brewers starter Chase Anderson (3-2) recovered from a slow start to give up four runs on six hits over 5 1/3 innings.

### ROYALS 7, RED SOX 6 (13 INNINGS)

Jorge Soler slugged a tiebreaking, three-run homer in the top of the 13th inning to give Kansas City a victory at Boston. Soler hit a 1-0 curveball from left-hander Brian Johnson (1-1) just barely over the Green Monster. The blast was Soler's third of the season. Alex Gordon hit a tying homer in the ninth inning and Jon Jay went 4-for-5 with one RBI for the Royals. Mitch Moreland and Eduardo Nunez homered for the Red Sox. Moreland and Andrew Benintendi each had three hits for Boston. — Reuters

### MARINERS 6, A'S 3

Nelson Cruz hit a three-run homer to back a strong start by Felix Hernandez, giving Seattle a victory against visiting Oakland. Cruz's fifth-inning blast to center field snapped a 1-1 tie. Hernandez (4-2) allowed three runs on three hits in six-plus innings, with two of the runs scoring after he exited. He walked four and



**HOUSTON:** Brett Gardner #11 of the New York Yankees strikes out in the fifth inning against the Houston Astros at Minute Maid Park on Tuesday in Houston, Texas. — AFP

struck out seven. Oakland's Jed Lowrie homered for a 1-0 lead, but the Mariners scored the next five runs.

### ANGELS 3, ORIOLES 2

Justin Upton's RBI single with the bases loaded in the bottom of the ninth lifted Los Angeles to a win over visiting Baltimore. Los Angeles ended a four-game losing streak. The Orioles, with their 13th loss in 16 games, ended the night tied with the Kansas City Royals for the worst record in the American League (8-21). Despite blowing a save opportunity by allowing two runs in the top of the ninth, Angels reliever Cam Bedrosian (1-0) got the win. Los Angeles starter Nick Tropeano threw 6 1/3 scoreless innings of one-hit ball.

### PADRES 3, GIANTS 2

Eric Hosmer hit an opposite-field home run off Hunter Strickland with two outs in the ninth inning to break a tie and give San Diego a win in San Francisco. The home run was Hosmer's third of the season and first since April 17. Kirby Yates (1-0) worked a scoreless eighth inning. Padres closer Brad Hand, who gave up three runs in the bottom of the ninth Monday night to take a loss, retired all three hitters he faced Tuesday to pick up his seventh save in nine opportunities.

### ROCKIES 3, CUBS 1

Jon Gray tossed seven strong innings and was backed by home runs from Charlie Blackmon, David Dahl and Nolan Arenado as Colorado won at Chicago. Wade Davis got the last three outs for his 11th save.

Anthony Rizzo homered for the Cubs, who had won five in a row.

### TIGERS 2, RAYS 1

Matthew Boyd pitched six strong innings, Leonys Martin doubled in the go-ahead run, and host Detroit squeaked past Tampa Bay. Boyd (1-2) gave up one run on seven hits while walking just one and striking out seven. A trio of relievers followed, including Shane Greene, who recorded his fifth save. Greene gave up three ninth-inning runs to the Rays in a 3-2 loss on Monday.

### BLUE JAYS 7, TWINS 4 (10 INNINGS)

Toronto scored three runs in the 10th inning, two on wild pitches, to defeat host Minnesota. Kendrys Morales hit two home runs for the Blue Jays, who have won three in a row, including the first two games of the three-games against the Twins. Minnesota has lost 11 of its past 12 games. Joe Mauer and Eddie Rosario homered for the Twins.

### CARDINALS 3, WHITE SOX 2

Yadier Molina drilled a walk-off single to deep left field as St. Louis scored twice in the ninth inning to rally for a win over visiting Chicago. Matt Carpenter led off the ninth inning with a home run for the Cardinals, who snapped a three-game losing streak. Marcell Ozuna doubled and scored the winning run on Molina's drive that bounced off the left field wall. Yoan Moncada finished 2-for-5 with a double and two RBIs for the White Sox, who have dropped three straight. — Reuters

## Dumoulin says Froome case 'not good for cycling'

**JERUSALEM:** Reigning champion Tom Dumoulin questioned Chris Froome's participation at the Giro d'Italia yesterday, ahead of Friday's 'Big Start' in Jerusalem.

Four-time Tour de France winner Froome is competing despite having returned an adverse analytical finding (AAF) during his victory at the Vuelta a Espana in September. Froome had elevated levels of the asthma medication salbutamol in his system and is fighting a case with cycling's world governing body, the UCI to avoid a doping suspension. And Dumoulin, the shock winner of the Giro 12 months ago, said that had he similarly returned an AAF, he would have been forced to stand down due to his Sunweb team's membership of the Movement for Credible Cycling (MPCC). "That's a good one to start with," quipped Dumoulin when asked about Froome during his press conference in Jerusalem.

"It's his decision to be here. I said it before-my team is part of the MPCC-and if I was in the same situation as him, I wouldn't be here. It's his decision and it's not up to me to have an opinion about it."

The MPCC is a group many top-level teams have voluntarily signed up to in order to promote clean cycling. They are required to suspend riders if they return a positive doping test result pending a decision on their guilt or otherwise.

It also requires riders to be stood down for eight days minimum if they request a therapeutic use exemption allowing them to take an otherwise banned substance.

Froome's Team Sky are not MPCC members and thus the rules don't apply to them, which has left the Briton free to compete normally while his lawyers wrangle with the UCI to try to prove his innocence.

### 'NOT GOOD FOR CYCLING'

But the fact that his case has dragged on



**JERUSALEM:** British cyclist Chris Froome of Team Sky arrives for a press conference in Jerusalem yesterday, two days prior to the start of The Giro d'Italia cycling race. The race's "Big Start", beginning on Friday. — AFP

and that no final decision has been taken, is damaging to cycling's credibility, Dumoulin said. "It's definitely not good for cycling. Everyone would like this to not happen, including Chris Froome," he said.

"To be starting with doubts or uncertainty-maybe he's winning this Giro and a few weeks later they decide he's losing this title (if he is hit with a ban). That also may be not nice for him. It's not good for anyone but the situation is like this and I cannot change it."

Dumoulin may not be right there as UCI rules do not specify that any ban resulting from an anti-doping rule violation after an AAF would be backdated. That means Froome would keep his results obtained up to any eventual ban, but that would nonetheless cast a dark cloud over his success and whether it was fairly obtained.

"That's certainly not something that I'm coming into this race even thinking of," said Froome. "I'm not going to entertain that idea.

Coming from the starting point that I've done nothing wrong-there's nothing that says I shouldn't be here racing, in that sense.

"It's not something that I'm going to entertain." Dumoulin is widely expected to be Froome's primary rival over the next three weeks and 21 stages-the first three of which take place in Jerusalem and Israel before the Giro returns to its homeland with three stages in Sicily.

But Dumoulin insisted it would be wrong to put him on the same pedestal as Froome. "We will know in three weeks' time (if he's capable of beating Froome). I can't tell you now, but I feel good," said the 27-year-old Dutchman, who last September beat Froome into third while winning the world time-trial title in Bergen, Norway.

"Froome's palmares (results history) is way bigger than mine: I won the Giro once, he's won the Tour de France four times and the Vuelta once." — AFP

## Malaysian badminton pair banned 20, 15 years for match-fixing

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Two Malaysian badminton players have been hit with career-ending bans of 20 and 15 years respectively after being found guilty of corruption and match-fixing, the sport's governing body said yesterday.

The Badminton World Federation (BWF) said former world junior champion Zulfadli Zulkiffli, 25, was banned for 20 years and fined \$25,000, while Tan Chun Seang, 31, was barred for 15 years and fined \$15,000.

They were found guilty of breaching the BWF code of conduct in relation to "betting, wagering and irregular match results", said a statement from the body.

A BWF ethics panel, which held hearings in February in Singapore into the case, found both players "engaged in corruption offences over a significant period and a significant number of tournaments" dating back to 2013.

Zulfadli committed more violations over a longer period and it was proven he had manipulated the results of four matches, the BWF said. Norza Zakaria, president of the Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM), said it was a "sad and shocking day for Malaysian badminton, to know a sport so close to our hearts has been tainted by match-fixing".

"BAM has a zero tolerance policy towards match-fixing," he said, adding programmes would be organised for those involved in the sport to counter such activities.

He said the punishment handed down to the pair, who played independently and were not affiliated with BAM, was "reasonable and appropriate considering the offence".

BAM will now present a report on the incident to Malaysian anti-corruption authorities, who will consider whether to take action. Their suspension began from January 12, the date on which both players were provisionally suspended by the BWF.

Tan was in Malaysia's squad for the prestigious Thomas Cup in 2010. He was banned by the BAM from competing in Asian tournaments for two years after quitting the national team in 2011. In 2011 Zulfadli beat current world champion Viktor Axelsen of Denmark to clinch the World Junior Championships.

Badminton has been hit by cheating scandals before. At the 2012 Olympics, eight women's doubles players were disqualified for trying to lose group games to gain an easier quarter-final draw.

And in 2014 the BWF asked police to investigate claims by two Danish players, Hans-Kristian Vittinghus and Kim Astrup, that they were approached by a Malaysian man to throw matches.

Malaysian badminton was previously hit by controversy in 2015, when former world number one Lee Chong Wei received an eight-month ban for doping. The panel which imposed the punishment said he had not intended to cheat. — AFP

## Sports

# Thai 'dwarf giant' Wanheng equals Floyd Mayweather's 50-0 record

## 'I'm happy that I can make the same record as Mayweather'

**NAKHON RATCHASIMA:** Thai boxer Wanheng Menayothin clinched his 50th straight victory yesterday, stopping a Panamanian challenger to hold onto his WBC minimumweight belt and tie the undefeated record of boxing great Floyd Mayweather Jr.

The 32-year-old Thai nicknamed the "dwarf giant" reached the milestone in the fifth round as Leroy Estrada failed to recover from a powerful upper cut. The Panamanian was the busier of the two fighters in the opening rounds, leaving a cut above Wanheng's left eye.

But the veteran Thai was unruffled, knocking down Estrada twice in round three with withering right hands and again in the fourth, before the stoppage in the fifth. Wanheng's quest to equal "Money" Mayweather has stirred intrigue between the unheralded, soft-spoken Thai and the brash, vastly more wealthy American.

"I'm happy that I can make the same record as him (Mayweather)," the champion said ringside after the fight. Asked about his next move, he said he was not yet thinking about a 51st bout. But one more win would bring Wanheng level with Mexican flyweight Ricardo Lopez, who retired with 51 wins, one draw and no losses. The bout was hosted in a parking lot, under an awning in the blistering late afternoon heat of the northeastern city of Nakhon Ratchasima, far from the glitz-and air conditioning-of Mayweather's favoured Las Vegas.

Boxing analysts have taken note of his achievement but point out that Wanheng has dominated undistinguished rivals compared with Mayweather, who took out greats including Manny Pacquiao and Oscar De La Hoya.

Wanheng's rivals have been a mixed bag—one last year had 44 losses, while another in 2014 had 24. In December, he tied Rocky Marciano's 49-0 tally with a win over Japanese contender Tatsuya Fukuhara.

Still, World Boxing Council president Mauricio Sulaiman, who attended Wednesday's bout, applauded the "tremendous fight" and record-equaling feat.

"The world is going to get to know him much better, and great opportunities will open for him," he told AFP. That may bring a boon to Wanheng, who has fought since he was 12 and despite his prowess is significantly less wealthy than Mayweather, who briefly emerged from retirement last year to fight MMA star Conor McGregor for a \$100-million purse.

Given the lack of finances, fighters in Thailand often compete under the label of their gym—Menayothin is Wanheng's Bangkok gym. The Thai boxer's legal name is Chayaphon Moonsri.

But he is better known by the nickname "dwarf giant"—on account of punching power that belies his size—and "Five-Star Grilled Chicken" because of a sponsorship deal with a Thai food company. — AFP



**NAKHON RATCHASIMA:** World Boxing Council President Mauricio Sulaiman (R) wraps the WBC championship belt to undefeated Thai boxer Wanheng Menayothin (C) after defeating Panamanian challenger Leroy Estrada to win his 50th straight victory yesterday in Nakhon Ratchasima. — AFP

## Wanheng's rivals have been a mixed bag

## Ovechkin lifts Capitals over Pittsburgh

**LOS ANGELES:** Alex Ovechkin scored with 1:07 left in the third period Tuesday, giving the visiting Washington Capitals a 4-3 victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins in Game 3 of an Eastern Conference semifinal series. The Capitals grabbed a 2-1 lead in the best-of-seven set. Game 4 will be played Thursday night in Pittsburgh before the series shifts back to Washington for Game 5 on Saturday. Ovechkin came down on a two-on-one rush with Nicklas Backstrom and one-timed a pass off the right post-then batted it out of the air into the goal to break a 3-3 tie.

Ovechkin finished with a goal and an assist while Backstrom had three assists. The Capitals scored twice in the third period to rally for the victory. Sidney Crosby and Jake Guentzel led the Penguins with a goal and an assist apiece. "I mean, if you want to be successful in the playoffs you have got to win on the road, and especially because they won the first game, too," Backstrom said, per The Washington Post. "It's nicer to be up 2-1 than being down 2-1. We're just excited for the next game." Much of the talk after the game was about a hit that Capitals forward Tom Wilson put on Penguins forward Zach Aston-Reese's head, leaving him bloody and prone on the ice.

Pittsburgh coach Mike Sullivan said after the game that Aston-Reese will need surgery for a broken jaw, and that he is being checked for a concussion. Much of the Pens' anger stems from Wilson's hit to the head on defenseman Brian Dumoulin in Game 2, driving him from the game. As was the case with the hit on Dumoulin, no penalty was called Tuesday.

"We lose a guy to a broken jaw that's going to



**PITTSBURGH:** Kris Letang #58 of the Pittsburgh Penguins and Brian Dumoulin #8 of the Pittsburgh Penguins check Tom Wilson #43 of the Washington Capitals while battling for control of the puck during the first period in Game Three of the Eastern Conference Second Round during the 2018 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs. — AFP

require surgery and a concussion because of another high hit to the head," Sullivan told reporters. "At some point, we would hope that the league might do something." Ovechkin called Wilson's play "a great hit. A great, hard hit." Some Penguins players were all the more infuriated that as Aston-Reese was lying on the ice, Wilson was seen laughing on the Capitals' bench.

"I get the physical game. I get the physical play. I've been on the wrong side of it," Penguins defenseman Kris Letang said. "At the end of the day, I respect what kind of game he plays. But you don't laugh at somebody getting hurt. You don't do that." The teams both had scoring chances in the first period but neither side broke through until early in the second period. That was when Washington's John

Carlson ripped a long slap shot past goalie Matt Murray at the 48-second mark.

Guentzel tipped one past Capitals goalie Braden Holtby at 4:33 of the middle period to tie the game. Guentzel extended his postseason scoring streak to seven games. Pittsburgh then took a 2-1 lead when Patric Hornqvist scored a power-play goal at 6:49 of the second period. He scored from in front after an Evgeni Malkin shot bounced over to him. Washington tied it at 11:04 of the second when Chandler Stephenson scored after a quick centering pass from T.J. Oshie. The Penguins then took the lead back when Guentzel made a spectacular move to avoid Dmitry Orlov by the left circle and sent a cross-ice pass that Crosby buried with 3:33 left in that wild second period. — Reuters

## Tiger will use new irons at Wells Fargo

**NORTH CAROLINA:** Tiger Woods will use a new set of irons at this week's Wells Fargo Championship in North Carolina, the 14-times major winner announced on Tuesday. Woods has been trying out the TaylorMade clubs for a while, and has decided the time is right to put them to the test in the heat of competition.

"Phase I of irons development ... is complete. Looking forward to teeing it up this week," he said on Twitter ahead of Thursday's first round in Charlotte. The news comes more than a year after Woods signed with TaylorMade, and after a disappointing performance last month at the U.S. Masters.

Woods struggled with his irons on the way to finishing tied for 32nd. "I felt I hit it well enough off the tee to do some things, but I hit my irons awful for the week," he said after his final round at Augusta National.

Woods, in his seventh start of the year after a successful spinal fusion, will be joined at Quail

Hollow by a strong field that also features Rory McIlroy, Justin Thomas and Masters champion Patrick Reed.

McIlroy and Thomas have fond memories of Quail Hollow. McIlroy recorded his first PGA Tour win there in 2010, while Thomas more recently made his major breakthrough at the PGA Championship. The course set-up this week will be more forgiving than it was when Thomas won last August, with more grass around the greens expected to offer better lies for chip shots.

"It was really tough to chip around the greens (at the PGA) because it was so tight," said defending champion Brian Harman, who won last year's Wells Fargo at a different venue. While Woods will consume most attention, fans with an eye on the future could do worse than watch Joaquin Niemann.

The 19-year-old from Chile finished sixth in his professional debut at the Texas Open two weeks ago. "It gave me a lot of confidence," said Niemann, who reckons his ability with the driver should hold him in good stead this week. "Hitting fairways is one of my best parts of my game. I just need to hit fairways because the course is really long. You don't want to hit five-irons from the rough." — Reuters

## I will work hard to restore my confidence, says Djokovic

**BELGRADE:** Novak Djokovic said yesterday his confidence had been rocked by a string of poor results after a premature return from elbow surgery but the former world number one vowed to work hard to get back to winning ways.

Having exchanged a few shots with a young prospect after an intense training session in searing heat at his own tennis complex in central Belgrade, the 30-year-old Serb conceded that the last 18 months have been testing.

"I have always believed in myself and that's why I was able to make all my childhood dreams come true, but right now my confidence is not at the highest level," he told reporters. "That's not surprising given the lack of results and all I can do is knuckle down to hard work to restore it. A

few good matches and one good tournament and it will come back."

Djokovic's slump began after he won his maiden French Open title in June 2016 to complete a career slam and amass 12 major honours. A string of below-par performances were followed by Djokovic having to retire against Czech Tomas Berdych in last year's Wimbledon quarter-finals with an elbow injury which kept him sidelined until January's Australian Open.

After a last 16 defeat by South Korean upstart Hyeon Chung in Melbourne, Djokovic had another spell on the sidelines following elbow surgery and said he had come back too early because he was hungry to play again.

### EARLY EXITS

Since returning he has suffered early exits in Barcelona, Monte Carlo, Miami and Indian Wells. "That was my decision because I missed playing tennis so much but I was not ready and it backfired," he said.

"After everything I have been through in the past year or so, I have had to lower my expectations but my motivation and my ambitions remain unchanged. "After this year's Australian Open I wasn't sure whether I'd have elbow surgery or not. I

was reluctant but then I realised it was the best long-term solution.

"The recent results have not been what we are used to but coming back is a process and all I can do now is knuckle down to some hard work.

"I have had some similar situations in the past but not one quite as challenging as this, so I have to accept it as part of a learning process." Judging by the ferocity of his shots in training and the vehement exchange of instructions with his coaching staff, Djokovic, currently the world number 12, is determined to break back into the top echelon of the men's game.

Mobbed by primary school children as he posed with them for photos after the claycourt practice session, Djokovic cut a relaxed and confident figure ahead of upcoming tournaments.

He also rubbished suggestions made by several local nutritionists, who were quoted by Belgrade media in recent weeks, that his meat-free diet was hampering his fitness. "I don't want to elaborate because people have been twisting facts in the past two years and all I'll say is that I reckon I know what's best for me as an athlete and a person," he said. "It doesn't affect me what people say, but it does affect those who are close to me." — Reuters



**BELGRADE:** Serbia's player Novak Djokovic signs autographs to fans during a training session in Belgrade, Serbia yesterday. — AFP

## Sports

# Cavaliers stun Raptors in overtime, Curry triumphs in Warriors return

## Warriors took a 2-0 lead in best-of-seven Western Conference series

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James's "worst" was too much for Toronto on Tuesday as the Cleveland superstar and his Cavs teammates rallied to stun the Toronto Raptors 113-112 in overtime in game one of their NBA playoff second-round series. It was a heart-breaker for the Raptors, who led throughout regulation only to see James knot the score at 105-105 with 30.9 seconds left in regulation.

Toronto, the Eastern Conference top seeds for the first time in franchise history, missed their last 11 shots of regulation. Cleveland's Kyle Korver opened overtime with a three-pointer and the Cavs held on for the victory and a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference set.

"It was an all-around team win for us," James said after five Cavs players scored in double figures. "Everybody contributed tonight, and we needed it."

After the high drama in Toronto, all eyes were on Stephen Curry in Oakland, where the two-time NBA Most Valuable Player scored 28 points in his return from a 16-game injury absence to help the reigning champion Golden State Warriors to a 121-116 victory over the New Orleans Pelicans.

The Warriors took a 2-0 lead in their best-of-seven Western Conference series, with Curry looking fit and confident as he came off the bench late in the first quarter. "Everything changed as soon as he walked on the floor," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said of Curry's impact. Curry had not played since suffering a sprained left knee ligament on March 23. But he got

off to a confident start, quickly draining a three-pointer, and the Warriors, who trailed 18-11 when Curry entered the game, were up 58-55 by halftime.

"He was Steph," Kerr said. "He doesn't take long to warm up, that's for sure." Curry connected on eight of 15 shots from the field and five-of-10 from three-point range. He pulled down seven rebounds with two assists and three steals.

Kevin Durant paced the Warriors with 29 points, seven assists and six rebounds and Draymond Green fell one rebound shy of a triple double with 20 points, 12 assists and nine boards. "Big win for us," Curry said after a game that saw 13 lead changes, 11 of them in the first half.

### CAVS PLAY TOUGH

There was no such back-and-forth in Toronto, where the Raptors led until James tied it up in the final minute of regulation. Once Korver put them in front at the start of overtime, they wouldn't relinquish the lead.

Kyle Lowry converted a three-point play to pull Toronto within 113-112 with 57 seconds remaining but Toronto's Fred VanVleet missed a potential game-winner. James, who said he was "burnt" after the Cavs clinched a seven-game first-round win over Indiana on Sunday, made just 12 of 30 shots from the floor but still recorded the 21st playoff triple-double of his career with 26 points, 13 assists and 11 rebounds.

"I definitely wasn't as efficient as I like to be," James said. "I missed a lot of open looks. It was probably one of my worst games of the season. "But at the



TORONTO: LeBron James #23 of the Cleveland Cavaliers dribbles the ball as Jonas Valanciunas #17 of the Toronto Raptors defends in the second half of Game One of the Eastern Conference Semifinals during the 2018 NBA Playoffs at Air Canada Centre on Tuesday in Toronto, Canada.—AFP

end of the day the only thing that matters is that my team-mates stepped up and got the win when I wasn't at my best."

JR Smith scored 20 points and Korver added 19. Tristan Thompson came off the bench to add 14 points

and 12 rebounds for the Cavs and Jordan Clarkson chipped in 16 points. "We didn't play great, but we played tough," said Cleveland coach Tyronn Lue, whose Cavs trailed by as many as 14 in the first half. "We stayed the course." —AFP

## NZ mull first Pakistan tour in 15 years

WELLINGTON: New Zealand is weighing up playing cricket in Pakistan for the first time in 15 years after an invitation from the south Asian nation's cricket board. New Zealand have not played in Pakistan since 2003 due to security concerns but had been asked to play Twenty20 matches in the country later this year, governing body New Zealand Cricket said.

"NZC has received a request from the PCB chairman for New Zealand to play in Pakistan," an NZC spokesman said. "At the moment NZC is doing due diligence on the request and consulting with security providers, the government, and the players."

"We will respond to the PCB when this process has been completed." The Black Caps are scheduled to play tests and one-day internationals against Pakistan in November at the United Arab Emirates, the country's designated 'home' base.

No dates have been issued for those matches but the spokesman said they would be played in the UAE. Pakistan has remained largely starved of international cricket since the 2009 attacks on a bus carrying Sri Lanka's team in Lahore, which wounded six players and a British coach, and killed eight Pakistanis.

But Sri Lanka returned to the country for a Twenty20 match in Lahore in October and West Indies played a recent T20 series in Karachi. New Zealand abandoned their last test tour of Pakistan in 2002 after a bomb exploded outside their Karachi hotel but returned to play an ODI series in 2003.

Pakistan media, citing an unnamed source in the national cricket board, reported that Australia had also been approached to play in the country.

Australia are scheduled to play tests and limited overs matches against Pakistan at the UAE later in the year, likely starting in September or October. Cricket Australia declined to confirm the approach but said their next series against Pakistan would remain in the Middle East. "The safety and security of Australian players is our number one priority," a CA spokesman said. "From an Australia team perspective, we are not contemplating moving our current bilateral-tour arrangements from taking on Pakistan in the Middle East, when they host the next series." —Reuters

## Karunaratne in doubt for W Indies tour

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka opener Dimuth Karunaratne has fractured a finger in practice, officials said yesterday, and is in doubt for a West Indies tour starting this month.

Sri Lanka's cricket board confirmed Karunaratne sustained the injury while batting in the nets on Tuesday to prepare for a limited-overs tournament. It did not comment on whether he would join the three-Test series in the West Indies, but sources said the 30-year-old opener was unlikely to be ready. The board said Karunaratne would be examined by a specialist "to determine the injury management and return to play timeframe". The left-hand opener has played in 49 Tests and scored 3,186 runs. Sri Lanka have adopted advanced software used by football club Barcelona to manage their injury-prone cricketers.

The players wear devices during training and tournaments to monitor fitness and performance. Under new coach Chandika Hathurusingha, Sri Lanka have been rebuilding after a year of humiliating defeats. The national side bounced back in a tour of Bangladesh in January, thrashing the hosts in all three formats of the game. —AFP

## England's Buttler sees nothing wrong in specializing

NEW DELHI: England stumper-batsman Jos Buttler has said there is nothing wrong with cricketers wanting to specialize in a particular format and believes the lucrative Indian Premier League (IPL) has changed the "climate" of the sport considerably.

England's Adil Rashid and Alex Hales have signed white ball-only contracts with their respective counties, which means they are not available for selection for the test side, while Colin Munro did the same in New Zealand in March.

Test, or red-ball, cricket's slide in priority for many players is a concern for traditionalists and a recent report by the Federation of International Cricketers Association (FICA) said young players were putting their Twenty20 ambitions above national contracts.

"I think there is nothing wrong in people wanting to specialise in the sport," Buttler told Hindustan Times. "It is becoming increasingly tough to play in all three formats. I don't think we should have that snobbery that if you play cricket, you need to play all formats."

Buttler also said players should not be criticised for looking to maximise their earnings in tournaments like the IPL. "The climate of cricket has changed a lot with the IPL and the money the tournament offers," said Buttler, who earned 44 million Indian rupees (\$659,274) in this year's players auction after being bought by



Jos Buttler

Rajasthan Royals.

"At the end of the day, we are professional athletes and we have a short career. To a big extent, earning as much money in that time is hugely important."

Buttler and his Rajasthan team mate Ben Stokes, who fetched a whopping \$1.97 million in the February auction, are among a dozen English players currently playing in the eight-team league.

The limited-overs specialist said England's approach

to the shorter formats had changed significantly in recent times. "We are taking white-ball cricket as seriously as red-ball cricket," said the 27-year-old.

"There are not many players who play all formats. So, the burnout issue is not prevalent anymore. (England coach) Trevor Bayliss, in particular, who had success (in IPL) with Kolkata Knight Riders as the head coach, knows how important it is for the success of players." — Reuters

## Azhar adamant Pakistan 'want more' from Amir

CANTERBURY: Pakistan bowling coach Azhar Mahmood "wants more" from Mohammad Amir, a challenge he believes the paceman will rise to in upcoming Test matches against Ireland and England. Amir was the hottest property in world cricket after bursting on the scene as a teenager in 2009.

He was soon earning comparisons with fellow Pakistan left-arm fast bowler Wasim Akram, with Wasim himself declaring Amir a better bowler than he had been at the same age. At 18, Amir was the youngest bowler to have reached the landmark of 50 Test wickets. His first 14 matches in the five-day game saw him take 51 wickets at just a fraction over 23 apiece-figures that had Amir on course to be an all-time great. But Amir's world was turned upside down in 2010 when he and Mohammad Asif became involved in a spot-fixing scandal after deliberately bowling no-balls during the Lord's Test against England at the behest of then Pakistan captain Salman Butt.

### 'RESPONSIBILITY'

In 2011 Amir was given a five-year ban by the International Cricket Council and sentenced to six months in jail by an English court. Amir returned to international duty in 2016 but his 16 Tests since his comeback have yielded 44 wickets at a relatively expensive 37.25. "We want more from Amir, as bowling coach I want more from Amir," Mahmood told AFP after the paceman took one wicket for 45 runs in 15 overs during Pakistan's drawn tour opener against Kent at Canterbury on Tuesday.

"If you see his record since he came back it's not great, but he was coming back after five years out," the former Pakistan all-rounder added. "He needs to take a bit more responsibility and get more wickets for us. "If he's the leader of this attack, he needs to show us a bit more. "I'm sure he will do that and that's what we want from him." Given his lengthy absence it is unsurprising that the now 26-year-old Amir has not quite scaled the heights he reached earlier in his career. Nevertheless, there have been some memorable moments since his return, with Amir taking a superb three for 16 in six overs as Pakistan thrashed arch-rivals India by 180 runs in the final of last year's Champions Trophy one-day tournament at The Oval.

Amir's figures against Kent on a cool, if sunny, day were nothing like as spectacular. This, however, was a warm-up match, with Pakistan next facing Northamptonshire before providing the opposition for Ireland's inaugural Test and then returning to England for a two-Test series. And one delivery from Amir, who served part of his prison sentence in Canterbury jail, stood out on Tuesday when he demolished the stumps of Alex Blake with a late-swinging yorker.

### 'IMAGINATION'

It certainly caught the admiring attention of Kent assistant coach Allan Donald, the former South Africa fast bowler. "When I saw this kid a few years ago, he's one of the most skilful that's going around," Donald said. "When you saw him knocking over those 'poles' that's exactly what you expect from him—so much skill, so much imagination and creativity to produce that sort of thing on flat pitches."

He added: "When it gets flat, you have to think out of the box and to see that happening was an eye-opener." Meanwhile Donald predicted Pakistan, whose last Test series in England ended in a highly creditable 2-2 draw in 2016, would impress again this year. "There are some seriously good players in this Pakistan team," he said. "I think it's going to be a great series—I hope it warms up for them though." —AFP



Azhar Mahmood

Sports

# Jupp Heynckes bows out in Europe after Bayern 'adventure'

'Not many people get to go on such an adventure at 72'

**BERLIN:** Jupp Heynckes bowed out with Bayern Munich in the Champions League semi-finals with the head coach admitting not many 72-year-olds get to experience "such an adventure".

Heynckes, who turns 73 next Wednesday, took charge of his final European match in Tuesday's 2-2 draw at Real Madrid before he steps down at the end of the season. "Of course I know now, it's final that I'll never go back to the bench in a Champions League game - and I think that's a good thing," he said as Bayern bowed out 4-3 on aggregate.

"Not many people get to go on such an adventure at the age of 72. 'I don't feel the emotion 'yes, now it's over', I'm just disappointed with the result, especially for the players.

"I have to compliment my team, I have not seen FC Bayern in form like that for many years, it was football at its best."

When Carlo Ancelotti was sacked last October, Heynckes returned to Bayern after four years in retirement since leading Bayern to the 2013 treble of Champions League, Bundesliga and German Cup titles. He only signed a contract until June and Heynckes will be replaced by Eintracht Frankfurt boss Niko Kovac next season.

His Bayern team went down fighting in Madrid. After losing the first leg 2-1 in Munich, Bayern flew out of the blocks in the return at the Santiago Bernabeu with

Joshua Kimmich scoring after just three minutes.

Real equalised when Karim Benzema was allowed to head home unmarked at the far post. Then a double mistake in the Bayern defence allowed the French striker to make it 2-1 just a minute after the break.

Bayern goalkeeper Sven Ulreich gifted Benzema his second goal by misjudging a poor back-pass from Corentin Tolisso to allow the Frenchman to tap into an empty net.

"Sven had a great season," Heynckes said of Manuel Neuer's stand-in since September, "he just had a blackout. 'He wanted to pick up the ball with his hands, then he realised that's not going to work and got confused, which is bitterly disappointing for the player and my team."

James Rodriguez equalised for Bayern, but the Germans ultimately bowed

out to Spanish opposition for the fifth season in a row in the knock-out stages of Europe. Nevertheless, Heynckes has worked wonders with Bayern this season.

Bayern had a five-point deficit in the Bundesliga table when he arrived, yet now hold into a massive 24-point lead after wrapping up a sixth straight title last month. Bayern's dreams of winning the treble this season ended in Madrid.

However, they can still do the double as the Bundesliga winners face Frankfurt and their future coach Kovac in the German Cup final on May 19 in



MADRID: Bayern Munich's German head coach Jupp Heynckes (L) reacts next to Real Madrid's French coach Zinedine Zidane during the UEFA Champions League semi-final second-leg football match Real Madrid CF vs FC Bayern Munich in Madrid, Spain. — AFP

Berlin. Heynckes says he has simply enjoyed working with Bayern's stars.

"We have had a wonderful atmosphere, a great collaboration over the nine months, it's a group that has character, it's a pity it was not rewarded," he added.

Bayern's sports director Hasan Salihamidzic poured praise on Heynckes.

"You have to see where we've come from, we were written off in October, so I have to give Jupp Heynckes a lot of praise," said Salihamidzic. — AFP

“ I have to compliment my team ”

## Marseille within touch of European glory days

**MARSEILLE:** Marseille face Salzburg today within touching distance of their first European final in almost a decade and a half.

Goals from Florian Thauvin and Clinton Njie in last week's Europa League semi-final first leg kept alive the French club's quest for a first continental title since their triumph in the inaugural Champions League final in 1993. They subsequently reached the UEFA Cup final in 2004, losing to Rafael Benitez's Valencia in Gothenburg.

Success in Salzburg (kick-off 1905 GMT) would leave the American-owned Ligue 1 side facing serious opposition in the shape of Atletico Madrid or Arsenal. They face off in today's other semi-final tied at 1-1 after last week's first leg at the Emirates in London.

In Marseille's favour should they prevail in Austria is the fact that the May 16 final is being staged in Lyon, just a couple of hundred kilometres inland from their Mediterranean headquarters.

When American billionaire Frank McCourt bought the slumbering French giants in October 2016 after their worst finish — 13th-in Ligue 1 in 15 years he promised to restore the glory days of the once-dominant club. With Rudi Garcia's arrival as coach on a three-year contract and investment in new players Marseille finished fifth last season, and are now fourth, one point behind third-placed Monaco with three games of the season remaining.

But before their fans start booking accommodation for the final their team must see off a Salzburg side that have not lost at home all season and who beat Marseille 1-0 in the Europa League group phase.

### GARCIA CAUTIOUS

Garcia for one was not taking anything for granted, declaring after last week's win: "We have to remain humble, nothing's done yet. "If we can take everyone to the final in France that would be brilliant but we are not there yet."



MARSEILLE: Marseille's French forward Dimitri Payet (C) practices during a training session on the eve of the Europa League semi-final football match Salzburg vs Olympique de Marseille (OM), yesterday in Marseille. —AFP

Garcia has good reason to inject a note of caution, judging by Salzburg's escape act against Lazio in the quarter-finals. Trailing 4-2 after the first leg in Rome and seemingly done and dusted the Austrian champions coached by Marco Rose wiped the floor with Lazio 4-1 in the second leg to progress 6-5 on aggregate.

"Against Lazio a lot of people thought we were dead and buried but we knew how to turn things around," commented Salzburg's Swedish-born Kosovo midfielder Valon Berisha. Marseille though will be bitterly disappointed if they don't hit the right notes in Mozart's home city.

They breezed into the last four with a 5-2 aggregate rout of RB Leipzig, confirming they are on an upward trajectory under former Lille and Roma coach Garcia. On the pitch last week's scorer Thauvin is in enjoying

the form of his life, playmaker Dimitri Payet is at his best again setting up both goals last week while Brazil midfielder Luiz Gustavo is proving an inspired signing.

In attack Garcia is counting on Valere Germain to regain his form having scored only one goal in the past two months. The Marseille-born striker, who is due to start in place of injured Kostas Mitroglou, told AFP he'd often experienced these fallow spells but that hasn't diminished his confidence "because I've also had fantastic months, like last August, or between December and February when I was scoring all the time". He can take heart from the example set by his compatriot Karim Benzema, who fired Real Madrid into the Champions League final on Tuesday with a double after a miserable run when he scored only once in 12 matches. — AFP

## Real, Benzema deliver when it matters to reach Champions final

**MADRID:** Real Madrid and Karim Benzema have each endured rather underwhelming seasons so far by their own high standards but both know how to rise to a big occasion. Benzema's double knocked out Bayern Munich on Tuesday and sent Real through to their fourth Champions League final in five years, thanks to a 2-2 draw on the night and a 4-3 win on aggregate. That Benzema proved the difference was testament to the bravery of Zinedine Zidane, who in picking the striker ignored the whistles of Real's fans in recent weeks as well as a miserable scoring run that showed him scoring just once in 12 matches. But it was also credit to Benzema, whose weaving run led to Isco's decisive goal against Atletico Madrid in the semis last year and who scored the winner in 2014, also in the semis, also against Bayern, in a 1-0 win in the first leg.

France may be wondering what they will be missing at the World Cup in Russia this summer. "I expected him to score goals again," Zidane said. "He has got two and he has given us the chance to go through." Benzema's latest contribution was not entirely of his own making given his second at the Santiago Bernabeu was a gift, presented after a poor backpass from Corentin Tolisso and an even worse attempt to clear by Bayern goalkeeper Sven Ulreich. But his habit of delivering when it matters most is not down to luck, just as Real scrapping to another European final is not undeserved. Real, out of sight in La Liga, were outplayed by Bayern for much of the tie, with the Germans reeling off 39 shots across the two games to their 16.

Their progress owed gratitude both to Bayern's individual errors and the generosity of referee Cüneyt Çakir, who failed to spot a Marcelo handball at 1-1, just before half-time. "If I tell you that the ball has not touched my hand, I'm a liar," Marcelo said afterwards. Dani Carvajal was similarly fortunate in the first leg.

Barcelona daily, Sport, wrote on Wednesday: "It was a terrible match from Zidane's team, who played with fire and were mostly outplayed by Bayern at the Bernabeu." Germany's Die Welt attributed the win to Bayern's mistakes. "Tolisso lost his mind, Ulreich too. The Bavarians had their ticket to the final stolen in Madrid." But this is not Real's first scrap in Europe this season. They snatched victory from the jaws of defeat against Juventus in the previous round too, having been blown away in the second leg. Real have belief, guts and experience.

"They needed a bit of luck but they had it," Bayern defender Mats Hummels said. "We made big mistakes and maybe that is a quality as well, not to make these mistakes." Liverpool or Roma now await in the final on May 26, with all three teams left sitting third in their domestic divisions, a reminder that the Champions League rewards impact over consistency.— AFP

## Brighton must stifle Man Utd's rhythm

**MANCHESTER:** Brighton and Hove Albion must work hard to spoil Manchester United's momentum in tomorrow's Premier League match and get a crucial win to secure their top-flight status for next season, the hosts' manager Chris Hughton has said.

Brighton have lost three and drawn as many of their last six league matches to drop to 14th in the standings on 37 points. Despite being five points clear of the relegation zone, the Seagulls are not yet completely safe.

United have narrowly beaten Brighton in the league and FA Cup earlier this season but Hughton is confident his side can get a better result at the Amex Stadium. "You have to go into every game thinking you can get a result - we'll be buoyed by our previous matches but United are in a good rhythm - these are the challenges we've worked so hard for," Hughton told a news conference yesterday.

"We have to be good on the ball and cause them problems - for any side that has their quality you know they'll be offensive and you know at times they'll take chances going forward.

"We have an opportunity on Friday to do ourselves a big favour... if we can perform as well as we did against them on the previous two occasions then we give ourselves a chance." Brighton could still get dragged into trouble in the closing stages as they travel to champions Manchester City and third-placed



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Belgian midfielder Marouane Fellaini (center) celebrates with teammates after scoring their late second goal against Arsenal at Old Trafford on April 29, 2018. — AFP

Liverpool in their final two matches of the season.

However, Hughton said he was content with Brighton's overall campaign as the club have the chance to secure a mid-table finish in their first season in the Premier League. "If you'd given me this situation at the start of the season with these three games to go I

would have settled for that. Of course there are some frustrations at missed points but overall we're relatively happy," Hughton added.

Brighton's squad is fully fit for the United clash with the exception of midfielder Steve Sidwell, who has missed the entire season with a back injury. — Reuters



### Matches on TV (Local Timings)

UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE		
Red Bull Salzburg v Olympique Marseille	22:05	
beIN SPORTS HD 3		
Atletico de Madrid v Arsenal	22:05	
beIN SPORTS HD 2		

**12** Sanchez breaks a scoreless tie as Yankees down host Astros



**13** Thai 'dwarf giant' Wanheng equals Floyd Mayweather's 50-0 record



**15** Jupp Heynckes bows out in Europe after Bayern 'adventure'



## Liverpool reach Champions League final

Brave Roma win semi-final second leg 4-2



ROME: Liverpool's German goalkeeper Loris Karius (R) clears the ball during the UEFA Champions League semi-final second leg football match AS Roma vs Liverpool FC at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome yesterday. — AFP

ROME: Liverpool reached the Champions League final after riding their luck to contain a fired-up AS Roma in a 4-2 defeat at the Stadio Olimpico yesterday that sent them through 7-6 on aggregate.

The five-times European champions, who will face holders Real Madrid in the May 26 final, twice took the lead but were forced to hang on in the second half as Roma created chances before Radja Nainggolan's two late goals put them ahead on the night.

Liverpool's Sadio Mane was their most potent attacking threat and gave them the lead after nine minutes, but a bizarre own goal by James Milner levelled for Roma. A Georginio Wijnaldum header put Liverpool back in front but Roma, who overturned a three-goal deficit to beat Barcelona in the last round, were given renewed belief when Edin Dzeko fired past Loris Karius early in the second half.

Nainggolan drilled in from distance after 86 minutes to make it 3-2 and smashed home a penalty in stoppage-time but it was too late for the Italian side who lost the first leg of the semi-final 5-2 in Liverpool.

"We never do it the easy way unfortunately," Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson said. "It was an amazing effort. In the first half we did well and scored some good goals. Overall we handled the situation well apart from the last 10 minutes."

Liverpool's task was seemingly straightforward-avoid suffering a three-goal defeat and a place in the final in Kiev was theirs. Their 5-2 first-leg victory at Anfield was a scoreline that had never been overturned in the competition's history, but Barcelona's shock defeat in the same stadium had served as a warning against complacency.

The crowd certainly seemed to believe a repeat

result was possible and the noise levels increased as Liverpool were pushed back in the opening moments.

### CLINICAL COUNTER

Yet Roma's spirits were dampened when Liverpool took the lead, capitalising on a catastrophic mistake with a typically clinical counter. Roma midfielder Nainggolan played a suicidal square ball that was pounced on by Roberto Firmino, who drove forward and played it through to Mane who buried his left-footed finish past Roma's Brazilian keeper Alisson.

That was the first goal Roma had conceded at home in the competition this season, but they were only behind for six minutes thanks to a calamitous own goal.

Dejan Lovren tried to clear a ball into the area but smashed his effort straight into the face of Milner and it ricocheted past Karius. The home fans rediscovered

their voice, but their renewed spirits lasted only another 10 minutes before Liverpool retook the lead.

The hosts failed to clear a corner and the ball was headed back by Dzeko into the path of Wijnaldum who nodded past Alisson. Roma levelled for the second time seven minutes after the break as Stephan El Shaarawy's shot was pushed tamely into the path of Dzeko by Karius and the Bosnian rifled his finish past the German keeper.

It was then backs to the wall for the Premier League side as Roma chances came and went before Nainggolan took aim from the edge of the area and rifled a shot in off the post. He slammed home a penalty after substitute Ragnar Klavan was adjudged to have handled, but it was not enough to prevent Liverpool reaching the final for the first time since 2007. — Reuters

## FIFA proposes staging a new mini-World Cup every two years

LONDON: FIFA president Gianni Infantino has proposed staging what would effectively be a mini-World Cup, featuring eight international teams, every two years in addition to the traditional event. The tournament, known as the "Final 8", would be the climax of a proposed global Nations League competition, part of an ambitious plan to reform international football which FIFA believes could be worth \$25 billion in a 12-year cycle. In a letter seen by Reuters, Infantino, who has already overseen the enlargement of the

existing World Cup from 32 to 48 teams starting in 2026, suggested that the new tournament would take place every October and/or November of every odd year starting from 2021. He said that a "solid and serious" group of investors were willing to spend \$25 billion on the competition and a revamped version of the Club World Cup, which would also start in 2021 with 24 teams.

The Confederations Cup, currently staged every four years in a year before the World Cup, would be abolished. The letter did not clearly indicate how many slots would be allocated to each region.

The plans were sent by Infantino to the members of FIFA's decision-making Council which still has to approve them. The new competition would run parallel to existing international tournaments such as the European Championship, Copa America, and African Nations Cup, plus the World Cup qualifying stages. It

could lead to criticism that FIFA is over-complicating international football and devaluing its flagship World Cup. FIFA could not immediately be reached for comment.

### SIMILAR COMPETITIONS

European soccer body UEFA and its counterpart for North and Central America and the Caribbean, CONCACAF, have already set up Nations League contests in their own continents. In both cases, the competitions involve all the national teams in their respective regions who are divided into divisions based on their rankings.

There is promotion and relegation between the divisions, as in conventional domestic club leagues. UEFA's inaugural competition will begin in September this year. Other continents would have to set up similar competitions for the tournament to be viable.

Infantino suggested that similar intercontinental mini-tournaments to the Final 8 could also be organised for the top teams in the lower divisions. Infantino's letter said that all revenue from the competition would be redistributed. "This means that FIFA as an organisation would not benefit financially from this competition," he said.

"We believe this offer is an excellent opportunity for the confederations and member associations as well as for football in general." In a separate proposal for Europe, the letter suggested that member associations could receive up to \$50 million for taking part in a single UEFA Nations League campaign although this amount would only be for the top-five ranking federations. The next biggest five European countries would receive \$15 million to \$20 million while the 33 lowest-ranked associations would receive a more modest \$7 million. — Reuters



## Business

THURSDAY, MAY 3, 2018

**18** Air France cuts back on Iran flights, blames weak demand**19** US hopeful about China talks to resolve trade dispute**21** Jazeera Airways adds Mumbai to its growing India network

BRUSSELS: European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker (right) and Brexit campaigner and member of the European Parliament Nigel Farage exchange a "high five" gesture, at the start of the plenary session on the EU's next long-term budget, in the European Parliament in Brussels yesterday. — AFP

# EU unveils bigger post-Brexit budget

## 1.279tn euro budget seeks to penalize 'rule of law' violators

BRUSSELS: The EU unveiled plans yesterday for a bigger 1.279-trillion euro budget for the seven years after Brexit, featuring a controversial move to cut funding for countries that fail to respect the rule of law. European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker said the proposals were "reasonable and responsible" but the idea of spending more money faces opposition from several countries.

Poland and Hungary, which have both been severely criticized by Brussels over democratic freedoms, are meanwhile up in arms over the proposal to "suspend, reduce or restrict access" to errant states. "We are proposing a new mechanism that will allow for the protection of the budget linked to risks arising from deficiencies in the rule of law," Juncker told the European Parliament.

The departure of Britain, a net contributor, in 2019 leaves the bloc with what Juncker says is 15 billion euro gap in its accounts, but the EU also wants more money for ambitious projects to unify the remaining 27 member states.

EU Budget Commissioner Guenther Oettinger said member states would pay 1.114 percent of their annual gross domestic product under the plans, up from one

percent in the current 2014-2020 multi-year budget worth 1.0 trillion euros.

### Key cuts

One of the key proposed cuts is five percent from the Common Agricultural Policy, the largest single area of EU spending and one dear to major farm producer France. There is also a five-percent proposed cut to so-called cohesion funds, which former Soviet bloc states in eastern Europe are the biggest beneficiaries from. In return, the European Commission wants to spend more on the digital economy, research, defense and protection for the bloc's borders against mass migration, including what one European source said is a quintupling of the border force Frontex to nearly 6,000 people.

Countries including Austria and the Netherlands are already gearing up to fight any demand for increased national contributions, although France and Germany have said they are ready to pay more.

The plan is likely to cause fights on a number of other fronts. Firstly, Warsaw and Budapest, locked in battle with Brussels over democratic standards and their refusal to accept refugees, oppose any attempt to impose conditions on the billions in funds they get from the bloc.

### 'Political pressure'

They view it as an attempt to punish them indirectly, without going through mechanisms like an unprecedented sanctions procedure launched by Brussels against Poland over its court reforms.

Juncker said "respect for the rule of law is an indispensable prerequisite for sound financial management and

effective implementation of the budget." But Poland was standing firm. "We will not accept arbitrary mechanisms which will make the funds an instrument of political pressure," Poland's deputy European affairs minister Konrad Szymanski said earlier.

Secondly, the eastern states are also likely to oppose both the cuts to cohesion funds overall, and also demands from southern nations like Spain and Italy that were hit by the economic crisis for some of those funds to be redirected. Thirdly, protests by French farmers are likely over any attempt to cut the Common Agricultural Policy, from which they are the biggest beneficiaries.

Farm funds account for 37 percent of the bloc's funding, while cohesion funds account for 35 percent.

Finally attempts by Brussels to push through the budget before the next European Parliament elections in May 2019 have also met a cool response. "We cannot afford a lost year," Oettinger said, referring to the fact that the 2014-2020 budget took two years to pass. EU states say it is "impossible" given the rifts between east, west, north and south, with countries anxious not to put their hands in their pockets at a time when populism is on the march. "These negotiations normally take two years," a diplomatic source said. — AFP.



### UK exit to leave a 15bn euro gap in accounts

## Amazon offers to buy 60% stake in India's Flipkart

BENGALURU/MUMBAI: Amazon.com Inc has made a formal offer to buy a 60 percent stake in Indian online retailer Flipkart, CNBC-TV18 reported yesterday, threatening to complicate Walmart Inc's bid to buy a majority stake in the Indian e-commerce player.

Sources told Reuters earlier this month that Walmart was likely to reach a deal to buy a majority stake in Flipkart, Amazon's biggest competitor in India, by the end of June for \$10 billion to \$12 billion.

The deal would be the US retail giant's biggest acquisition of an online business and would kick off a battle with Amazon in an Indian e-commerce market that analysts forecast will be worth \$200 billion a year within a decade. CNBC-TV18 reported that Amazon had offered Flipkart a breakup fee of \$2 billion to convince it to discuss an offer which analysts say would bring with it substantial antitrust challenges, as

Flipkart and Amazon dominate the online shopping space in Asia's third-largest economy.

Two sources close to the matter, asking not to be named, confirmed to Reuters that Amazon was interested in buying Flipkart, but declined to give further details. One of the sources said that Flipkart had vetoed an approach from Amazon for a 51 to 55 percent in the company two years ago, judging its offered price as far too low at the time.

"Now with Walmart in the mix things are different," the source said. "To the best of my knowledge no decision has been made yet. There is no deadline per se."

CNBC-TV18, citing unnamed sources, said Amazon's new bid was likely to be on a par with Walmart's, but that Flipkart's investors and founders continue to favor the deal with Walmart, with founder Sachin Bansal overseeing final negotiations. A spokesman for Walmart declined to comment, while Amazon said it does not offer comments on rumors and speculation. Flipkart did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment. Walmart's urgency to stem market share losses to rivals like Aldi or Amazon has also seen it launch talks to merge its UK arm ASDA with J Sainsbury, in which it will hold a minority stake. — Reuters

## AUB reports a net profit of \$174.7 million for Q1 2018

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank B.S.C. (AUB) reported a net profit attributable to its equity shareholders of \$174.7 million for the quarter ended 31 March 2018. The net profit reflected an increase of 9.6 percent in Q1/2018 as compared to the net profit of \$159.4 million achieved in Q1/2017. The Q1/2018 net profit also represents a 16.5 percent improvement over the Q4/2017 trailing quarter reported profit of \$150.0 million. The Basic Earnings per Share in Q1/2018 were US 2.2 cents, compared to US 2.0 cents in Q1/2017.

Net interest income improved by 12.4 percent to \$229.3 million during the quarter driven by loan and investments growth besides improved margins. Operating income grew by 7.5 percent which together with consistent application of operational efficiencies resulted in the Bank's cost to income ratio of 25.9 percent (Q1/2017: 27.0 percent).

Solid asset quality levels were sustained with a non-

performing loans ratio of 1.9 percent (31 December 2017: 1.9 percent) while specific provision coverage ratio increased to 87.1 percent (31 December 2017: 85.1 percent). The total provision coverage ratio inclusive of expected credit loss provisioning under IFRS 9 but excluding available significant asset collaterals, improved to 219.2 percent as at 31 March 2018 (31 December 2017: 154.3 percent).

The Group's Return on Average Equity (ROAE) for Q1/2018, increased to 18.2 percent, compared to 17.0 percent achieved in the first quarter of 2017. Return on Average Assets also increased to 2.3 percent for Q1/2018 (Q1/2017: 2.2 percent).

Hamad Al-Humaidhi, AUB Chairman, commented: "Our results demonstrate AUB's resilience and ability to deliver sustainable core earnings on a consistent basis under its diversified well managed business model and through its strategic investments across multiple markets, assisted by robust risk management, effective cost control measures and ongoing focus on the sourcing of cross border business flows."



Hamad Al-Humaidhi

## Business

# Air France cuts back on Iran flights, blames weak demand

## Flights to be restricted to summer only

**PARIS:** Air France is cutting its Joon subsidiary's service between Paris and Tehran to the summer season only, blaming a poor economic performance over two years in operation.

"Air France has decided to adapt its program to better match demand," a spokeswoman told Reuters in an email message, adding that the decision would take effect from October 28.

Air France's move comes amid international uncertainty over whether or not US President Donald Trump will pull out of a nuclear deal with Iran, although the spokeswoman said the decision was not linked to the political climate with Iran.

Under that 2015 deal, Tehran agreed to curb its nuclear program to satisfy world powers that it would not be used to develop weapons. In exchange, Iran received relief from sanctions, most of which were lifted in January 2016. "This just shows how the uncertainty on the Iran deal is beginning to have an impact on the business sentiment towards Iran," said a European diplomat. Bankers and others involved in business with Iran say they have been reluctant to travel

to the country to close deals or negotiate the financing of existing ones because of uncertainty over the status of underlying US sanctions, even before the latest standoff between Trump and Iran.

Air France has been reviewing demand on the route for several months. In January, it said it was shifting the route from its main network to its recently launched Joon subsidiary, using smaller planes, as part of a wider restructuring and rebranding of certain routes.

Joon offers some business-class seats although it is not mainly aimed at traditional business travellers, but at younger travellers with money to spend. The latest schedule links Air France more squarely with summer tourist traffic as Iran seeks to promote its domestic tourist industry despite political tensions.

However, tourist companies say travel has not picked up as Iran initially expected. Air France added it would handle the rebooking of flights for customers affected by the change. Air France's decision follows a similar one in December by Etihad Airways, which had also said it would scrap flights to Iran and Uganda. —Reuters



**PARIS:** In this file photo Air France planes are parked on the tarmac of Roissy-Charles de Gaulle Airport, northern Paris. Air France announced that 85 percent of the flights will be maintained today, as Air France staff begin a two-day strike, the latest in a series pushing for a pay rise. —AFP



### Decision follows demand review on route

#### Special report

## The impact of VAT on key Kuwaiti sectors

By M R Raghu

**D**ecrease in oil prices have led the member countries of GCC in search for alternative means of revenue. One way was to introduce a common tax called Value Added Tax (VAT) in the region. On July 09, 2017 two members of GCC, Saudi Arabia and UAE ratified the VAT framework agreement for the introduction of VAT in the region. With a tax rate of 5 percent, it will be applicable in the entire region with certain goods and services to be treated as zero rated or VAT exempt.

With the taxation being implemented on January, 2018 in these two countries, other members are following suit to implement it by 2019. As draft regulations for VAT in Kuwait have not been declared, through this note, we will try to determine the impact of VAT on certain key sectors of Kuwait.

#### Transportation and logistics

As per the VAT framework, commercial transportation service for passengers and goods from Kuwait to international countries and other GCC countries will be subjected to VAT and will be treated as zero-rated. Kuwait has the option for charging tax on domestic commercial transportation of travelling passengers (which includes air travel and road travel) and goods which if implemented will make them costlier within the country. While it will be easy to implement the tax on the final price of the services provided, overall cost might increase. This may be due to the introduction of tax to fuel prices and other services related to transportation. VAT might have minimum impact on travellers due to small increase in price. As for transportation of goods, price hike will likely increase the price in the supply chain of a company. This will impact profitability and increase the cost of doing business. Due to 0 percent VAT, inflation will not impact international transportation of passengers and goods. As for domestic services, there is an expected spike in inflation if VAT is levied which is expected to smoothen over time.

#### Retail sector

This sector will see the biggest impact as VAT would be levied on all consumer goods and products. The stores will be charged an input VAT for which an output VAT will be calculated and included in the final price for the customers. Although easy to implement at store level, factors such as discounts which are given to the customers will have to be considered which might impact the output and input VAT calculation. Implementation of VAT will cost the stores time and resources (like modification in IT systems). With many global retail stores eying for a piece in the growing industry, this might lead to decreasing price margins to offset the impact of VAT in order to attract customers. Customer demand will depend on the price-demand elasticity of the goods. Everyday consumable products which are highly inelastic will face the least impact while there might be a decrease in demand for luxury items. The industry will not be affected by cross border transactions and will be among the biggest revenue source for the government.

#### Real estate

According to the VAT agreement, Kuwait has the choice of opting for either a 5 percent or a 0 percent VAT in both residential as well as commercial

properties. In certain projects the implementation of tax can be exempted. It can follow the implementation process of both KSA and UAE, where residential properties are exempted or zero rated and commercial properties are taxed at 5 percent with certain cases being exempt (e.g. NGO, building used for charitable purpose). As such, the owners of commercial properties can charge the VAT to the customers as an addition to their rent, resulting in rental inflation.

Implementation of VAT would impact mostly construction companies and developers. These companies are likely to struggle to implement the taxation, as companies might be unable to claim refund on input VAT related to construction of projects which might be exempted, leading to loss. Moreover, in case of under-progress project, estimating the applicable VAT could be a challenge, if the procurement was done, prior to the implementation and invoices are due until-after VAT implementation. Implementation of VAT might increase the initial cost of constructing the property which will lead to increase in the selling price. Certain companies will want to wait out the entire transition period before starting any new projects so as to avoid confusion of paying VAT while existing projects under construction might be delayed. As for the customers, there might be a temporary decrease in demand for owning as well as renting properties due to increased cost. The industry will not be affected by cross border transactions.

#### Financial services

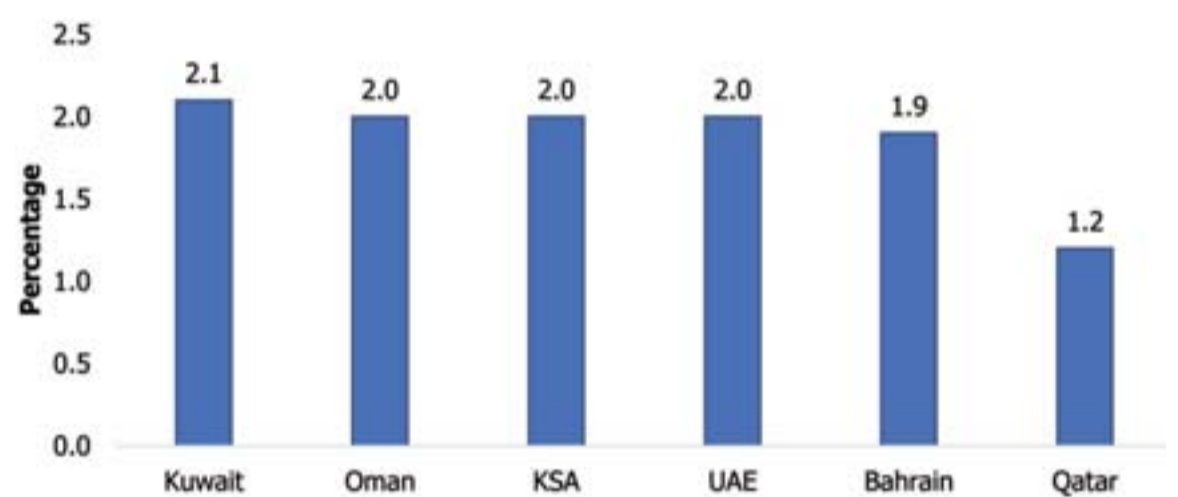
Implementation of VAT in the financial sector might be complicated. Firstly, most financial services come as bundled products. Bundled services are the combination of many services into one service. Such products may have both taxable and non-taxable services which might create difficulties to implement VAT (e.g. for portfolio management, managing fee are taxable while margins earned on derivatives is not taxed). Secondly, certain services taken by financial institutions such as IT services from others will be subjected to VAT, but the same cannot be allocated directly to the cost of financial products. This might lead to loss in terms of not being able to claim full deduction on VAT.

Kuwait might follow the global standards of taxing fee based products (e.g. management fees, commissions) while exempting margin based products (e.g. interest). With lower interest rates, fee based products are becoming more popular among the banks. VAT might slow down the demand of these products with banks having two options to follow. They may either increase the prices of the services, charge them to the customers to have the same level of profit or they may include VAT deduction as part of their spending which might reduce profitability but retain customers. The banks might go with the first option as customers will be willing to pay the extra cost with not much impact in demand. No tax is implemented on cross border services.

#### Conclusion

VAT is most likely going to increase the inflation rate in Kuwait. Introduction of VAT is likely to increase the rate to 3.75 percent from the predicted 2.5 percent at the year-end of 2018. While real estate and transportation will see a decrease in demand, retail and financial sector might not see much changes. Real estate is expected to see the maximum increase in cost while retail might see a low to medium increase in price. Although some sectors will find it difficult to implement VAT, going forward, it might become easier. —Note: M R Raghu is managing director of Marmore Mena Intelligence, a subsidiary of Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz". Marmore is a research house focused on conducting Mena-specific business, economic and capital market research.

**Graph: Estimated VAT Revenue (% of GDP in 2018)**



Source: National Bank of Abu Dhabi

**Table: Impact Areas on Sectors**

Impact Areas/ Sectors	Ease of		Taxation Slab (Assumed)	Consumer Demand	Price Increase
	Implementation	Cross border transaction			
Transportation/Logistics	Yes	No	0% and Tax Exempt	Decrease	Medium to High
Retail	Yes	No	5%,0% and Tax Exempt	Not affected	Low to Medium
Real Estate	No	No	5% and Tax Exempt	Decrease	High
Financial Sector	No	No	5% and Tax Exempt	Not affected	Medium to High

## EXCHANGE RATES

### BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL		
British Pound	0.405273	0.412773	Egyptian Pound	0.013944
Czech Korune	0.006112	0.015412	Iranian Rial	0.000084
Danish Krone	0.044605	0.029605	Iraqi Dinar	0.000203
Euro	0.356710	0.364210	Jordanian Dinar	0.421552
Georgian Lari	0.138280	0.138280	Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000
Hungarian 0.001138	0.001328		Lebanese Pound	0.000155
Norwegian Krone	0.033365	0.038565	Moroccan Dirhams	0.022649
Romanian Leu	0.064623	0.081473	Omani Rial	0.778487
Russian ruble	0.004747	0.004747	Qatar Riyal	0.078703
Slovakia	0.008995	0.018995	Saudi Riyal	0.079487
Swedish Krona	0.030154	0.035154	Syrian Pound	0.001280
Swiss Franc	0.296509	0.307509	Tunisian Dinar	0.19695
			Turkish Lira	0.068678
			UAE Dirhams	0.080839
			Yemeni Rial	0.000982
				0.001062

### Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

	Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
Australian Dollar	0.218118	0.230118
New Zealand Dollar	0.205347	0.214847
Canadian Dollar	0.229856	0.238856
US Dollars	0.298050	0.302450
US Dollars Mint	0.298550	0.302450
Bahraini Dinar	0.794826	0.803326
US Dollar		301.800
Canadian Dollar		235.815
Sterling Pound		412.095
Euro		363.635
Swiss Franc		303.290
Bahraini Dinar		802.600
UAE Dirhams		82.570
Qatar Riyals		83.805
Saudi Riyals		81.375
Jordanian Dinar		426.950
Egyptian Pound		17.073
Sri Lankan Rupees		1.914
Indian Rupees		4.526
Pakistani Rupees		2.611
Bangladesh Taka		3.621
Philippines Peso		5.838
Cyprus pound		17.962
Japanese Yen		3.750
Syrian Pound		1.585
Nepalese Rupees		2.834
Malaysian Ringgit		77.695
Chinese Yuan Renminbi		47.890
Thai Bhat		10.500
Turkish Lira		73.835



## Business

# Angola looks beyond crude oil to fish oil to kick-start growth

## Lourenco promises to deliver 'economic miracle'

**BENGUELA, Angola:** Angolan President Joao Lourenco has named diversifying the oil-dependent economy as his top priority after he became the country's first new leader in 38 years.

And one natural and readily available resource that has been identified is fish-but a lack of equipment and know-how has meant the industry has struggled. Lourenco, part of the MPLA party that has ruled Angola since 1975, took office in September promising to deliver an "economic miracle" that would transform the southern African nation, where the UN says more than half of the population lives on less than \$2 a day. The collapse in 2014 of the price of crude oil, which provides 70 percent of all revenues and nearly all hard currency, put immense pressure on the country to diversify.

Even though global oil prices have since recovered somewhat, Lourenco still plans to push forward. He is betting the 1,600 kilometers (1,000 miles) of Atlantic coast could provide a fishing bonanza. "The diversification of the economy is our priority," Lourenco said recently. "We're going to relaunch fishing and agriculture and we will open the country to foreign investment."

To demonstrate his commitment, Lourenco visited fish factories in Tombwa on the southwest coast. One of the sites is equipped to freeze the catch, while the other processes fish into oil and fishmeal.

Fish oil is highly sought after by the cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries, while fishmeal is used by farmers as animal feed. Lourenco vowed to "improve the infrastructure to support fishing and the transformation of processing", according to the government's latest six-year plan.

Fishing minister Victoria de Barros previously announced plans to build a new port with refrigerated storage in Tombwa at a cost of \$23.5 million. The government is seeking to increase the annual fish catch by 16 percent over the next four years to 614,000 tons. Meanwhile, it is aiming for a 50 percent increase in fishmeal production to 30,000 tons over the same period.

### 'Our salvation was fishing'

Reducing dependence on oil is proving to be a tough task for a country that has been heavily dependent on the black gold for decades. "We have a fish industry but we don't have the capacity to meet international demand," said Jose Gomes da Silva, the government director of fishing in the coastal city of Benguela.

In the city, the fishing sector employs thousands of people—a "very important" economic force, according to Da Silva. But more could be done. In the Baia Farta, 30 kilometers (18 miles) from Benguela, the privately owned Pesca Fresca business transforms frozen fish into fishmeal and oil, which is then exported to South America, China, Namibia and South Africa.

As well as being supplied by industrial fishing ships, Pesca Fresca sources some fish from small-scale fishermen like Orlando Eduardo. "Our salvation was fishing," said 32-year-old Eduardo, barefooted and sporting a hat. Fishermen like Orlando gather on the sun-baked beach to drop off their catches of sardines, bass and mackerel from their small, colourful wooden boats.

On good days, Orlando earns 20,000 kwanza (\$90) — enough to cover his costs with a little left over. Angola has a critical lack of large fishing ships and processing facto-



To lessen its economic dependence on oil, Angola is looking to develop its fishing sector, which also produces goods for the cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and farm industries.— AFP

ries. A lack of spare parts means those it has often languish in harbor. "We face maintenance difficulties which seriously endanger the fishing industry," said Pesca Fresca director Jose Neves. To stimulate fishing, the government recently announced the purchase of a specialized fishing vessel for \$3.7 million.

But experts are unconvinced that such acquisitions will make a significant impact. Some economists have also greeted Lourenco's ambitious plans with skepticism. "The fishing industry represents less than one percent of GDP," noted Alves da Rocha of the Catholic University of Angola.— AFP

## German coalition bickers over military and aid spending

**BERLIN:** Bickering broke out within Chancellor Angela Merkel's hard-fought coalition yesterday, as German budget plans left the defense and international development ministries out in the cold.

With tax revenues expected to rise in coming years in step with economic growth, Finance Minister Olaf Scholz might have expected a warmer reception for plans to raise federal spending by 37 billion euros (\$44.4 billion) by 2022, to 367.7 billion.

"Germany is in a good economic and financial position today," the Social Democratic Party (SPD) politician said, allowing him to offer a budget stuffed with extras for families, the unemployed and the education system. Scholz even managed to sketch the increased outlays without planning to borrow any new funds-sticking to his predecessor Wolfgang Schauble's "black zero" policy.

But Merkel's conservative ministers for defense and development were disappointed with the plans, which see only small increases in their budgets.

In a veiled criticism, Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen of Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU), called for a "solid financial basis" for the Bundeswehr (German army) immediately after the cabinet meeting that approved the new budget, suggesting more cash could still be negotiated in parliament. Like other NATO countries, Germany promised in 2014 to lift defence spending within a decade to 2.0 percent of gross domestic product (GDP)

— or around 66 billion euros based on last year's 3.3-trillion-euro figure. But Scholz's scheme includes a military funding increase to just 41.5 billion euros next year. "I see no contradiction" Merkel spokesman Steffen Seibert told reporters, saying that "we have started down the path" towards the NATO goal.

### Spend money to make money

Meanwhile Germany's spending on international development aid will remain short of the United Nations target of 0.7 percent of GDP. Both budget items fail to live up to the coalition agreement between the SPD and CDU, which promised to meet the international commitments.

Berlin can also expect criticism from abroad over falling investments by the federal government from 2020 onwards.

Organizations including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and allies from Warsaw to Washington have urged Berlin to spend more on physical infrastructure, faster internet connections or upgrading crumbling schools. Such investments would help cut down Germany's massive trade surplus by stoking imports-helping its partners abroad-as well as laying the foundations for future growth, they argue. The finance ministry said some of the shortfall would be made up by extra money flowing to state and municipal governments for their own investment spending.

"In an economic boom the finance minister must aim for surpluses and reduce debt," said Marcel Fratzscher of Berlin's DIW economic think-tank, endorsing Scholz's no-new-borrowing goal.

Nevertheless, "the government should also invest significantly more in transport, digital and energy network infrastructure," he urged, advising against any new tax cuts.— AFP



BERLIN: German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz (Front) arrives with the State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Finance, Werner Gatzler (Back) at a press conference on the government's budget plans in Berlin yesterday.— AFP

## Incoming BASF boss rules out DowDuPont-style break-up

**FRANKFURT:** The incoming boss of BASF has thrown his weight behind the chemical titan's contentious strategy of keeping divergent businesses folded into one company, at a time when its major rivals such as DowDuPont are breaking themselves up.

The comments from Martin Brudermueller, who will take over as CEO on Friday, provide clarity on a key strategic issue that is dividing investors, in marked contrast to predecessor Kurt Bock who would not be drawn on which path he favored.

The German group has grown from a 19th century indigo dye workshop to a diversified juggernaut worth \$95 billion. It is the only major Western chemicals player banking on an integrated value chain — which it dubs "Verbund" — where a company owns businesses throughout the production process.

"We often hear the Verbund getting criticized for being too rigid. That's not true," said 56-year-old Brudermueller. "If you have everything under one roof, you can coordinate things much better, that is the sense in which we will develop it further. You wouldn't normally want to sell attractive businesses that are growing," he told Reuters and other reporters in remarks released late on Tuesday.

At its Ludwigshafen headquarters and at five other hubs abroad, BASF runs close-knit networks of chemical reactors that churn out products as diverse as basic commodities, coatings, vitamins, drug ingredients and engineering plastics.

Bock, when asked in February whether BASF would continue to have diverse businesses under one roof or was considering other options, said the company might learn from what rivals did but did not say which path he favored.

Both strategies have potential advantages: break-ups can create more focused individual companies and allow stronger units to attract investors unshackled from weaker ones, while an integrated model can reduce costs. US rival DowDuPont is planning to break up into a Materials Science division that relies on in-house basic petrochemicals plants and a Specialty Products unit selling more differentiated and complex materials. A third spin-off will focus on agriculture.

In other recent separation deals in the industry, Bayer spun off its Covestro plastics unit and is now selling down the shares. Air Products spun-off specialty chemicals unit Versum

and coatings group Akzo Nobel is selling its specialty chemicals division.

### Shareholders split

BASF competes with DowDuPont in areas such as pesticides, engineering plastics, nutrition, insulation foams and petrochemicals. Its rival's three-way split will restore BASF's position as the world's largest chemical maker but some investors and analysts would rather see it lose that crown.

Patrick Jahnke, portfolio manager at Deka Investments, the firm selling its upstream petrochemical assets, saying the benefits of physical proximity to downstream operations could be shared with a new owner. "You can sell the assets but the factory remains in place," Jahnke said. "There are many who would pay a high price (for upstream BASF assets). Private equity would run the business with higher debt and optimised for cash flows and would arrive at a better profitability," he added.

Upstream refers to basic petrochemicals, and downstream to more complex specialty chemicals. A portfolio manager at a top 20 BASF shareholder, who declined to be named as they are not authorized to comment publicly on the investment, also saw the merits of a break-up.

"Downstream, specialty chems could work separately," the manager said. "To de-clutter and reduce complexity ... tends to increase multiples and returns, but German compa-

## Tech shares bask in Apple glow despite Fed trepidation

**LONDON:** Forecast-beating results from the world's biggest company, Apple, lifted tech shares yesterday, putting Wall Street on track for a firmer session despite some trepidation over a Fed meeting later in the day.

Expectations the US Federal Reserve will signal more policy tightening ahead kept investors wary of big market moves, especially after currency markets were roiled this week by the dollar's surge to 3 1/2-month highs against a basket of currencies. But the dollar edged back down after Tuesday's 0.7 percent rise, allowing world stocks to rise after two days of losses, especially following Apple's 4 percent after-market gains.

The world's biggest company by market capitalization beat profit and revenue expectations in the first quarter, thanks to robust iPhone sales, and it announced a \$100 billion share buyback.

Germany-listed Apple shares jumped 5.7 percent and the New York-listed stock was 3.6 percent higher in pre-market trade. "The headline news from Apple on iPhone sales has been taken well and there's a relief bounce today across Apple supply chain names which had been hit in recent weeks," said Neil Campling, co-head of the global thematic group at Mirabaud Securities.

The results lifted Europe's tech index 1.2 percent to a six-week high, led by an 8 percent surge in shares in AMS, provider of the facial recognition technology used in iPhones.

Chipmakers STMicroelectronics, Infineon, BE Semiconductor and ASML also gained 1.1 to 3.8 percent, enjoying the positive mood on the sector. US equity futures signalled the S&P500 would open 0.2 percent higher. Futures for the Nasdaq tech benchmark were half a percent higher.

Tech gains were less marked in Asia, where markets in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong all closed weaker. Campling said the Apple results had raised some "red flags", including high inventory levels and a lower average selling price for its handsets.

"It's a strange thing to do, to increase inventory so sharply. There will be more questions about 'where do we go from here'," he said. That uncertainty about future profits, alongside the possibility of higher US interest rates, is weighing on other sectors too, even though S&P500 companies posted 10 percent earnings growth in the first quarter, according to Thomson Reuters.

Oil and metals prices near multi-year highs are a major concern, leaving market players wondering if "perhaps this is as good as it's going to get," said Stephen Innes, head of trading in Asia-Pacific for Oanda in Singapore.—Reuters

are not well known for it." BASF has said that sharing logistics, excess energy and by-products within its chemical complexes saves it more than 1 billion euros (\$1.2 billion) per year. There are also supporters of the integrated approach among BASF's shareholders. Arne Rautenberg, of Union Investment, said there was still a lot of value in the model. "The results this year wouldn't have been good without the basic chemicals assets," he said. Any move to separating them from the rest "would very much surprise me and I wouldn't be excited", he added.

### Tale of two sectors

BASF has been a tale of two sectors over the past year. Supply bottlenecks at rivals and strong industrial demand have flung BASF's basic chemicals business into a surprise upward cycle. Meanwhile, margins of its more complex, specialty products, the group's designated growth drivers, have been squeezed by higher raw materials prices.

"If upstream strength dissipates and the downstream margin struggles continue, then we think investor focus will turn to portfolio questions," HSBC analyst Sriharsha Pappu said in a recent research note. If allowed to strike out on their own, BASF units making construction chemicals, coatings and catalytic converters could bolster their earnings and fetch better trading multiples on the stock market, the HSBC analyst said.—Reuters

## Business

# Jazeera Airways adds Mumbai to its growing India network

## Kuwaiti airline facilitates connecting flights to 14 destinations across ME

**KUWAIT:** Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost airline, operating regionally and internationally, is proud to announce its latest and largest addition to the growing network of Indian routes. Forging ahead with the fourth destination in India after Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Kochi recently, Jazeera Airways will now fly to Mumbai starting May 9. Responding to the travel demands of its customers, the award winning carrier will now provide strong connectivity through Kuwait on to fourteen destinations across the Middle East.

Rohit Ramachandran, CEO of Jazeera Airways said, "We are delighted to start our flights to the largest city in India. Our network in India is developing well and is continuing to support the travel needs of over 920,000 Indians from Kuwait, as well as offering Indian citizens connect-

tivity across the Middle East. Also with our increasing passenger numbers Jazeera Airways is proud that it will open its own dedicated terminal at Kuwait International Airport in May. This is an exciting phase for the brand as it reiterates the long term commitment of honoring Jazeera's support for the Vision 2035."

Known as the entertainment and commercial capital of India, Mumbai is one of the world's top ten hubs for global businesses and home to some of the biggest conglomerates such as Tata Group, Maruti Suzuki, Infosys Tech, Mahindra Group, Godrej, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to name a few.

A diverse cosmopolitan Indian city, it houses famous shopping bazaars, the popular Bollywood

industry, museums and art galleries such as the Prince of Wales Museum, the National Gallery of Modern Art, Nehru Centre Art Gallery and the Jehangir Art Gallery. Jazeera Airways will operate daily flights to and from Mumbai starting May 9 departing 20:30 pm from Kuwait arriving 03:00am in Mumbai Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport.

Flying to 23 destinations across the Middle East, Europe and India, Jazeera Airways operates a fleet of 9 Airbus A320 aircraft. Passengers can enjoy a baggage allowance of 30kg for economy class and 50kg per business class passenger. Travelers are encouraged to book flights now via Jazeera's website - Jazeeraairways.com, through the Jazeera app, by calling 177 or from all travel agents.



## Easa Husain Al-Yousifi & Sons introduces a new server from Panasonic



**KUWAIT:** Easa Husain Al-Yousifi and Sons launched the new enhanced Panasonic communications solutions category with the latest addition to its line-up. The KX-NSX1000 & KX-NSX2000 is a next generation unified communication server/Networking Scalability/ wireless Solutions for the Kuwait market. Panasonic KX-NSX100 is capable of facilitating up to 1000 users as a standalone or as a network system, enabling enhanced scalability.

Panasonic KX-NS2000 Direct supports for up to 2,000 users in a full transparent network and for integrated networks. The versatile communication solutions include solid resiliency to strengthen the customer voice network, which also offers dual network capability, and a control unit for 31 multisite connections. KX-NSX series IP-PBX, offers next generation unified business communication for companies, comes with a host of features including Panasonic UC Pro, CA operator console, voicemail, video communication functions, a built-in call center function and partner application linking. These functions make business communication more efficient and enable users to utilize limited resources effectively. The NSX series PBX system is a perfect fit for both

normal work telephones to mobile users on the go and call center operators.

Commenting on the new line-up, Sami Abdou, Sales and Support Manager of Communication Division at Easa Husain Al-Yousifi & Sons Company said, "The development of enterprises is viewed as a significant avenue towards the employment of Kuwaiti in the private sector. We want to tap into the potential market where enterprises will eventually demand simplified and vertical-specific solutions. We want to offer them with a versatile system that can grow with the company simply by activating the various options and applications accordingly to suit specific needs."

Also as Sami mentioned, they introduced the Smart Hybrid IP-PBX KX-HTS32 new products which available in the market from JAN 2018.

The KX-HTS32 model, which is a Hybrid IP-PBX works as an Analogue PBX and is conceptualized for easy handling and leading the category's market trend. The solution comes with various built-in functionalities such as Wi-Fi, video, SIP etc. Panasonic constantly supports changing business environments and enhance competitiveness in the small-scale PBX market.

## Building boom lifts Lisbon allure and property prices

**LISBON:** Lisbon's azure skies are dotted with forests of cranes as scores of construction workers give Portugal's capital a shiny and new, if pricey, veneer. For years the local construction industry lay in the doldrums-but today the city is a hive of activity, a boon for those involved in its overhaul. "Eight years ago, with my colleague, we were going from door to door offering our services," recalls Roman Kurtysh, a stonemason from Ukraine who specializes in facade revamps and working at height.

"I still don't know how we survived," grins Kurtysh, a stocky man in his 40s with a thinning beard who left his homeland for Portugal almost two decades ago. He tried his hand at various jobs before setting up Rkesa, an urban renewal firm, with compatriot Oleksandr Shulyak in 2009. "In those days, at the end of the month we would draw a salary of 53 euros (\$60) each," recalls Kurtysh. "We were ready to throw in the towel," he said.

Early 2014 brought a turning point. Three years after receiving an EU bailout loan package of 78 billion euros Portugal began to drag itself out of a deep-seated economic crisis. The two Ukrainians took full advantage.

"From that point on, our order books began filling up," recalls Oleksandr Shulyak, who leads the firm's team of "steel monkeys"-high rise workers who scale 16 Rkesa sites in the capital alone. Rkesa is just one example of the surge in construction activity with planning permissions and projects soaring after years of urban decline. By mid-2017, the sector employed 310,000 people, eight percent more than the 287,000 of one year earlier, according to Portugal's National Statistical Institute (INE). Sector production rose 5.9 percent in 2017, in contrast with a 52 percent slump in the 19 years that went before, estimates the Portuguese construction industry federation FEPICOP. — AFP



LISBON: Construction cranes work on the refurbishment of buildings at Figueira Square in downtown Lisbon. — AFP

## Global reports KD 3.9m revenues, KD 1.6m net profit in Q1 2018

**KUWAIT:** Global Investment House ("Global" or the "Company"), a regional asset management and investment banking firm headquartered in Kuwait, with offices in major capital markets in the MENA region, yesterday announced its financial results for the first quarter ended 31 March 2018 reporting a net profit of KD 1.6 million (\$5.3 million), revenues of KD 3.9 million (\$13 million) and fee and commission income of KD 2.5 million (\$8.3 million) representing 64 percent of total revenues.

During Q1 2018, Asset Management generated KD 2.7 million (\$9.0 million) revenues and the Asset Under Management (AUM) grew by KD 16.0 million (\$53.4 million) to KD 926 million (\$3.1 billion) stemming from both new money raising and performance driven AUM growth and affected by cash distributions to clients.

During the quarter, the real estate asset management team successfully completed the sale of the first property acquired as part of the UK National Commercial Real Estate Program in September 2015 and let to National Air Traffic Services (NATS), achieving total return of 23.6 percent, internal rate of return of 10.55 percent of which the income element represented 9.3 percent per annum. Special situation asset management entered into a specialized asset management agreement with a regional group to manage a portfolio worth \$90 million. Private equity asset management exited two portfolio companies and plans distribution of the proceeds to clients during the second quarter.

MENA Asset Management continued to report competitive returns and its managed funds outperformed their respective benchmarks. The team received two recognitions by industry experts, "Best Kuwait Asset Manager" and "Best Saudi Equity Fund".

During Q1 2018, the Investment Banking team generated KD 0.2 million (\$0.6 million) revenues from two M&A mandates in the financial and industrial sectors. The team is currently working on several mandates and has an interesting pipeline of M&A and advi-

sory mandates. On the brokerage front, Global made focused efforts to grow the institutional brokerage business and generated KD 0.3 million (\$0.9 million) revenues. The company's continuous efforts to control and rationalize its cost base resulted in a decline of KD 0.6 million or 19 percent in the operating cost base to KD 2.5 million.

Hareb Al-Darmaki, Chairman of the Board of Directors, said: "The Company had an excellent start to the year; successfully closing several transactions, winning a number of new mandates and reporting positive results. The team's efforts are highly recognized through the successful implementation of the fee-based business strategy thus maintaining high quality of revenues, which remains our priority."

Sulaiman Mohammed Al-Rubaie, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, commented: "We are



Hareb Al-Darmaki

Sulaiman Mohammed Al-Rubaie

delighted by these financial results, which reflect the Company's robust business model and trust of our clients and stakeholders in the Company. Despite the challenges, our team showed highest levels of commitment to continue creating value to all our stakeholders, through our resilient and robust fee-based business model, innovative strategies and execution capabilities."



## How EcoBoost technology injects muscle car performance into Ford's model range

**DUBAI:** Power and fuel efficiency once sat at opposite ends of the performance spectrum but thanks to Ford's EcoBoost range of engines, you can now spend more time on the road and less time at the fuel pump.

Ford's award-winning EcoBoost engines power a wide range of models in the current Ford line-up, including the nimble and sporty Focus and Focus ST, muscle cars like Ford Mustang, performance vehicles like the Ford F-150 Raptor, and even Le Mans-winning racing cars, like the new Ford GT.

And it's not just in Ford's extreme performance vehicles that you'll find EcoBoost technology. With up to 182-horsepower and 240 Nm torque available from its 1.5-litre EcoBoost engine, the Ford Focus delivers incredible performance from such a small engine.

The 2.0-litre four-cylinder EcoBoost engine that powers the extremely popular Ford Taurus in Saudi Arabia not only produces more torque than the traditional, naturally-aspirated 3.5-litre V6, but manages to accomplish this while using less fuel. Adaptable and capable, the EcoBoost engine can be found in models across Ford's portfolio - from the EcoSport and Focus to the all-new Expedition and the mighty F-150 Raptor.

EcoBoost V6 engines are so capable that they're now used to replace larger displacement naturally aspirated V8 engines with more powerful, more responsive and more fuel efficient units without affecting performance at all. In fact, in most cases, EcoBoost engines outperform larger capacity naturally-aspirated engines by developing more power and torque, while also using less fuel. It's why the new Ford F-150 Raptor is powered by a 421-horsepower EcoBoost V6 engine - that also generates 678 Nm of torque - and why Ford is introducing the engine technology to more and more of its vehicles.

### Innovative combination

The secret to the success of all EcoBoost engines is the innovative combination of three key technologies: direct fuel injection, variable camshaft timing and turbo charging - and the control of these by unique Ford software that's designed to optimize the engine for any driving situation.

Injecting precise amounts of fuel directly into the cylinders at high pressure provides ideal conditions for combustion, allowing engines to run more efficiently. Variable camshaft timing provides the perfect amount of fresh air for the combustion process, eliminating the risk of wasting fuel.

The turbocharger uses energy from the engine's exhaust to drive a turbine wheel,

which in turn is mated to a compressor that sends cooled, pressurized air back into the engine. That cooled, pressurized air contains more oxygen which helps create a bigger "boost" of energy when reintroduced to the combustion process.

EcoBoost engines are also lighter and more compact than ever before. Ford uses strong materials such as compacted graphite iron (CGI) are used where needed, and lightweight materials like aluminum to reduce weight. That means the engines are not only robust and compact, but you don't waste fuel carrying around more weight than you have to.

Ford's EcoBoost engine technology is so innovative that the company has secured 275 US patents and has 200 more pending - more than any other manufacturer when it comes to gasoline turbocharged direct-injection technology. EcoBoost's accolades include the 2017 International Engine of the Year "Best Engine Under 1.0-litre" - its sixth consecutive category win. Whether you simply need to cruise long distances or want to tap the performance potential of your Ford, EcoBoost engines make it possible.



## Technology

## Facebook messaging app to add real time translations

## Modi twice as popular on Facebook as Trump

SAN JOSE: Facebook on Tuesday gave its popular Messenger app the ability to translate messages in real time, deploying artificial intelligence to enable text conversations between people using different languages. Messenger has become a tool for businesses to connect with customers, and the ability to converse with customers in a variety of languages could help bump up advertising.

"The ability to speak with anyone without any language barrier is something we are really excited about," Messenger chief David Marcus said as Facebook kicked off its annual developers conference here. Buyers and sellers in Marketplace at Messenger will be able to communicate across languages, according to Marcus.

The feature will launch with English and Spanish translations of Marketplace conversations in the US and will be extended to general Messenger use in coming weeks, the service said in a blog post. Additional languages and countries are to be gradually added. Messenger already has an artificial intelligence capability called "M" that enhances the service, but applying it to translations is something new.

Other companies also are using artificial intelligence to break language barriers. Amazon employs it in a translation feature in

its leading platform for hosting content or services in the internet cloud, while Microsoft uses it for translations in its Skype messaging service. Google last year hit the market with Pixel ear buds capable of real-time translation of conversations in dozens of languages.

Pixel Buds were quickly branded an internet-Age version of the alien "Babel Fish" depicted in famed science fiction work "The

as far as we are accessible to each other, but those true connections aren't going to happen until we all understand and are understood by each other," US Travis representative Robb Selander told AFP while demonstrating the device, which taps into online computing power.

Messenger boasts some 1.3 billion monthly users, who engage in about eight billion conversations a month. The experience is further enhanced by some 300,000 apps developed for the service. "The platform is really thriving now," Marcus said. A Messenger feature also unveiled at the developers conference allows companies to send "bubbles" that can be clicked on to trigger augmented reality experiences through smartphone cameras. For example, Messenger users could check out a version of the newest Nike sneaker; see what a Kia might look like outside their home; or virtually try on Sephora makeup.

## Modi twice as popular

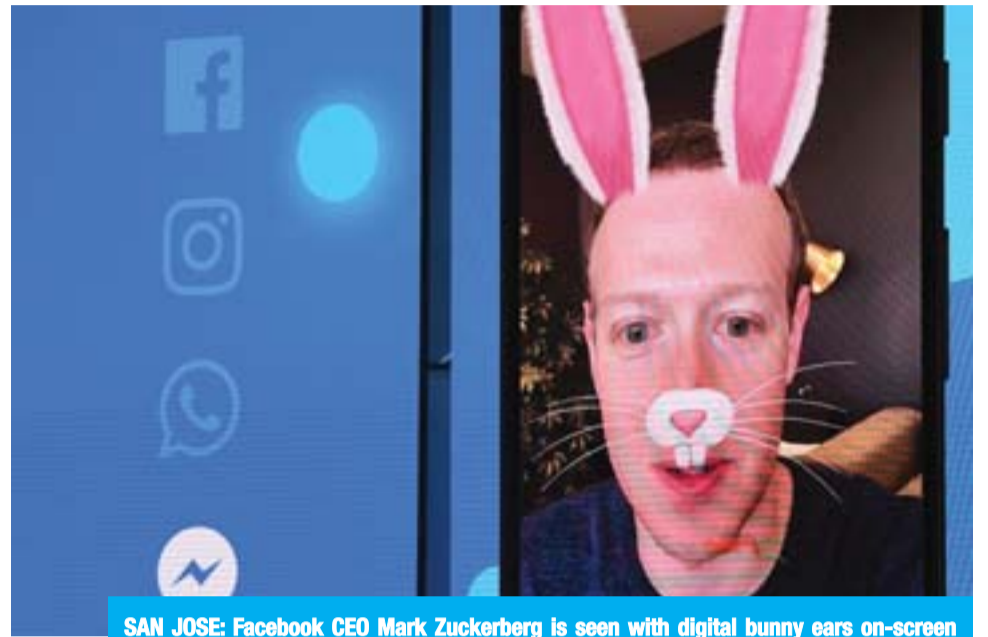
US President Donald Trump may rule the roost on Twitter, but he lags far behind Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Facebook, according to a study published yesterday. Modi is by far the most followed world leader on the gargantuan social networking platform, counting 43.2 million followers. That is nearly twice the 23.1 million who follow Trump, according to a study by communications firm Burson-Marsteller.

Of course, Facebook tends to be more widely used in Asia than Twitter which may also account for the large number of followers

## Could help bump up advertising

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy." In the literature, inserting a Babel Fish in an ear enabled a person to understand anything spoken in any language. Pixel Buds work wirelessly with second-generation Pixel smartphones to handle real-time translations.

Meanwhile, Netherlands-based startup Travis was at the Consumer Electronics Show gadget extravaganza early this year with a small device capable of translating conversations between people speaking different languages in real time. "Technology connects us



SAN JOSE: Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg is seen with digital bunny ears on-screen during the annual F8 summit at the San Jose McEnery Convention Center. —AFP

for Asian leaders. Cambodia's prime minister Hun Sen shot into fifth position after his following swelled nearly 50 percent to 9.6 million people, the study found. He therefore counts "more Facebook fans than Cambodia has Facebook users (7.1 million), but still fewer" than the 14.4 million Khmer speakers on Facebook," it pointed out.

The study, which analysed the activity of

650 personal and institutional Facebook pages of heads of state and government and foreign ministers since January 1, 2017, meanwhile showed that Trump easily counted most interactions on the platform. The US president counted a total of 204.9 million comments, likes and shares over the past 14 months—nearly twice as many as Modi, who counted 113.6 million, the study said. —AFP

## Disney to collaborate with Twitter on content

SAN FRANCISCO: Twitter announced a deal to collaborate with Disney on content, particularly live events from the entertainment giant's sports arm ESPN. Details about which sporting events would be streamed live on Twitter were to be revealed later this week. The partnership includes ads to accompany broadcasts, the companies said in a joint statement.

Twitter will also serve as an online venue for video from other Disney subsidiaries, including ABC and Marvel. Video has attracted users to Twitter, and social networks have found keen online appetite for sports. "Now more than ever, social platforms are putting a major focus on and investment in sports-related content," ESPN senior vice president Travis Howe said. "It is the new primary vehicle driving digital experiences to grow and engage audiences."

Twitter global vice president of revenue and content partnerships Matthew Derella called teaming up with Disney "a huge step forward in expanding the depth and breadth of video content we offer." The Disney collaboration came as Twitter announced 30 new deals for content namely touching on entertainment, sports and video games. Included in that mix is NBCUniversal, which will distribute live video and clips from an array of its properties, such as NBC News, MSNBC, Today, Telemundo, and E! News, Twitter said.

"People tell us what they want to see with the conversations they share on Twitter," said Twitter global head of content partnerships Kay Madati. "In the past year, we've really expanded our efforts with the best publishers and content creators in the world to bring a slate of programming that reflects those diverse content interests." Twitter announced that daily video views have nearly doubled at the service in the past year. The San Francisco-based company's shares ended the formal trading day up 4.52 percent to \$30.31. Last week, Twitter reported its second consecutive quarterly profit, boosting the outlook for the messaging platform after years in the red.

The one-to-many messaging service earned \$61 million in the first three months of the year, helped by strong growth in advertising revenue and modest gains in users. Twitter stock has doubled from a year ago, when concerns were high over the service's future. While Twitter has built a solid core base of celebrities, politicians and journalists, it has failed to match the broader appeal of Facebook and other social media platforms, hurting its ability to bring in ad revenues.

The network has stepped up efforts to boost its user base and engagement, adding streaming video partnerships, doubling the character limit on tweets to 280 and making it easier to create "tweetstorms" by stringing messaging together. It has also moved largely to an algorithmic-based feed using artificial intelligence that aims to deliver more tweets that drive interest and engagement. —AFP



BEIJING: This file photo illustration taken on March 23, 2018 shows Twitter logos on a computer screen. —AFP

## Indian inventors try novel approach to tame air pollution

NEW DELHI: As the pre-monsoon summer heat takes hold in New Delhi, two things are as inevitable as 40-degree-Celsius days: power cuts and air pollution from the diesel generators that then kick in. But a team of Indian engineers has figured out away to bring some good from choking generator exhaust: They are capturing it and turning it into ink. "The alarming thing about diesel generators is they are located in the heart of densely populated areas. It's spitting smoke right there," said Kushagra Srivastava, one of the three engineers who developed the technology, now installed in Gurgaon, a satellite city of New Delhi, and in the southern city of Chennai.

The idea, Srivastava said, came about when he and his co-founders stopped at a sugarcane juice stall on a hot day. They noticed a wall that had turned black behind the stand's diesel generator, where exhaust emerged from a pipe. They wondered if diesel exhaust might be used to produce paint - and set out to try.

The device they came up with, which attaches to generators, captures 90 percent of the soot particles from cooled diesel exhaust. The material can then be sold to ink manufacturers. Their company, Chakr Innovation, has so far installed 50 of the devices for government firms such as Indian Oil, real estate developers and other state government offices, earning more than 11 million rupees (\$200,000) in revenue in the first year, Srivastava said.

The company has plans to install another 50 devices over the coming year, he said. It has so far sold 500 kg of collected soot, which has been used to create 20,000 liters of ink, he added. Chakr Innovations is not the first start-up to see cash in diesel exhaust. A competitor called Graviky Labs, based in Bangalore, is using similar technology to turn diesel exhaust from vehicles into ink.

## Choking air

Srivastava and his co-inventors Arpit Dhupar and Prateek Sachan see themselves as part of a movement towards cleaner air and energy in a country where major cities struggle with choking air. About 1.1 million people a year die from the impacts of air pollution in India, according to a 2015 survey by the US-based Health Effects Institute. That is about a quarter of the total number of air pollution deaths worldwide, it said.

## Bio-tech reveals inner workings of bacteria mindset

PARIS: Scientists have figured out how some bacteria not only resist antibiotics but feast on the drugs designed to eradicate them, according to a study published recently. The findings, reported in Nature Chemical Biology, could help scientists genetically engineer bacteria to consume tonnes of antibiotics from industrial waste and livestock farming that leech into the soil and waterways every year, the researchers said.

"Ten years ago, we stumbled onto the fact that bacteria can eat antibiotics, and everyone was shocked," said lead investigator Gautam Dantas, an associate professor of immunology at the Washington University School of Medicine in Missouri. "Now that we understand how these bacteria do it, we can start thinking of ways to use this ability to get rid of antibiotics where they are causing harm."

Discovered in the 1920s, antibiotics have saved tens of millions of lives by defeating bacterial diseases such as pneumonia, tuberculosis and meningitis. But over the decades, bacteria have learned to fight back, building resistance to the same drugs that once reliably vanquished them. Penicillin—the original antibiotic, and once the most commonly prescribed—has fallen out of favour for this reason.

The World Health Organization has repeatedly warned the world is running out of effective antibiotics,



KANPUR: Indian commuters drive along a busy road as pedestrians try to cross a zebra crossing in the city of Kanpur of the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. —AFP

In New Delhi, levels of the most dangerous particles in the air are sometimes 10 times higher than the safe limit, the survey noted. Srivastava and Dhupar both grew up in New Delhi, which the World Health Organization in 2014 declared the most polluted city in the world. Sachan comes from Allahabad, the third most polluted city in WHO's 2016 rankings. "Earlier I remember there were a lot less cars on the road, there was a lot less congestion, and a lot more greenery," said Dhupar, Chakr's chief technology officer. But as trees were felled and roads widened to accommodate more cars, Dhupar - then in high school - developed chronic respiratory problems. Doctors put him on medication and warned him to stop playing sports.

"My problem is, whenever I start to run out of air, the anxiety levels shoot up," he said. Dhupar said many of his family and friends have also developed long-term respiratory issues. Diesel exhaust contributed to just 2 percent of all air pollution deaths in India in 2015, according to the Health Effects Institute. But in "confined spaces" in urban areas, where many generators are used, it repre-

sents a larger risk, said Pankaj Sadavarte, one of the report's researchers.

## Action in New Delhi

India has in place policies to monitor and restrict air pollution, but they can be difficult to enforce, experts say. Worries about air pollution are growing, however. Last November, the capital launched its first air quality emergency action plan during a particularly hazardous week when pollution spiked. The government halted construction within the city, raised parking fees to discourage driving and shut schools to keep children indoors.

The national Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is drafting a national policy to clean India's air, though its release has been delayed, said Sunil Dahiya, a senior campaigner with Greenpeace India. "The air pollution debate and health debate is picking up in India," Dahiya said in a telephone interview. "That momentum is forcing the policymakers to make our cities more livable." —Reuters

## Xerox CEO to resign in settlement with top shareholders

NEW YORK: The CEO of US copier and printer maker Xerox is stepping down to end a battle with shareholders opposed to a planned takeover by Japan's Fujifilm. Major shareholders Darwin Deason and Carl Icahn, who together control 15.2 percent of Xerox's shares, have vigorously opposed the takeover and have filed a suit to block it. On Friday, a US court ordered a temporary block of the takeover, saying it prioritised the interest of Xerox's CEO over its shareholders.

In a statement issued Tuesday in the US, Xerox said Jeff Jacobson would be replaced John Visentin as CEO, with Keith Cozza taking on his role as board chairman. Both men are backed by Deason and Icahn. Under the planned deal, Xerox would be absorbed by an existing joint venture known as Fuji Xerox, falling under the control of Fujifilm. After the transaction is completed, Fujifilm would hold 50.1 percent of Fuji Xerox, while current Xerox shareholders would receive a special cash dividend of \$2.5 billion.

Deason and Icahn sued in February claiming a secret 2001 deal between Xerox and Fujifilm contained a clause that prevented the Xerox board from seeking another buyer, effectively shortchanging the company's shareholders. —AFP

and called last year on governments and big pharma to create a new generation of drugs to fight ultra-resistant supergerms. Bacteria can become resistant when patients do not finish a course of treatment, giving the half-defeated bug a chance to recover and build immunity. Modern industry and agriculture hasten the rise of antibiotic resistance by saturating the environment with active drugs. People release unmetabolised antibiotics into the water system through their urine or feces.

## Bon appetit

Bacteria easily share genetic material. When resistant bacteria infiltrate the water or soil, they spread resistance-conferring genes to the bacteria species that were already there. To determine how some bugs not only withstand antibiotics but actually feed on them, Dantas and colleagues studied four species of soil bacteria known to flourish on a diet of penicillin.

The researchers found three sets of genes active in bacteria that consumed penicillin. They also discovered the single-celled organisms had learnt to neutralize and snip off toxic molecules, like a chef removing poison from a fugu fish. After that, it's "bon appetit". The new insights could lead to strategies for cleaning up antibiotic contamination in rivers, lakes and soil.

"With some smart engineering, we may be able to modify bacteria to break down antibiotics in the environment," said study lead author Terence Crofts, a researcher at Washington University. But any such a plan would require finding a way to speed up the action of the bacteria whose consumption of antibiotics—albeit effective—is very slow. "But now we know how they do it—it is always much easier to improve on something than to try to design a system from scratch," said Dantas. —AFP

Health

# British children learn the ABCs of FGM to help end harmful practice

## 137,000 girls in England and Wales have undergone FGM

LONDON: As teacher Tanya Mathiason flicked through a slideshow to display diagrams of male and female genitalia to primary school children in northwest London, no one flinched or giggled. Instead, the students eagerly discussed the meaning of the words: female, genital, and mutilation.

"Break those words down: what does female mean? What does genital mean? What does mutilation mean?" said Mathiason, the head of pastoral care at Norbury School in the culturally and ethnically diverse neighborhood of Harrow. "It means when someone cuts off stuff?" replied one student. "Harm?" said another.

By the time they leave Norbury School, all 640 students - both boys and girls - would have learnt about female genital mutilation (FGM), a ritual that usually involves the partial or total removal of the external genitalia including the clitoris. An estimated 137,000 women and girls in England and Wales have undergone FGM, according to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). FGM can cause chronic pain, menstrual problems, recurrent urinary tract infections, cysts and infertility. Some girls haemorrhage to death or die from infections. It can also cause fatal childbirth complications in later life.

### Young age

As FGM is mostly carried out between infancy and 15, school principal Louise Browning said she wanted the students to start learning about it in the third year, at about seven years old. "I became more aware that FGM was happening to girls at a much younger age than I thought," Browning told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "Who's to say that we don't have survivors in our school? I felt I was letting down my girls by not raising this. Our end goal is for this practice to stop."

Browning and her team worked with the National FGM Centre, run by children's charity Barnado's and the Local Government Association, to devise age-appropriate lessons, which they began teaching in Norbury School in 2015. It is one of only a handful of primary schools in the country that teaches students about FGM, but raising awareness among parents and children was necessary, she said. FGM mostly affects immigrant communities from various countries including Somalia, Sierra Leone, Eritrea, Sudan, Nigeria and Egypt - a demographic that is well-represented in the Harrow school.

"Many of our families, our children, come from FGM-practising communities so it is really important that they have this knowledge, that they leave here at 11 (years old) knowing what this practice is about," said pastoral manager Mathiason.

### Shocking

FGM is performed by Muslims and Christians and by followers of some indigenous religions. People often believe FGM is required by religion, but it is not mentioned in the Quran or the Bible. "Most people who do it think it's in their religion ... but no religion actually tells you to do that," said 11-year-old Khadija, who has learnt about FGM since she was seven.

"It's just shocking because it's most likely to be parents who would do it. They're the ones who love you and care about you, but instead they want to harm you," she added. In March, a London solicitor accused of forcing his daughter to be circumcised was acquitted, increasing pressure on police and prosecutors who have yet to secure a conviction for FGM more than 30 years after it was outlawed.

The prosecution was only the second to be brought under FGM legislation introduced in 1985. FGM is underpinned by the desire to control female sexuality, but beliefs around the practice vary enormously. Many believe it purifies the girl, brings her status in the community and prevents promiscuity. Uncut girls risk being ostracised.

Sonita Pobi, head of training at the National FGM Centre, said the lessons helped children make sense of the practice and know who to turn to for help, regardless of their cultural background or religion. "It's about giving children the vocabulary to speak up when something is wrong. It's about making children aware about the hidden form of abuse that may happen to them," said Pobi. After learning about FGM at Norbury School, 11-year-old Oliver said he felt empowered to help classmates and friends. "When I first learnt about it, I was quite scared because it was happening. But once I knew quite a bit about it, I knew that I couldn't really sort out the situation, but I would know who to speak to," he said. His classmate Naylen, also 11, agreed. "I think the FGM lessons are good for children to learn because ... we could make a change to all of these harmful activities," he said. —Reuters



KENYA: A woman shows the razor blade that she uses to cut girls' genitals in Mombasa.

## Ecstasy may relieve the agony of PTSD

PARIS: Better known to nightclubbers as ecstasy, the euphoria-inducing drug MDMA appears to alleviate Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in war veterans, firefighters, and police officers, researchers said yesterday. In a trial in the United States, three different doses of the drug were tested on 26 service personnel diagnosed with the debilitating affliction after experiencing trauma in the line of duty.

Those on the two higher doses — 75 or 125 milligrammes — enjoyed greater relief of PTSD symptoms

than those given the smallest dose of 30 mg, a team reported in the journal *The Lancet Psychiatry*. All 26 received psychotherapy throughout the drug trial, and did not know what dose they were receiving. A month after their second dose, 86 percent of the 75 mg group no longer met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD, said the study authors.

The figure was 58 percent for the 125 mg group and 29 percent for the 30 mg group. In a second leg of the study, participants previously on 30 mg who had their dose upped to 100-125 mg of MDMA saw symptoms "significantly" decrease. After one year, the severity of symptoms among the 26 remained "significantly reduced", the researchers reported. Sixteen participants who suffered from PTSD when they joined the trial no longer met the criteria for diagnosis. —AFP

CLINIC  
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248 33 199

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

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## What's On

# Ahmadi Governor attends ceremony for school environment projects



Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah attended the closing ceremony of the environment friendly schools project at Um Al-Haiman Intermediate Girls School and thanked HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his constant care for the environment. He said "we long to have friendship with the environment as it is a relationship we all share and we can all truthfully interpret the goal we were created for, which is to build earth and preserve the bounties Almighty Allah granted us." The governor congratulated the winning schools and wished the rest the best of luck in the coming years. Head of the environment friendly schools project Tariq Shihab declared Ratqa Girls Secondary School as the first place winner this year. He said 19 schools participated in the project this year.



## CRYchess 2018 registration closing

Friends of CRY Club (FOCC), announces the rescheduled dates for children's chess tournament 2018. "Tala & Lulwa Alajeel Education Fund CRYchess 2018" will be held at the Gulf Indian School (GIS), Fahaheel, on

Friday, 11th May 2018, from 0900 - 1630 hrs. Reporting time is 8.30am on 11th May, 2018.

It is open to all school children. The players will be placed into groups, allocated by their age, to play in the Swiss pairing format. There will be five rounds of approximately 45 minutes each. All children will play all the rounds. Medals & certificates are awarded to all participating children and first 3 positions in each group win trophies. With CRY, everybody wins. The last date for registration is Sunday, 6th May, 2018.



## GUST students showcase capstone projects

Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) Computer Science students presented their capstone projects as part of their senior year requirements. The projects, which consisted of fully functional mobile applications, were presented to faculty members from the Computer Science Department, GUST management, and guests. The projects will be graded and included in the students' final grades.

Six projects were presented using various material, including a live demonstration and hands-on testing of the application on smartphones. The students were able to demonstrate the application of theory and software development fundamentals through the development of their software applications. Through their ideas, they were able to provide solutions for contemporary real-world problems. The projects included a closet organizer called 'MyCloset', a full-fledged multiplayer game called 'Sequence', and an organizer specifically catered to GUST students called 'Daily GUST'. All teams were mentored by

Computer Science Department Associate Professor, Dr Mahmoud Omar Elish.

GUST's Head of the Computer Science Department, Dr Taber Ali, said, "I can safely say that many of these projects can be commercialized, as they are designed with a high level of professionalism. We are extremely proud of the level of talent and creativity demonstrated by our students, and would like to congratulate them on their efforts. This event sheds light on the depth of the CS Department curriculum and the level of education provided by its faculty."

The projects come as a culmination of the students' integrative experience in GUST's educational program, and demonstrate the level of knowledge attained. Following all the presentations, three teams were awarded:

- Best Technical Work - Shoufhum
- Best Idea - Eleos
- Best Presentation - Salaty

This event takes place every semester, and its goal is to highlight the vast amount of effort, concentration, and creativity it takes to put together a fully functional application or software applicable in daily life. GUST's Computer Science Department continuously pursues opportunities to encourage its students to apply their imagination in technological innovations, applying what they learn in class to make a difference and address real-world issues.



## LOYAC concludes 'Trainers Training'

Loyac concluded the "Trainers Training" program that was held under the umbrella of "KON" social entrepreneurship program to promote social responsibility. It was held in cooperation with Kuwait Hotels Company at the Marina hotel and in the presence of the chairperson of Loyac Fareah Al-Saggaf and Professor Beth Goldstein from Babson College, USA.

Al-Saggaf thanked KHC - Marina hotel and said Loyac meets the youth needs by granting them valuable opportunities to make a positive change through the "KON" program. She said Kuwait is the first country in the Arab world that is working on redefining the principal of social entrepreneurship through "KON", which in turn contributed to reviving this principle. She also praised the cooperation with Babson College - USA, which is considered a leader in this field. She said the government, private and civil sectors form a connected net-



work, and if one side is compromised, the cooperation network will not be complete, nor will success be achieved.

Babson college representative Feyenoord Radakison said they were delighted to present the training program for the third consecutive year. He felt the achievements of the various teams among

young entrepreneurs who presented plans of their social work six weeks after the interactive training, by following Babson's method from idea to reality. The "KON" social entrepreneurship program, in cooperation with Babson college for age group 12-16 years will start in July and will last six weeks.

## Hardee's announces 2nd winner in 'Go Large' campaign

Yousuf Abdullah Al-Houly won the first prize in the second week of the Hardee's campaign "Go Large" out four winners (a winner every week), which is a 2018 Chevrolet Camaro 2018 and four mobiles given by Hardee's to its customers. Houly was very happy with the surprise after being told he was the winner. He said he was with his family at home and could not believe the news, and did not think he would be the lucky winner of the 2018 Camaro. He added he used to ignore such coupons and not pay much attention, except this time, which came with a result contrary to his expectations.

Houly said he is in constant contact with Hardee's and is a permanent customer due to its quality and new items. Houly said he lives in Jaber Al-Ahmad and did not know that the chicken fillet meal will lead him to own a 2018 Chevy Camaro. Director of Hardee's Kuwait



Ahmad Zain said the Hardee's chain caters to all age groups. He said the contest was held in coordination with Talabat.com, adding that the goal behind the campaign is not only to increase sales, but to give an extra advantage to customers and the opportunity to win valuable prizes.

Director of licensing at the chain Ahmad Hafez said Hardee's applied for approval of the campaign by the Commerce and Industry Ministry, which cooperated and helped to launch the campaign in an organized manner. He said the "Upsize it and Win" campaign is for one month, giving winners a 2018 Chevrolet Camaro 2018 and four iPhones every week.

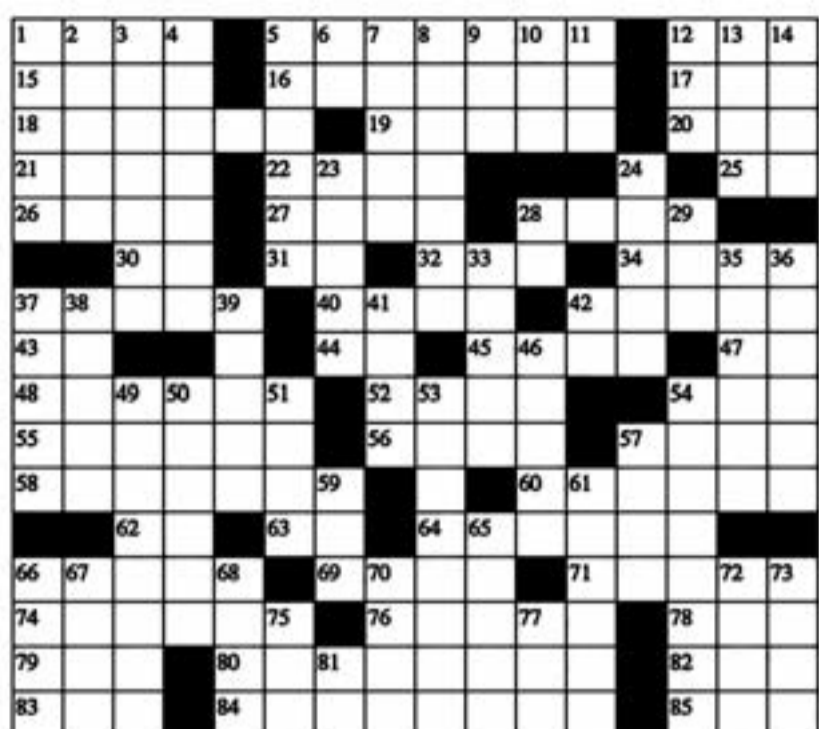
Prizes will be handed out in a major ceremony that will be held under the supervision of the Commerce and Industry Ministry on May 12.

Hafez said the draw is done under the supervision of Commerce and Industry Ministry, and the more coupons one has in the draw, the more the chances to win, adding the draw is conducted electronically. He said Hardee's has always been present, and what is new are its products, quality and speed. Its sales are always the highest among its competitors. Social media official Amnah Abduljaleel said Hardee's is among the most-ordered restaurants on Talabat.com, adding that she noticed enthusiastic reactions by customers to the "Go Large" campaign. She said there will be future cooperation with the Hardee's chain of restaurants.





CROSSWORD 1899



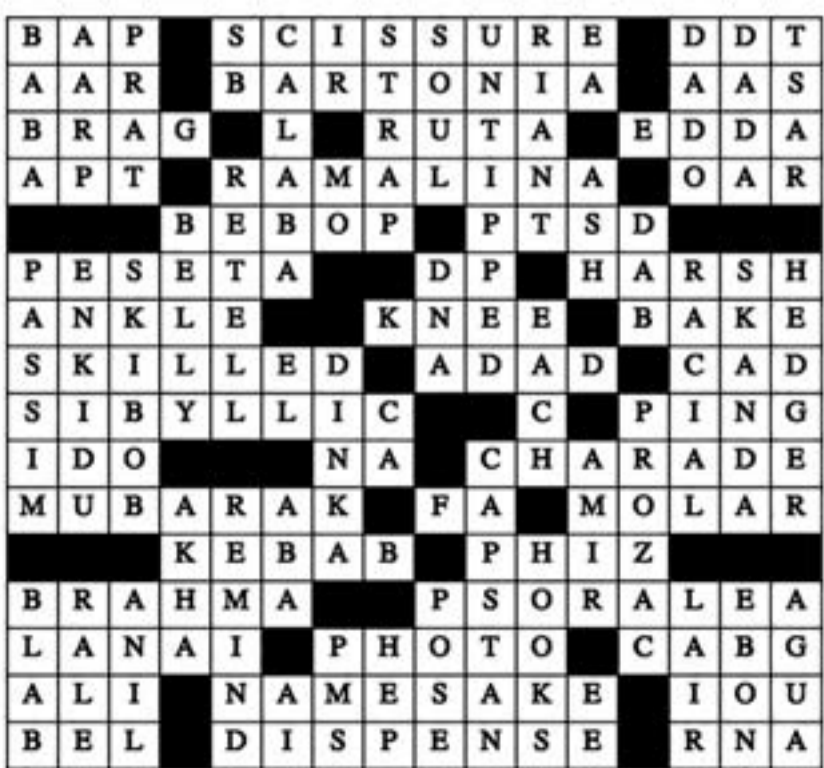
ACROSS

- 1. Gymnastic apparatus consisting of two parallel wooden bars supported on uprights.
15. Excel or defeat in a game.
17. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
18. A city in northwestern Syria.
19. Causing nasal discharge.
21. An extension at the end and at right angles to the main building.
22. The wood of the sabicu which resembles mahogany.
23. Yellow-fever mosquitoes.
24. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
25. A primeval personification of air and breath.
26. Large lipoproteins rich in triglycerides.
27. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
28. Informal or slang terms for mentally irregular.
29. A roll of photographic film holding a series of frames to be projected by a movie projector.
30. A ductile malleable reddish-brown corrosion-resistant diamagnetic metallic element.
31. Half the width of an cm.
32. The longest division of geological time.
33. A metrical unit with unstressed-stressed syllables.
34. Small shrubby African tree having compound leaves and racemes of small fragrant green flowers.
35. Slightly wet.
36. The local time at the 0 meridian passing through Greenwich, England.
37. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
38. A town in north central Oklahoma.
39. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
40. 1 species.
41. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
42. Separate or cut with a tool, such as a sharp instrument.
43. (informal) Exceptionally good.
44. A small square tile of stone or glass used in making mosaics.
45. People of the same race or nationality who share a distinctive culture.
46. Being nine more than ninety.
47. A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
48. A warning against certain acts.
49. Relatively low in price or charging low prices.
50. Being of delicate or slender build.
51. Bottle that has a narrow neck.
52. The capital of Croatia.
53. Conforming to an ultimate standard of perfection or excellence.
54. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
55. Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
56. A member of a military unit trained as shock troops for hit-and-run raids.
57. A member of a Mayan people of southwestern Guatemala.
58. Having any of numerous bright or strong colors reminiscent of the color of blood or cherries or tomatoes or rubies.
59. (Greek mythology) A son of Zeus who became king of Lycia.
60. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

- 1. (botany) Especially of leaves.
2. The mission in San Antonio where in 1836 Mexican forces under Santa Anna besieged and massacred American rebels who were fighting to make Texas independent of Mexico.
3. (Old Testament) Wife of Isaac and mother of Jacob and Esau.
4. Shaped like a spine or thorn.
5. The total output of a writer or artist (or a substantial part of it).
6. An ancient city of Sumer located on a former channel of the Euphrates River.
7. Relating to or used in or intended for trade or commerce.
8. (botany) Outer tissue of bark.
9. Either of two folds of skin that can be moved to cover or open the eye.
10. Used of a single unit or thing.
11. An affirmative.
12. The corporate executive responsible for the operations of the firm.
13. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
14. Divulge information or secrets.
15. United States tennis player (born in Czechoslovakia) who won several singles championships.
16. Submerged aquatic plant having narrow leaves and small flowers.
17. An associate degree in nursing.
18. A light touch or stroke.
19. A drama set to music.
20. The capital of Lombardy in northern Italy.
21. An appliance that corrects dental irregularities.
22. Showing deterioration from age.
23. Tropical American plants with basal rosettes of fibrous sword-shaped leaves and flowers in tall spikes.
24. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
25. The ratio of the circumference to the diameter of a circle.
26. A desert in southern Israel.
27. Surrounded by hostile forces.
28. An East Indian sailor.
29. A large mass of ice floating at sea.
30. One of four subclasses or superorder of Monocotyledones.
31. A syntactic string that forms a part of some larger syntactic unit.
32. Tropical woody herb with showy yellow flowers and flat pods.
33. An associate degree in applied science.
34. (trademark) A material used to coat cooking utensils and in industrial applications where sticking is to be avoided.
35. Make amendments to.
36. Exhibiting or restored to vigorous good health.
37. Either of two large muscles of the chest.
38. Lacking in strength or firmness or resilience.
39. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
40. God of love and erotic desire.
41. A long thin fluffy scarf of feathers or fur.
42. A rapid bustling commotion.
43. A form of address for a man.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

A perfect day to make decisions and plans for the future has arrived: no problems seem too large to overcome or deal with. Your practical side does battle with the dreamy tendency you experience today. A certain task demands that you focus and push away any distractions. A beloved mentor steps in to give you reliable direction; you already know this information but confirmation from this person is much needed at this time. A project that seemed impossible seems very doable now; you figure out a unique way to bring this to a close. Your imagination is strong and actually very productive as you apply it to solving an odd problem; this could be a big breakthrough. You might just enjoy this evening under the stars with a very good listener.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Then new phase you have entered ushers in a time of things going your way, it's almost as though you're able to command fate. Now's the time to work on demanding problems or projects that could require discipline and long-term commitment. Failure isn't an option nor is giving up; this could mean personal or work-related issues. Your manners, fashion and refinement help you land an important account or customer; this is something that's strongly indicated. You may just find that you have been placed under a microscope for examination by a critical person: a boss or in-law could be what this means. Sitting back and observing shows you things you truly never imagined. This evening you unwind with those who behave, think and believe as you do.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

When those around you make their feelings known you're in complete agreement. All around good will and support are prominent at this time. Your surroundings highlight your style and grace; this is especially true when attending a social event. You easily grasp the theoretical and mystic concepts explained by a new friend. A person you're close to could feel threatened by the new way you tend to business; consider that this person chooses to keep their mind closed to anything new or different from what they've known for years. A nice surprise makes your day, especially when you discover who sent it. You receive a sincere compliment on your talents and looks. If you feel pressure and tension from a certain person, consider breaking ties now.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

This is a day that runs without a hitch; peace and quiet are likely. An old, troubled relationship comes to an end; it's a relief when the other person chooses to terminate the relationship as this is what you hoped for. It's easy for you to get along with anyone today and this creates a progressive, productive atmosphere. You're grateful for the quality of your life and those you share it with; more and more negativity is being eliminated. You have strong affection for someone who brings joy to your life; this could indicate a young person or beloved pet. You find yourself in charge of a number of people; you're definitely the best choice for this position. Someone calls with news of a new situation you've just stepped into; this is good news.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You become passionate about your feelings for the mysteries of life, death and paranormal activities. You could choose to be in denial about something that needs your true realization; no one gains from putting their head in the sand! Forgiveness is something you have a problem with; working on this helps tremendously. You are coming to understand that we're all connected on some level. You know instinctively that a new acquaintance is a good choice for employment. Breaking away from the old ways of doing things is interesting but you could try to talk yourself into feeling threatened. You visit an unusual place to shop for organic foods that you have wanted to try for some time. A younger person makes your day when they pay you a surprise visit.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Interaction with others reveals your most unique qualities. Something you desire seems out of reach but you could find that attaining it's just waiting for you to act; this is part of your learning about manifesting what you want! You're able to comprehend theories you couldn't before now. It's possible to overcome a phobia you have dealt with all of your life; you can feel yourself growing and strengthening. Opinions and understanding shift regarding how life on the planet actually works and how eternity is involved. You could actually allow yourself a small luxury. Your worth's far more than you let yourself see or understand while others see it very clearly and say so. A personal circumstance seems to be changing in front of your eyes.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

When you say what you think it's not appreciated by those who hear it even though they asked for it! Take care that you don't become thoughtless and say things you definitely shouldn't; this could have long-lasting ill affects you may regret. You want to remove yourself from a project you don't feel good about; timing could be everything no matter your choice to push this. Your connections to your coworkers are strong and sincere; this is why productivity and quality are prominent! Being ahead of the game is always best, but even if you're not, you excel. Taking time to revisit how you accomplished something in the past reaches into the present to offer insight. A new perspective on an old situation turns out to be priceless!



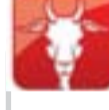
Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Someone seems to think it's alright to show disrespect even in front of others! You're able to get people and places where they need to be; being organized brings success! New ways, new methods these prove their value. Being practical at work comes with ease; this could be difficult at home. New inventions and methods of communicating capture your attention and you could find yourself attending some sort of convention or gathering regarding these. A challenge you receive only makes you more determined to reach a certain goal. You catch something just in time before it causes a huge problem. A visit to a place of culture is strongly indicated for you this evening after a long day at work. You're grateful for the privileges you have in life.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You're interested in secrets and mysteries; you enjoy something considered taboo. You have an opportunity to put someone in their place but decline to do so in favor of sitting back and letting them reap what they have sown. Abundance is indicated in the areas of money, love and health; it seems easier to make plans for future prosperity. A comment made in passing provides insight you weren't looking for but are very glad to have at this time. Your regard for things of beauty and value is heightened; value doesn't have to mean monetary worth. A mentor means more to you than they know; perhaps the time to tell them has come. You may choose to attend a social function that may upset someone. Doing something for yourself is golden.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

An energy of creativity soars to the fore; now's the time to write that book or poem, paint that masterpiece or any other creative endeavor. You're surrounded by those who love and respect you; this is a day when everything feels right, one task flows into another without any problem. Setting your goals high works well and you decide to make hay while the sun shines! Intuition serves as a most helpful map if you follow it! Doing well with groups and maybe larger numbers of people is prominent at this time. Reading or taking in a movie stirs creative juices you put to very good use. You come to understand something you reflected on in the past. Allowing an open mind gets you far and you're learning that going with the flow is easier.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Your head could be in the clouds today, with images of futuristic things dancing in your head. You could trip upon a way to do something that might get in someone else's way; this is difficult as you need to get your project done as soon as possible! The warmth of home on a brisk early spring day causes gratitude in your heart; this is your haven from the world. You receive a visit from someone carrying juicy gossip; this makes you even more determined to do nothing gossip-worthy! You can't believe your good fortune later when you win a raffle or some such prize; absorb it all, intelligent water bearer. You could have a tendency to overspend. Good vibes flow into the evening when a meal shared with friends brings wonderful news.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You become interested in volunteering in some way to make a difference in your community; you could actually have a problem choosing as there are so many causes worthy of your time. A strong sense of unity is a hallmark of the new phase you have entered. You could find that you're annoyed on both the home and work fronts. Decisions regarding both should be put on pause until a better time. You experience simplistic enjoyment, nothing fancy or showy for you! Keeping your thoughts inside feels better than sharing. There's nothing so comforting as a best friend in your time of need, whether sipping warm cocoa with cookies or having a stiff drink, it works every time as long as you're together. Later, reflect on your good fortune.

Wordsearch Puzzle

World Currencies

Wordsearch puzzle grid with clues: Find and circle all of the world currencies that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a John Paul Getty quotation. Includes a list of currencies at the bottom.

Yesterday's Solution

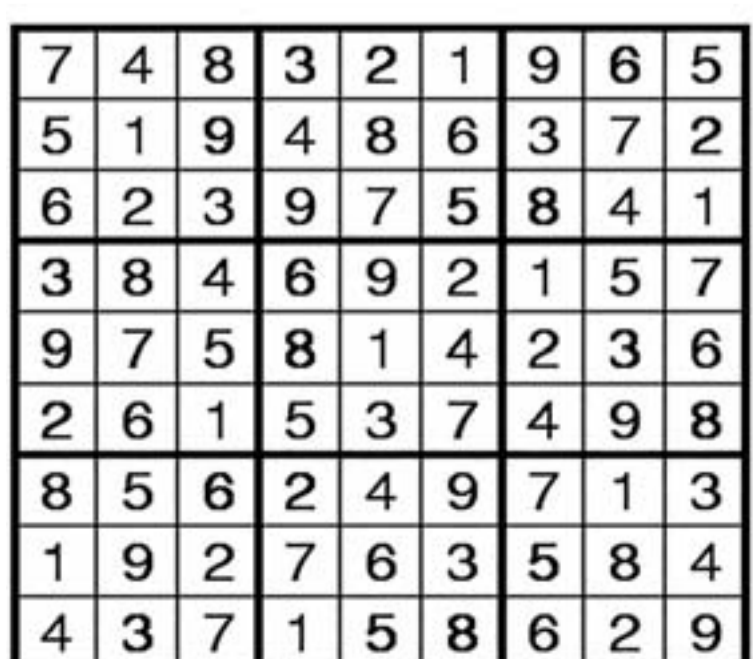
Winter

Wordsearch puzzle grid with clues: Find and circle all of the winter-related words that are hidden in the grid. Includes a list of winter-related words at the bottom.

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution







## Grande announces new album Sweetener

**A**riana Grande announced her new album 'Sweetener' will be released in July, whilst co-hosting 'The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon'. The 24-year-old singer surprised fans by unveiling details of her follow-up to 2016's 'Dangerous Woman' on the US show on Tuesday night. Ariana confirmed the tracks 'God Is A Woman', 'The Light Is Coming' and 'Raindrops' will join the lead single 'No Tears Left to Cry' on the LP, whilst teasing that on the 20th of every month she is going to share something special with her fans. Describing the record, the 'Side to Side' hitmaker, who has worked with Max Martin and Pharrell Williams on the tracks, said: "It's kind of about bringing light to a situation or to someone's life, or somebody else who brings light to your life." The 'Bang Bang' singer recently got fans speculating about her next single with a series of cryptic tweets about "R.E.M.". Ariana tweeted the letters: "r.e.m." upside down, before posting what appear to be lyrics. She wrote: "last night ..... boy i met you ... yea ..... when i was sleeeeecep ... you're



such a dream to me (sic)" And added: "and it was on a day like this ... yeah ... if you can believe ... if you can believe ... you're such a dream to me (sic)" She has not confirmed a date for the new track, but she did respond to a fan who used the hashtag #3daysuntilREM. Ariana replied: "Not quite yet. u know I can't resissst sum times. I love u. (sic)" 'No Tears Left to Cry' was inspired by the terrorist attack that hit her concert in Manchester, North West England last May. In the track, she touches on the resilience of the city, especially felt at the One Love Manchester benefit gig that she headlined in the wake of the horrific attack outside her Manchester Arena concert. On the chorus, she sings: "Ain't got no tears left to cry. So I'm loving, I'm living, I'm picking it up." The single - which was produced by Max Martin - also features the line: "We're way too fly to partake in all this hate. We out here vibin', we vibin', we vibin'." The accompanying music video includes the worker bee - which has been a symbol of the city of Manchester since at least 1842.

## Mendes inspired by the sea

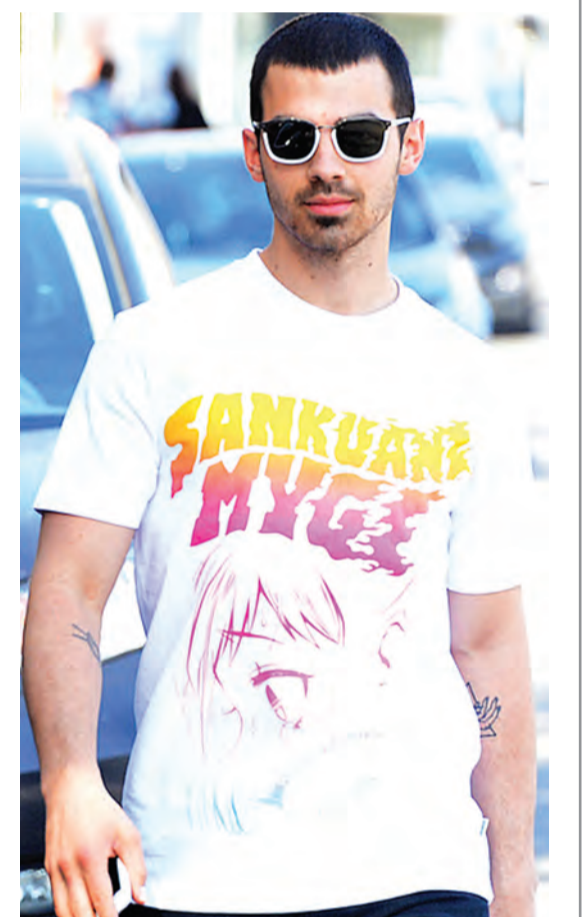
**S**hawn Mendes was inspired to write 'In My Blood' by "staring at the ocean" in silence. The 19-year-old musician released his new single - which tackles feelings of anxiety - last month, and has now revealed that during the writing process, he

would often spend time staring out to sea in complete silence until something inspired him. He said: "We went to this amazing studio in Malibu, it's called the Woodshed. It's basically up on a cliff and there's this incredible view of the ocean. So whenever I

got stuck on lyrics I would walk outside with the writers and we would stare at the ocean and kind of not say anything for like five minutes, until something kind of came to us. And for some weird, magical reason, something always did." The 'Lost in Japan' singer was nervous to show people the vulnerable track when he first finished piecing it together, but felt at ease once his management team were "blown away" by it. He said: "Everybody in the room was kind of just like emotionally blown away by the song and the concept and the feel, and after that it was kind of let's roll, we got this thing." Tackling the subject of anxiety in his new track was a different move for the 'Mercy' hitmaker, and he has also admitted that his upcoming self-titled third album - which is set to be released on May 25 - was written differently to his previous material. Speaking in a video for Billboard magazine's 'How It Went Down' series, Shawn said: "What we kind of started doing for this entire album was we would just spend time talking about what it was I wanted to talk about instead of just diving in and trying to find what to talk about." Previously, Shawn had said he intended for 'In My Blood' to be more "serious" than his other tracks. He said: "I love all of my other songs, but ... it was all kind of more vague topics about a relationship. This is my first time breaking into something that's more serious and more about me."



## Jonas would love to duet with country star Musgraves



**J**oe Jonas says it would be a "dream" to duet with Kacey Musgraves. The DNCE singer is huge fan of the country star - who released her third album 'Golden Hour' in March - and would love to team up with her on a song. Asked if it's on the cards, Joe said: "I would love that. That would be amazing. I am a huge Kacey Musgraves fan. Doing a collaboration with her a duet would be a dream." The 28-year-old star shot to fame in Jonas Brothers in 2005, along with brothers Nick and Kevin Jonas, but he says a reunion won't be happening anytime soon as they are all "focused" on their own careers and lives. Joe - who is engaged to 'Game of Thrones' actress Sophie Turner - told E! News: "I think right now we are all focused on our individual careers and personal lives. "We get to be brothers and that's something that want to really be the forefront of who we are as people. I think right now we are doing our own thing. You can never say never but we are going to stay focused on our individual stuff." However, Joe previously admitted that he hadn't ruled out the idea completely. Speaking in 2015, the 'Cake By The Ocean' hitmaker said the 'Lovebug' group - who disbanded in 2013 - could easily record a new LP together in the future because they still "get along" well and there was no animosity when they split. He said: "Seeing where things will lead us. It's easy to say we're done and that we're never doing it again, but then we both look at each other and go, 'We obviously get along.' And who knows - years from now we could be like, 'All right, let's make a record.' It could easily happen." The trio released four albums during their eight years together, their last record was 2009's 'Lines, Vines and Trying Times'.

## AGUILERA TO RELEASE SONG PRODUCED BY WEST?

**C**hristina Aguilera has reportedly recorded a song with Kanye West. The 'Beautiful' hitmaker is said to be planning on dropping the "tribal-like" track produced by the 40-year-old rapper "this week." A source told The New York Post's PageSix Column that the song "is produced by Kanye [West] and that "It's very tribal-like, with heavy drum samples .??. The insider also teased that her first single from her forthcoming record, thought to be called 'Liberation', will feature another "big" artist and her album is a complete new direction for Christina who has given her image an overhaul with the help of a new manager. They added that "the first proper single from the album will be a big duet, but her team isn't ready to announce the other singer-yet. "Christina has changed her look, her management has got her great new artists and consult-

ants to work with, she's in a great place." The 37-year-old star teased the record's title during a concert in Azerbaijan last weekend. During a short interlude, a video was shown which seemed to tease the star's upcoming eighth studio album. A fan recording of the video was posted on Twitter by fan account Xtina Daily, and shows a series of shots of the megastar whilst her voice lists a series of words beginning with "ex". Christina says in the video: "Ex. Xtina. Exhale. Explore. Express. Experiment. Exploit. Exclusive. Exist. Expire. My existence has no expiration. This is my liberation. This is our liberation. Be liberated with me. It's time for liberation. As one, a liberated nation." The video concludes with the words "Xtina, liberation" repeated several times. 'Liberation' will be Christina's first album in six years, with her last studio venture being 2012's 'Lotus'.

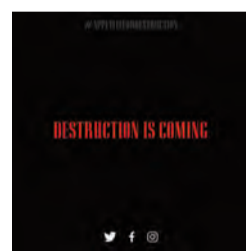


## DMA's unveil new Dawning at London concert

**T**he DMA's performed a brand new version of their song 'Dawning' as they rocked the O2 Forum Kentish Town in London on Tuesday night. The Australian three-piece rock band - Johnny Took, Tommy O'Dell and Matt Mason - released their second album 'For Now' last Friday and they treated a packed out audience at the venue to tracks to a host of tracks from the acclaimed LP. The band surprised their fans by playing 'Dawning' twice with the second rendition being a tweaked extended version of the tune which prompted a mass sing-along from a rambunctious crowd. Other highlights from the record included 'In the Air', 'Emily Whyte' and new single 'Break Me', whilst hit ballad 'Delete' - taken from their first album 'Hills End' - drew huge cheers and featured beautiful vocal harmonies between singer Tommy and guitarist Matt. The band briefly left the stage but after their fans chanted for more music they returned for a three-track encore of 'Play It Out', 'In the Moment' and 'Lay Down'. The DMA's incredible gig comes just days after their new album received a glowing recommendation from Liam Gallagher - whose former band Oasis has been cited as a major influence by the trio on their songs. The 'Wall of Glass' hitmaker posted on Twitter: "Just heard the new DMA's record I world BIBLICAL as you were LG x [sic]" Talking about the recommendation exclusively to BANG Showbiz, guitarist Johnny said: "It's cool. Growing up listening to guitar music and popular guitar music, he's been there and done it, he's been at the top of it. It's good to get a thumbs up from your peers, it's pretty damn cool and it will help us sell a few more tickets, you know."

## Guns N' Roses tease Appetite for Destruction news

**G**uns N' Roses are teasing fans with an incoming announcement involving their debut album 'Appetite for Destruction'. A billboard featuring the artwork from the 'Sweet Child of Mine' hitmakers' record, featuring all five original members, has been erected in Camden, north London, and has got fans speculating that a full reunion with drummer Steven Adler and guitarist Izzy Stradlin could be happening. However, with the heavy rock band's seminal 1987 LP turning 31 in July, it could simply lead to Axl Rose and co-re-releasing or re-issuing the album. There is also a new website that has been launched, with the cryptic message: "Destruction is coming." Axl, Slash and Duff McKagan reunited with original drummer Steven for the first time since 1990 at their concert in Cincinnati in July 2016. As for Izzy, he said he didn't rejoin Guns N' Roses for their tour because they wouldn't share the money "equally". The 56-year-old musician - who left the band in 1991 after six



years - refused to come out on the road with them because he claimed the group weren't willing to pay him the same figure as everyone else. Talking to Twitter, he wrote: "They didn't want to split the loot equally. Simple as that. Moving right along... (sic)" Axl responded admitting he had "no idea" why his old bandmate didn't join him, Slash and Duff. He said: "I don't really know what to say about Izzy. It's like you could have a conversation and think it's one way, and the next day it's another way. And I'm not trying to take any shots at Izzy. It's just his thing is kind of his thing, whatever that is." With Izzy absent from the line-up, Richard Fortus has been filling in on guitar. Frank Ferrer, who has been a member of the band since 2006, is on drums in the absence of Steven. The 'Welcome to the Jungle' hitmakers play Download Festival this June and are also preparing for the next leg of their 'Not In This Lifetime Tour', which kicks off on June 3 in Berlin, Germany.

## Dame Vera Lynn nominated for two Classic BRIT Awards

**D**ame Vera Lynn has been nominated for two Classic BRIT Awards. The 'Land of Hope and Glory' hitmaker - who reached the grand age of 101 in March - has already been honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award and now the iconic singer, widely known as 'The Forces' Sweetheart', is in the running for Female Artist of the Year and Classic FM Album of the Year for '100', which she released last year to mark her 100th birthday - making the centenarian the only musician to release an album. Hans Zimmer has received three nods in the Soundtrack Of The Year category for his work on BBC series 'Blue Planet II', and

blockbuster films 'Blade Runner 2049' and war thriller 'Dunkirk'. Britain's Got Talent' star Tokio Myers too has three nominations for Classic BRITs Breakthrough Artist of the Year, Male Artist of the Year and Album of the Year for his debut LP 'Our Generation'. Other notable nominees include Alexander Armstrong and Alfie Boe, who both collaborated with Vera on '100', and have received two nominations each. Alfie is up for Group of the Year with musical partner Michael Ball and their LP 'Together Again' is up for Album of the Year. Alexander - who is also co-hosting the evening along with Myleene Klass - is also nominated for

his album 'In A Winter Night' and Male Artist of the Year. Geoff Taylor, Chief Executive BPI & BRIT Awards, said: "The nominations for this year's Classic BRIT Awards have captured the essence of classic music in all its exciting and diverse forms. From operatic traditions to contemporary classical and from film and games soundtracks to musicals, all forms of classic music and the artists that bring it to life will be celebrated at this year's awards. I am so thrilled that British music legend Dame Vera Lynn is honored as our Lifetime Achievement Award recipient." The Classic BRIT Awards return after a five-year break. The ceremony will take



place on June 13 at London's Royal Albert Hall, with Andrea Bocelli, and Michael and Alfie's double act Ball & Boe, Sir Bryn Terfel and Tokio all performing on the night. The ceremony will be broadcast on ITV and in partnership with Classic FM, and will celebrate music from the world of classical, film, television, theatre and games.

Lifestyle | Gossip

# Del Toro says Cannes Festival voting process is amusing

**B**enicio Del Toro finds the voting process at the Cannes Film Festival to be amusing. The 51-year-old actor is set to preside over the jury of Un Certain Regard at the annual film festival in the south of France, and Del Toro - who served on the jury for the 2010 Cannes Competition - has revealed details of the regimented voting process. He recalled: "You vote really early in the morning the day of the awards. It's like, you get up at 8am and you go to this castle and they close the doors and you have to vote for everything in that day and then there's a lot of like, back and forth: 'We've got to vote again.'" Del Toro served on the 2010 jury alongside the likes of Tim Burton and Kate Beckinsale, and he admitted they laughed a lot about the process. He



told IndieWire: "Not about the movie, but laughing about the process. 'We got to that point where even if you really care about a movie that was not getting any votes, you had to laugh. You go, 'Okay, well I see the world a little bit different.'" Meanwhile, Del Toro has also bemoaned the decline of cinema in America. However, the actor remains committed to the platform, revealing he watches "very little TV". He said: "They're in danger in the numbers here in America. 'I understand that they're not in danger in the [entire] world. In some places, it's booming. 'Me personally, I'm a movie guy. I grew up liking movies. I watch all movies. I watch movies from all over the world. I don't think that movies can disappear. The two-hour, the three-hour format. I see very little TV."

# SCORSESE EXPRESSES CONCERN FOR HEALTH OF THE MOVIE BUSINESS

**M**artin Scorsese has accused review websites of damaging the movie business. The 75-year-old filmmaker - who has directed some of the most iconic movies in recent cinema history, such as 'Goodfellas', 'Taxi Driver' and 'Raging Bull' - has hit out at review aggregator websites, saying they devalue cinema. He explained: "It can all be summed up in the word that's being used now: content. 'All movie images are lumped together. You've got a picture, you've got a TV episode, a new trailer, you've got a how-to video on a coffee-maker, you've got a Super Bowl commercial, you've got 'Lawrence of Arabia', it's all the same. 'They can also turn a picture off and go straight to the next piece of content. If there's no sense of value tied to a given movie, of course, it can be sampled in bits and pieces and just forgotten.'" Scorsese argued that aggregator sites encourage people to make a snap judgment of movies, which he believes to be detrimental to the industry. The Hollywood icon told Entertainment Weekly: "The horrible idea they reinforce [is] that every picture, every image is there to be instantly judged and dismissed without giving audiences time to see it. 'Time to see it, maybe ruminate and maybe make a decision for themselves. So the great 20th century art form, the American art form, is reduced to content.'" Scorsese told the attendees at the Turner Classic Movies Film Festival that they were able to recognize the distinction between disposable content and real cinema. He said: "You know the difference between a YouTube video and the great American art form. You react against the devaluation of cinema and movies by showing up."



# Cavill hints at rivalry with Johnson's Black Adam

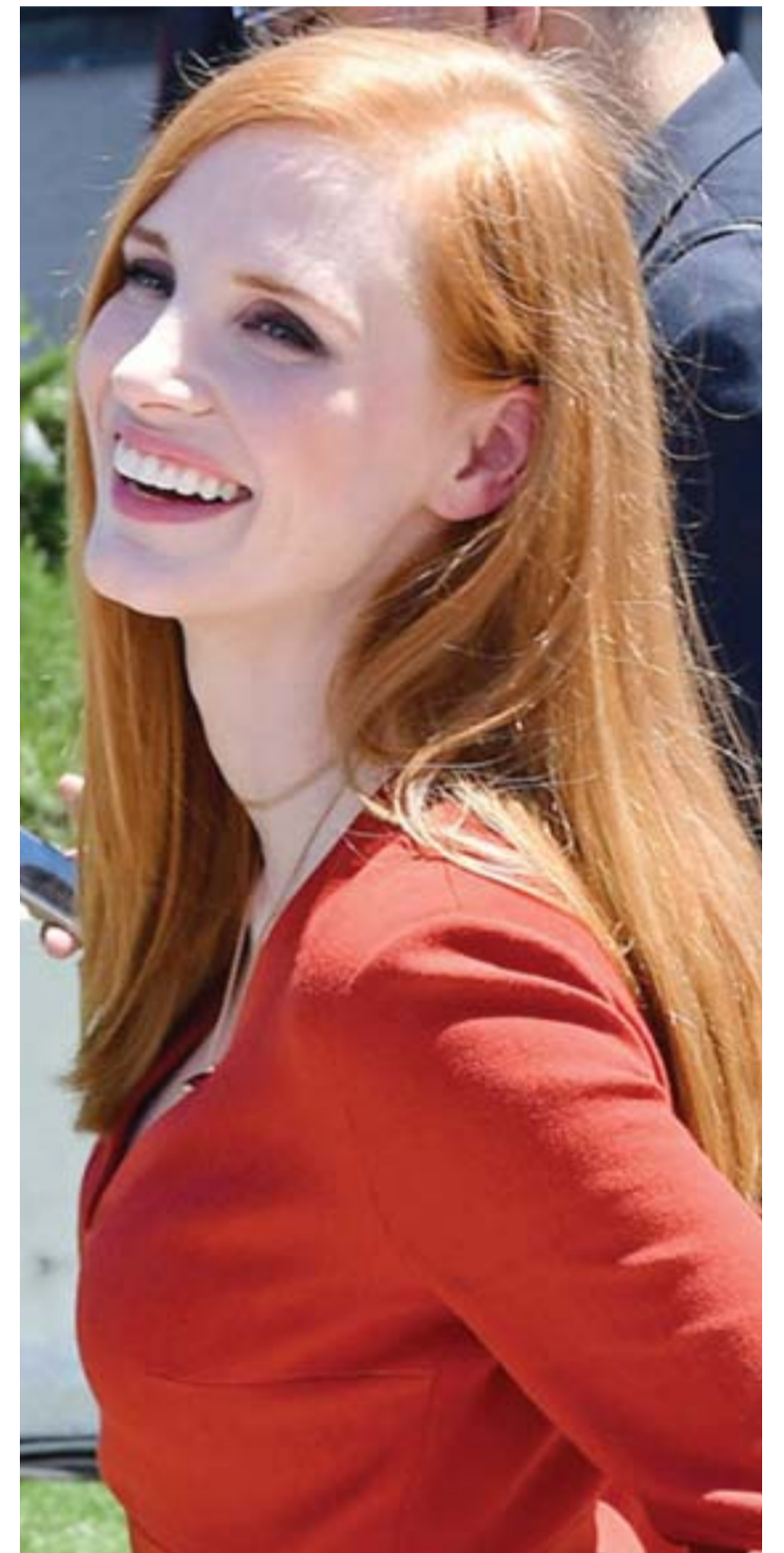
**H**enry Cavill has hinted he wants Superman to face off against Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson's Black Adam. The 34-year-old actor - who made his debut as the iconic character in 2013's 'Man of Steel' - has opened up about the possibility of Black Adam appearing on screen alongside Superman. He told MTV: "There's a lot of things spinning around in the universe right now with that. Obviously if Black Adam does become a character officially, he will play him... 'I'm pretty sure it'll be a Shazam/Black Adam thing first. If it does happen, it would make sense that way. But you never know, maybe there will be a Superman movie and Shazam will come and help.'" Henry's hint comes shortly after Dwayne, 46, revealed he hopes his 'Black Adam' movie will be released in 2019. The wrestler-turned-actor is set to appear as the villain in the upcoming DC movie and, after multiple delays to the project, Dwayne confirmed in April that significant progress is now finally being made. He shared: "The script came in, it's great, we're working on it. If things come together in the way we anticipate them coming together, that feels like a 2019 movie." DC movies have often been overshadowed by those of Marvel, which is responsible for money-spinning franchises like 'Iron Man' and 'Thor'. Despite this, Dwayne is confident that DC knows what it is doing. He explained: "Marvel is doing such an incredible job of universe building ... and DC is doing a great job finding the footing and tone of their movies."



# Power Rangers franchise sold for \$520m



**T**he 'Power Rangers' franchise has been sold to Hasbro for \$520 million. The eye-watering acquisition by the world's biggest toymaker could have major implications for the film franchise, which includes the 2017 'Power Rangers' movie that featured the likes of Dacre Montgomery, Naomi Scott and RJ Cyler. The world-famous brand is being sold by entrepreneur Haim Saban - who created it 25 years ago - in a deal that also includes a number of other assets, including the TV series 'My Pet Monster', 'Popples', and 'Julius Jr'. The original 'Power Rangers' TV show - which was inspired by a holiday Saban took in Japan - was launched in 1993 and proved to be a huge global success. Since then, the brand has branched out into other areas, including toys and three 'Power Rangers' films. Brian Casentini, the senior vice-president of Saban Brands, previously explained why the characters have proven to be so popular with young children. In 2014, he shared: "These are in a full costume, including a helmet. 'It's far easier for a child to project themselves into that costume and imagine themselves as a Power Ranger than it is with Superman. 'It's something that a young child can watch and not be frightened of. The monsters are wackier, they're in rubber costumes, it's not as threatening as some of the older superhero shows. We do that by design. 'We can't fight the natural progression that occurs with a child. What we can do is try to tell stories that resonate as old as we can get. Our core audience is four to eight and then they graduate and move on. Power Rangers' fundamentally remains every child's entry point into the superhero genre."



# Chastain to lead female spy movie 355

**J**essica Chastain will lead the all-star cast for female spy movie '355'. The 41-year-old actress is set to star in the large-scale espionage movie directed by Simon Kinberg, which will also feature a cast full of A-list actresses including Marion Cotillard, Penelope Cruz, Lupita Nyong'o, and Fang Bingbing. According to Deadline.com, all the actresses will star as international agents in the edgy action thriller movie, which comes as a move to break into the male-dominated genre with a full female ensemble. Alongside starring in the movie, Jessica is also set to produce alongside Kelly Carmichael under her Freckle Films banner, with director Simon Kinberg also producing through Kinberg Genre. Deadline also reports that the hope is to launch a franchise around the movie, in the same vein as popular spy franchises 'Mission: Impossible', James Bond, and the 'Bourne' movies. Speaking to the publication, Jessica said: "I love the 'Bourne' movies, the 'Mission: Impossible' films, and wondered why, except for 'Charlie's Angels', there hadn't been a true female ensemble action-thriller spy film. That got my wheels going, along with the idea of casting actresses from all over the world to truly make it an international project. I realized the incredible creative freedom we would have with that. I brought the idea to Simon, told him about the actresses I was thinking of, and he was so sweet. He said, 'I want to do it with you.'" Then I called all the women, told them what I was envisioning and that I wanted it to be a collaborative process, and how we would all create this together. Every single actress I called said yes, on the phone call. So far it has been a very wonderfully easy process." Jessica hopes that '355' will help bring an end to the "confines of stereotypical traits". She said: "The action genre has long been dominated by male heroes, and it's so exciting to be part of a film that will allow for not just one female action hero but a whole ensemble of very capable, fierce female characters that reject tired stereotypes. Characters that liberate from the confines of stereotypical traits. That is something that excited me about this, the opportunity to create different types of female heroes." Theresa Rebeck is penning the script for the feature, which will be sold internationally by FilmNation Entertainment, and distributed in America and China by CAA Media Finance Group. — Bang Showbiz

# VIN DIESEL ADMITS HE FOUND HELEN MIRREN 'INTIMIDATING'



**V**in Diesel was "intimidated" by Dame Helen Mirren when he met her for the first time. The 72-year-old actress approached the 'Fast & the Furious' star at a Golden Globes after-party, where she spoke to him about the possibility of starring in the money-spinning film franchise. Recalling his conversation with the award-winning actress, Vin shared: "She's very intimidating, despite her 5'2" frame, for a tough New Yorker like myself, I was intimidated. And I don't get intimidated easily." The 50-year-old actor - who first appeared in the franchise in 2001 - revealed how the actress jokingly told him to get his act together and put her in the eighth installment of the franchise, 'The Fate of the Furious'. She said: "I've been wanting to be in 'Fast and Furious' forever! You're the producer, make it happen!" Vin - who famously fell out with Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson on the set of the film in 2016 - explained that working with the 'Calendar Girls' actress was a "magical" experience. He told IndieWire: "The whole experience was magical for me. The experience of working with her was so magical, and so validating for me. 'I remember this being one of my favorite days in my journey. No one else in the room mattered. 'Nothing existed but this bond between her and I, and there was something really magical and really special about it. And it's something that I'll take with me for the rest of my life ... It's probably her which is why 'The Fate of the Furious' was the fastest movie in history to hit a billion dollars."

# Mirren joins cast of The One and Only Ivan

**D**ame Helen Mirren has joined the cast of 'The One and Only Ivan'. The 72-year-old actress will work alongside Danny DeVito and Angelina Jolie on Disney's live-action/CG hybrid adaptation of Katherine Applegate's acclaimed book. Angelina, 42, is producing and voicing one of the characters, with Bryan Cranston and Ariana Greenblatt also set to appear in the live-action elements of the movie. Elsewhere, Sam Rockwell and Brooklyn Prince will join Mirren and DeVito as part of the voice cast. Production work for the film started earlier this week, but Disney is remaining tight-lipped about character details for the time being. 'The One and Only Ivan' was originally published in 2012 and it tells the story of a silverback gorilla who lives in a cage at a mall. Meanwhile, Helen previously joked that she had to beg for her roles in 'Fast & Furious 8' and 'Red'. The British actress is more known for her dramatic work, but was desperate to be a part of an action series, and claimed that being an Oscar winner worked to her advantage. Mirren - who starred alongside Bruce Willis and Morgan Freeman in 2010's 'Red' - shared: "It was a little hankering definitely. Absolutely it was. 'I begged. I put it out there and then I begged. That was one of the wonderful advantages of winning an Oscar. I got to be in action movies! 'Because they love having Oscar winners in their action movies. They want to bring you down."



## Lifestyle | Music &amp; Movies

## Watching the detectives: The movie sleuths saving silent cinema

In the Spanish colonial-style environs of Hollywood's Roosevelt Hotel, around 100 film buffs chew pencils, polish spectacles and furrow brows in the flickering glow of long-forgotten silent movies. These cinema sleuths are being shown a selection of snippets from thousands of old films stored lovingly by the US Library of Congress—despite no one having the foggiest idea what most of them are.

The library hosts annual "Mostly Lost" workshops at its Packard Campus in the foothills of Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains, where scholars and plain old enthusiasts gather to find out as much as possible about the unknown, or little-known, films. "The Library of Congress is intensely committed to investigating, identifying, preserving and making accessible our silent film heritage, so much of which is still unknown," said Greg Lukow, head of the national audiovisual conservation section.

The library has gone on the road to bring its work to the TCM Film Festival, a celebration of Golden Age Hollywood held every year in the spiritual home of American cinema. Attendees quiz neighbors, consult databases on tablets and smartphones and shout out the names of actors, locations, car models and anything else they recognize as piano maestro Ben Model accompanies the clips. "That's Balboa Park in San Diego!" yelled a middle-aged woman in a red baseball cap as one clip played. "There's a gas tank like that in east LA!" another added breathlessly. These film buffs are relying on

knowledge amassed over a lifetime, information that cannot simply be culled from the Internet Movie Database or crowd sourced on Twitter.

## We're very proud'

"Anyone recognize that typewriter?" Library of Congress technician Rachel Del Gaudio asked hopefully, poised with pen and pad as those present scrutinized the grainy monochrome footage. "Some attendees have a great knowledge of film history already but that's not required. Sometimes people just have a great memory for stories," Del Gaudio said. "Maybe somebody happens to know that the film playing on screen is some forgotten-about tale from the 17th century. Or maybe you're a world class researcher. Maybe you're like one of our star attendees who easily recognizes faces. Or sometimes butts."

She's talking about Steve Massa, of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, a legend at "Mostly Lost" since he named a fat silent actor two years ago after seeing just a few frames of his backside. The 45-acre (18-hectare) Packard Campus, about 75 miles (120 kilometers) southwest of Washington, houses 7.5 million films, TV and radio shows and other recordings, on more than 90 miles of shelving.

A little over half of the 763 clips shown since 2012 have been identified, in the workshops themselves and through further research. "We're very proud of that. Some of those films exist elsewhere in more complete



The US Library of Congress hosts annual "Mostly Lost" workshops, where scholars and plain old enthusiasts gather to find out as much as possible about unknown, or little-known, films. — Shutterstock

form, but with quite a few of those, that is literally the only known existing material of that title," Del Gaudio said. A 2013 study for the Library of Congress showed three-quarters of nearly 11,000 silent films released by major studios between 1912 and 1929 have been lost. Experts argue, however, that many were likely forgotten for a reason and, even if their identities are restored, would not be held up alongside "Ben-Hur," "The Gold Rush" or "The Ten Commandments."

## 'Game changer'

Feature films—stored in metal cans before digitization—can consist of 150,000 frames or more, across numerous

reels, any of which could be lost through nitrate deterioration, fires or floods. Picture houses failing to return prints, poor handling, silent-era bootleggers and faulty projectors were among the hazards a studio would face trying to hang onto its beat-up movies. Among the more high-profile gems uncovered by "Mostly Lost" are a 1928 Walt Disney cartoon, a 1933 Three Stooges color short, a 1927 comedy by John Ford and "The White Shadow," the earliest surviving film credit for Alfred Hitchcock.

A stolen baby mixup vignette screened at the Hollywood event—recently revealed to be "Toodles, Tom and Trouble"—is amusing enough but comes across in these less innocent times as kind of creepy. Experts were able to narrow down its 1915 release date and New York location by the fashions of its actors, products in shop windows, an English-language newspaper, gas street-lamps, brickwork in a park and more. In another clip, a long camera shot and painted scenery narrow down the era while in a third a calendar in the background shows the date May 28 falling on a Saturday, meaning the movie was most likely shot in 1921. "We are fortunate that we have many, many non-film resources both in print and, now, online," said moving image curator Rob Stone, the originator of the workshops. "It really has been a game changer for us with 'Mostly Lost,' once we got WiFi in our theater." — AFP



Actor Tom Cruise attends "The Mummy" New York Fan Event at AMC Loews Lincoln Square in New York City. — AFP

## My big break: Tom Cruise on the snapped ankle that halted 'M:16'

If the infamous "hobbling" scene in Rob Reiner's "Misery" made you hide behind the sofa, then prepare to wince hard at "Mission: Impossible - Fallout"—as Tom Cruise shatters his ankle for real. The injury has threatened or ended the careers of sports legends like Diego Maradona, Yao Ming and Derek Jeter, but 55-year-old Cruise calmly finished the take and was back on set within six weeks. "I've broken bones before in my life, but it was hard," the "Top Gun" icon, perhaps the most recognizable movie star in the world over the last four decades, said.

"It was very difficult, because they were concerned I wasn't going to be able to run for nine months at least and I'm in the middle. I've got a release date and responsibilities—I didn't want to stop filming." AFP caught up with Cruise at the annual CinemaCon industry gathering in Las Vegas, where he was promoting the sixth film in the lucrative spy franchise ahead of its July 27 release.

"Mission: Impossible - Fallout" was forced to halt production in London last year after Cruise slammed awkwardly into a concrete wall as he leapt between buildings while attached to cables. "I knew instantly my ankle was broken and I really didn't want to do it again so just got up and carried on with the take," he said after the incident. Director Chris McQuarrie—who was also at the helm for Cruise's "Mission: Impossible 5" (2015) and "Jack Reacher" (2012) — said he would "move heaven and earth" to ensure that fateful fourth take got into the movie.

## Semi-naked

Cruise's most difficult days were ahead of him, though, as he had to spend hours every day in rehab and climb a mountain in Norway when he returned to filming. "When you see the sprinting in the movie, I'm basically doing it on a broken foot. But I was able to get to a physical point where it wasn't causing any more damage by doing that," Cruise said.

A veteran of more than 50 movies, the star is admired for his adventurous attitude to filmmaking, which over the years has involved some hair-raising moments on set. It all started comparatively sedately as Cruise announced himself to Hollywood with a minor role in the 1981 romantic drama "Endless Love." It was a memorable scene in 1983's "Risky Business," where he cavorts in a white shirt and his underwear while lip-syncing to "Old Time Rock and Roll," that confirmed him as one of the film industry's brightest talents.

Legendary producers Jerry Bruckheimer and Don Simpson cast Cruise in 1985's smash-hit "Top Gun" as the fighter pilot Maverick, a role that catapulted him into the ranks of Tinseltown's elite. In the 33 years since, he has established himself as one of the most powerful and bankable players in Hollywood, his movies grossing \$9.3 billion and his talents earning three Oscar nominations. His box office successes have included conventional action movies but also edgier roles, such as Oliver Stone's "Born on the Fourth of July," Barry Levinson's "Rain Man" and Michael Mann's "Collateral." — AFP

## Judd sues disgraced Weinstein over 'smear'

Actress Ashley Judd, one of the first women to publicly accuse Harvey Weinstein of sexual misconduct, sued the disgraced mogul Monday, alleging he defamed her after she rejected him. The complaint filed in Los Angeles Superior Court in Santa Monica, accuses Weinstein of ruining her chance to be cast in the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy by making false statements to director Peter Jackson that he'd had a bad experience with Judd, calling her a "nightmare."

"With those baseless smears, Weinstein succeeded in blacklisting Ms Judd and destroying her ability to work on what became a multibillion-dollar franchise with 17 Academy Award wins and many more nominations," the suit states. The document goes on to describe the "pathetic reality" that Weinstein was retaliating after Judd, 50, rejected his sexual advances a year earlier, when he allegedly cornered her in a hotel room under the guise of discussing business.

"A self-described 'benevolent dictator' who has bragged that 'I can be scary,' Weinstein used his power in the entertainment industry to damage Ms Judd's reputation and limit her ability to find work," it says. Judd said in a prepared statement that any damages she wins will go to the Time's Up legal fund. "So that women and men in all professions may have legal redress for sexual harassment, economic retaliation and damage to their careers."

Weinstein has previously denied having any input into casting decisions involving "Lord of the Rings," which

began pre-production work under the Miramax studio but later moved to New Line Cinema. Oscar-winning Jackson worked with Weinstein and his brother Bob early in the development of "The Lord of the Rings," and has said the pair acted like "second-rate Mafia bullies."

The New Zealand director said he had no direct knowledge of sexual misconduct allegations against Weinstein, but that the producer pressured him not to hire Judd or Mira Sorvino. "I recall Miramax telling us they were a nightmare to work with and we should avoid them at all costs. This was probably in 1998," Jackson was quoted as telling Fairfax New Zealand.

"At the time, we had no reason to question what these guys were telling us but in hindsight, I realize that this was very likely the Miramax smear campaign in full swing." He spoke out in December as the number of women accusing the fallen mogul swelled to more than 100, with allegations ranging from harassment to rape. "There it is, confirmation that Harvey Weinstein derailed my career, something I suspected but was unsure," Sorvino tweeted. "Thank you Peter Jackson for being honest. I'm just heartsick."

Weinstein's spokesman pointed out at the time that Judd appeared in two subsequent Weinstein films—"Frida" (2002) and "Crossing Over" (2009) — and said Sorvino was also considered for other films. — AFP



Ashley Judd



Kanye West

## West sparks new outrage in calling slavery 'choice'

Rapper Kanye West, on the receiving end of criticism in the music world after backing President Donald Trump, sparked fresh outrage Tuesday when he called slavery "a choice." The rapper, never shy about expressing himself, made the comments in passing during one of two free-flowing interviews he gave as he promotes two upcoming albums. "You hear about slavery for 400 years. For 400 years? That sounds like a choice," West told TMZ Live, the broadcast wing of the celebrity gossip site. West elaborated little on his statement but appeared to be drawing a parallel to how he is presumed to hold certain views as an African American artist.

"We're mentally in prison. I like the word 'prison' because slavery is too direct to the idea of blacks. Like Holocaust is Jews, slavery is blacks," West said. West's remarks immediately sparked an uproar on Twitter, his favorite medium, and he was taken to task live by a TMZ employee who said he was "appalled." The 40-year-old rapper, designer and husband of reality television star Kim Kardashian re-emerged last month after a year-long absence that followed a purported mental breakdown. He enraged many fellow artists—but was embraced by conservative commentators—as he praised Trump, who has since cited the rapper's words as evidence of minority support. In a separate interview with radio host Charlamagne the God, West said he had not followed Trump's policies but, "When I see an outsider infiltrate, I connect with that."

West—who in 2005 made headlines by saying that then president George W. Bush "doesn't care about black people"—is one of the few prominent African Americans to support Trump. The president built his political career by promoting unfounded conspiracy theories about his predecessor Barack Obama's birthplace and has been embroiled in a number of racial controversies since taking office. Speaking to Charlamagne the God, West said he was upset that Obama invited other rappers to the White House such as Kendrick Lamar and Jay-Z. Obama, in off-record small talk with a reporter in 2009 that leaked, called West a "jackass" after the rapper disrupted the MTV Video Music Awards to say that Taylor Swift did not deserve her prize. "You know, he never called me to apologize," West said, explaining that Obama had met him and his mother before being elected president. — AFP

## 'Simpsons' breaks TV record but faces controversy

"The Simpsons" has broken the record for the most episodes in a primetime scripted series on American TV, but the milestone came as the popular show finds itself accused of racism. Fox's 636th episode about the Simpson family, which aired Sunday night, pushed it past Western drama "Gunsmoke" which stopped at 635 episodes in 1975 after 20 years on the air. Outside of primetime, some US soap operas have been running since the 1960s.

"The Simpsons" stars Homer, the family patriarch working for a nuclear power station, his wife and voice of reason Marge, and children Bart, Lisa and Maggie. Since it first aired in 1989, the show has won more than 30 Emmys. In its early years, the animated comedy regularly pulled in more than 15 million viewers and had double that — 33 million—for its most-watched episode in 1990. It became so popular that references to "The Simpsons" have formed part of pop culture.

Declining audience figures had led to fears that it would not be renewed, but in 2016, Fox committed to continue "The Simpsons" until a 30th season in 2019. After so many years, one character who has been part of "The Simpsons" since the beginning has in recent months become the subject of controversy. Apu

Nahasapeemapitlon is the manager of Kwik-E-Mart convenience store, a character of Indian ethnicity voiced by a white actor, Hank Azaria.

In the documentary "The Problem with Apu," released last November, Hari Kondabolu, an actor and comedian of Indian origin, denounced the character's marked accent and other stereotypes. Both Azaria and "Simpsons" creator Matt Groening refused to appear in the documentary to answer questions. Azaria, however, later told a reporter from the TMZ celebrity website that Kondabolu "made some really interesting points" and "gave us a lot at 'The Simpsons' to think about."

In an episode on April 8, the show addressed the issue when Marge tried to remove any references that could offend anyone from a children's book she had bought. She reads the book to her daughter Lisa, who finds it boring. "Something that started decades ago and was applauded and inoffensive is now politically incorrect," says Lisa, turning towards a picture of Apu and winking. "What can you do?" "Some things will be dealt with at a later date," says Marge. "If at all," says Lisa.

Following this exchange, Azaria said last week in an interview on "The Late Show" that he was "perfectly willing and happy to step aside, or help transition" the character to something new. Groening, however, says he is "proud of what we do on the show. And I think it's a time in our culture where people love to pretend they're offended." Last May, a Russian cartoon channel said it would not air a "Simpsons" episode about playing a game similar to Pokemon Go in a church, following concerns raised by Orthodox clerics. — AFP



Lifestyle | Features



A view of the "Central Perk" coffee shop in Shanghai.—AFP photos



A puzzle with an image of the US television sitcom 'Friends' displayed on a table at the "Central Perk" coffee shop in Shanghai.

## Stuck in second gear: Chinese fans ponder life without 'Friends'

No one told them it was gonna be this way. Millions of Chinese "Friends" fans are heartbroken after a video site pulled the US sitcom, beloved by millennials in China for its endearing young characters and as an English conversation resource. Top portal Sohu had broadcast reruns of Monica, Rachel, Chandler and the gang since 2014, but abruptly stopped in April, citing unspecified "copyright issues". The move has touched off anguish on Chinese social media sites such as the Twitter-like Weibo, where a "Friends offline" hashtag has generated millions of posts.

Many have called for Sohu to re-up on its "Friends" rights, with others offering advice on where to download pirated episodes of the Emmy-winning show, which originally aired in the United States from 1994-2004. The sitcom, centered on a group of young New Yorkers, became

a global hit through syndication, but perhaps nowhere more than in China where it first gained a following from pirated DVDs or illegal downloads before streaming rights were secured.

Millions of Chinese youngsters identify with the theme song's lament—"your job's a joke, you're broke, your love life's a DOA"—and relish the chance to burnish their American-style English. Some English training courses in China even assign the show as teaching material. Guo Yujin, a customer-service executive and longtime "Friends" fan, called the program "a window through which Chinese can learn American culture." "I learned so much conversational English, things that you can't learn from books. Books only have the most boring grammar, but this is very life-like," she said. Guo spoke while having lunch in Shanghai's "Friends" cafe, a spot-on facsimile of

the "Central Perk" hangout frequented by the cast. The proprietor is 39-year-old Du Xin, a "Friends" fanatic who calls the show his "faith". He opened his first cafe in Beijing in 2009 and also has one in Guangzhou.

### Central Perk

They feature "Central Perk's" signature window logo, big orange couch, and a TV that loops episodes all day. Coffees come with messages like "I (heart) Rachel" and "I'll be there for you" traced into the foam, and customers frequently queue up outside on weekends. Tammy Cai, a friend of Guo's visiting from Hong Kong, said the cafe was the most important stop on her itinerary. "I only need to come here. The rest I can just glance through," Cai said.

Du got hooked after "Friends" was there for him during a romantic break-up in college. "The show gave so many

things that we long for, such as the love between Chandler and Monica, Rachel and Ross. That is from an ideal world and that is what ideal love and ideal marriage look like," he said. Du, who took "Gunther" as his western name after the fictional cafe's barista, said the stores are losing money, however, due to rising competition from proliferating coffee houses in China as the beverage gains popularity. Another potential threat: Warner Bros, the show's producer, recently acquired the "Central Perk" copyright, causing speculation it may build its own cafes. But Du is ploughing ahead. His latest project is a single-room hotel called "Monica's bedroom" designed on the character's room in the show, right down to her floral-pattern linens, and he is also selling other "Friends" memorabilia, from mobile phone cases to T-shirts. — AFP



Reporter and writer Cain Burdeau pruning an olive tree with shears and a small saw on a property his wife and he bought in Contrada Petraro in the mountains of northern Sicily near Castelbuono. — AP photos



Giovanni Caruso holding an old photograph of life on a former noble estate in Torretta near Palermo in Sicily.



Giovanni Caruso pointing to a disease on an olive tree on a former noble estate in Torretta near Palermo in Sicily.

## Pruning olive trees is a balance of art, lore and science

Watching Giovanni Caruso prune an olive tree is like observing a mountain climber decide how to reach the next hand-grip in a cliff. He chooses his path with deliberation. He even wears a helmet. With a set of newfangled tools and theories, this 35-year-old Sicilian biologist and self-made pruning expert is working on his first commercial project to introduce the central Italian technique known as the "polyconic vase" into Sicily's often remote and overgrown olive groves. This method seeks to sculpt a tree into separate cone-shaped sides, thus producing more olives that are easier to pick. "The cone's geometric shape allows the most branches to be exposed to the sun," Caruso said.

I thought about the overgrown olive trees I bought a few years ago with my wife and two boys on a property in Sicily. This was the first year we pruned them, nervously trying to open them up to the sun as we'd learned from Caruso. Caruso wielded a chain saw mounted on an extendable pole and powered by a battery pack. Pruning in Sicily is mostly done with regular chain saws, but also with handsaws and shears, as we had done. He moved on to another tree. "Just looking at it, it seems to be a globe," he said. "We're going to try to make it a vase, which means we'll cut out the center."

### People abandoned their olive orchards

And within a few minutes he'd transformed it. The location was redolent of history: 6,000 olive trees on a former noble estate in Torretta, a valley town near Palermo. The sprawling villa, once a monastery, recalls a Sicily of opulent leisure and eccentric aristocrats. To an untrained eye, the orchard could appear fine. But a lot is going wrong, Caruso said. Many trees suffer from neglect and disease. "In this area, no one prunes anymore," lamented Gregorio Ugdulena, a descendant of the family that developed the estate. His sister, Amalia, remembered when field hands clambered up high ladders to prune, and boys carried pots of tar to heal the trees' fresh cuts. "Many people have abandoned their olive orchards," Gregorio said with a sigh.

That's why he brought in Caruso, an energetic former bersagliere (an elite rifleman) in the Italian army. In the past four years, Caruso has trained himself in the polyconic vase method. He now does workshops in Sicily, where Ugdulena, and I, met him. It is early April, the end of a long pruning season for Caruso and also for my wife and me. We'd spent much of the past few months learning to prune our long-abandoned, 40-odd olive trees. For beginners,



Giovanni Caruso making a final cut on a large olive tree he is pruning on a former noble estate in Torretta near Palermo, Sicily.

pruning any tree can be daunting. Where to start? What damage will I do if I cut this branch instead of that one? Will I kill a tree? Can I climb into a tree to prune? How exactly should I cut off a branch?

### The new technique

Add to this the contradictory advice from friends and local farmers, all eager to tell you what you're doing wrong: "Clear out the center." "No, because of the heat, you should leave some branches to shade the center." "Cut off branches that hang to the ground." "No, don't do that." "Cut branches that shoot up." "No, leave a few shooting up." And on it goes.

A look at the trees around us made us even more confused. Many were pruned so heavily that only a few limp twigs were left dangling off main branches. The sound of chain saws was routine. Slowly, we gained confidence and speed. We started with obviously depleted dry sections, suckers and overlapping branches, and then moved on to what wasn't so obvious. It took hours to prune the bigger specimens.

Caruso stood in a section of the orchard planted with Nocellara del belice trees. They looked nice to me. But not to him. "The trees lack leaves and there are many diseases," Caruso said. "Look around: It's surrounded by mountains so there isn't any circulation, and there's a lot of humidity." Humidity is bad for olives, he said. At his side was Giuseppe Lo Presti, a 41-year-old agronomist and olive tree specialist. Lo Presti stooped to inspect a dead tree. "Look, this is what happens when you don't cut right," he said. Someone had cut into the trunk, allowing infections in.

Caruso moved on, his chain saw whirring into action. "The trick is to start from the top; the apex controls the plant," he said. "By pruning from the top, you can see how much light comes in." The new technique has been met with skepticism in the region, Caruso said. Resting a foot on a wall overlooking the orchard, he recounted how three men stopped to criticize him, an outsider with a never-before-seen helmet.

### A good pruner

He wears it because he works from the ground and could be hit by falling branches - he has a scar to prove it. "They shouted: 'No, don't cut that one! Cut that branch! Where are you from?' It was quite a spectacle," he said. "Everyone thinks they're the best, that only they know (how to prune)." He added: "Pruning is often seen as an art, but we see it as a technique. People are often looking for aesthetic perfection." He paused. "There's not a manual on how to do it, each tree must be done individually."

A good pruner must understand how a tree functions so that every cut makes sense, Caruso and Lo Presti agreed. When I came home, I saw trees that still needed work. But I was glad we hadn't bought a chain saw and sawed away. We are trying to balance many things, including maintaining the aesthetic beauty of long gnarled branches, and avoiding power tools. We want to watch and learn how our trees respond to what we've done. Already this spring, we're pleased at how the now-thinned-out olives are flowering. Did we play a hand in creating all the lovely small yellow clusters? I like to think so. — AP

## Alaa Selim named the 'General Manager of the year 2017'

General Manager of Cophorne Al Jahra Hotel & Resort, Alaa Selim, has been named the "General Manager of the year 2017" among Millennium Hotels and Resorts Middle-East & Africa. He was awarded this prestigious title at the 2018 General Manager's conference gala held on 26th April at Bab Al Qasr Hotel in Abu Dhabi. In addition to the prestigious GM of the year award, Alaa has also received a "General Manager Service Excellence Award", and the "Best Financial Performance Hotel 2017".

Receiving the General Manager of the Year award was a surprise for him, as he says he didn't know about it beforehand. "This recognition," he says, "was above and beyond. For the past 5 years, I've done the best I could and I want people to know that your commitment and dedication payoff at the end". He added "Behind me as a General Manager there were an arsenal of 120% committed colleagues who ensured every performance indicator is met and exceeded. I proudly accept these awards on behalf of all of them"



# Lifestyle

THURSDAY, MAY 3, 2018



A mammoth skeleton on a lifting platform is seen behind water fountains in Cathedral Square in Strasbourg, eastern France, as part of the 'Industrie Magnifique' festival. Several art pieces will be shown in different squares of the city from May 3 to May 13. — AFP

## WW II veteran to graduate 68 years after leaving college

Like so many American soldiers returning home from World War II, Bob Barger started working a new job and going to college. Once he settled into his career and raising a family, finishing school was no longer a priority. Now, 68 years since he last sat in a classroom, Barger is set to graduate from the University of Toledo this week after a review of his transcripts from the late 1940s showed he completed enough courses to qualify for an associate's degree - a two-year diploma not offered when he was still in school. It was something I never dreamed of," the 96-year-old Barger said. "I knew I couldn't go back to school now."

"I'm going to be proud to hang that diploma on the wall and think about the friends behind it," he said. "I found out without friends, this old world wouldn't be worth living in." The university took a look at Barger's old school records because of a friendship he struck up with Haraz Ghanbari, the school's director of military and veteran affairs.

They met five years ago when Ghanbari, a Navy Reserve officer, asked Barger to officiate his promotion to lieutenant. Ghanbari later found out that Barger never graduated from the university, even though he took a full load of classes from 1947 to 1950. "We actually had to go into the archives to find his transcripts," said Barbara Kopp Miller, dean of University College at Toledo. The records showed Barger completed 83 credit hours - about 20 more than what's required for the associate's degree that he'll receive on Saturday. University officials say they don't know of anyone older ever graduating from the school. "It's the right thing to do. He deserved. He earned it," Kopp Miller said. "It's so cool to honor a member of our greatest generation."

Barger was a pilot in the Navy, enlisting after seeing an advertisement that said "join the Navy and get an education." He flew seaplanes for scout observation over the Gulf of Mexico and was a flight instructor at a base in Corpus Christi, Texas. He later was stationed in Norman,



World War II veteran Bob Barger poses with his Naval flight school certificate in Toledo, Ohio. — AP

Oklahoma, after the war and planned on a career in the Navy until an explosion in a bunk house. He wasn't hurt, but carrying out the bloodied men changed his mind about staying in the military.

Barger returned home with his wife and young daughter and studied business and advertising while working for a paper company. He remembers history was his favorite class at what was then called Toledo University. He never gave much thought about not graduating until just recently. When he was told in January that he would finally get a degree, he let out a hearty laugh. "I can't believe this. I'm 96 years old," said Barger, whose wife died in 2011.

Members of the university's Student Veterans of America chapter bought him a cap and gown that he tried on last week. "I fit. I guess I look pretty good in it," he said. The assisted living center where he lives is planning a big graduation party for over 100 people. Barger stocked up on a dozen bottles of vodka, whiskey and scotch. He jokes that he now wants to find "a cushy job where I can play golf." — AP

## DJ Avicii death a suicide

Dance music superstar Avicii's death last month in Oman was a suicide, the celebrity gossip site TMZ reported Tuesday. A representative for the Swedish DJ did not reply to requests for comment. But his family earlier insinuated that Avicii had killed himself. "He really struggled with thoughts about Meaning, Life, Happiness," his family said in an open letter on Thursday. "He could not go on any longer. He wanted to find peace." TMZ, quoting unnamed sources, said that Avicii committed suicide. The 28-year-old whose real name was Tim Bergling was found dead on April 20 while on vacation in Oman. Police in the Gulf sultanate said that there was no indication of foul play. Avicii had long spoken of his problems with alcoholism and his struggles as an introvert in adapting to the hard-partying DJ lifestyle. He stunned fans in 2016 by retiring from touring at the age of just 26, although he later returned to the studio. Avicii was one of the first DJs to bring electronic dance music into the mainstream, filling festivals and winning radio airplay as he collaborated with artists including Madonna and Coldplay. —AFP

## Mix-and-match ingredients for custom lip balms

By Holly Ramer

After a long, multi-blizzard winter, homemade lip balm is just the thing to get spring off to a smoother start. Searching for tutorials online, I came across a wide variety of recipes involving about half a dozen ingredients mixed and matched in countless combinations. I soon discovered that while one single tube of balm would be significant less expensive than commercially made versions, getting started can require a significant investment up front. And while I'll now have the ingredients on hand (Lip balm for everyone on my Christmas list!), I'm not sure I have enough friends to even make a dent in some of the supplies.

Still, I liked being able to use all-natural ingredients, especially once I realized that my usual brand includes 20 ingredients, most of them unpronounceable chemical additives. Choosing my favorite scents or flavors was another plus. For testing purposes, I stuck with peppermint for each version, but mixing essential oils would be fun. All three of the versions I tried used beeswax as the base but differed in the number and type of other additions. Here's what I found, with each method rated from 1 to 10, with 10 indicating the least expensive, easiest and best results:

### Shea butter

The first tutorial I tried came from a blog called The Blooming Carrot and involved a mixture of coconut oil, beeswax and shea butter. The author admits to being picky about lip balms, and promises this version would be the perfect middle ground between balms that are too gooey and those that are too solid without being moisturizing enough. The technique was easy because the proportions were equal - melt 2 tablespoons each of coconut oil, beeswax pellets and shea butter in a double-boiler set over simmering water, and then add about 30 drops of essential oils. Compared to other methods, which involved a microwave and lots of stirring, this technique was the easiest. The mixture is then poured into lip balm tubes, which is a bit messy but not difficult. I ended up with 12 tubes from one batch. Once cooled, I found this balm slightly too soft for my tastes, though it did feel quite nourishing.

### Cocoa butter

My second attempt, via The Nourished Life blog, was the most ambitious: a chocolate-mint flavored lip balm with six ingredients that required the use of a digital scale for measuring.

The first three ingredients - cocoa butter, shea butter and beeswax - are melted either in a double boiler or microwave. The remaining ingredients - sweet almond oil, peppermint essential oil and cocoa powder - are then stirred in, and the mixture poured into tubes. I should've stuck with the double-boiler method, because melting the ingredients in the microwave was a bit frustrating as they melted at different rates and got clumpy. It also was difficult to mix the cocoa powder in smoothly and to pour the mixture into the tubes before it started to solidify.

The resulting balm - seven tubes in total - smelled and felt great. This version slightly edged out the first in quality, though I'm not sure it was worth the extra expense of the additional ingredients.



Photo shows homemade lip balms that include ingredients such as coconut oil, shea butter and beeswax.

### Coconut oil

Version No. 3 came from The Seasoned Mom blog, where the author claims her technique takes just five minutes to whip up. This balm had the shortest and thus least expensive ingredient list - coconut oil, beeswax and essential oils - but it took me at least twice as long. The directions call for melting 5 tablespoons of coconut oil and 3 tablespoons of beeswax in a glass measuring cup in the microwave, stirring every 30 seconds. Though it is not explained in the recipe, in the comments the author says she used a chunk of solid beeswax, melted it and then measured 3 tablespoons. It wasn't clear to me whether the coconut oil was handled in the same way, so I melted them separately, measured the correct amounts and then combined them, adding the essential oils to the final mixture. The result was the firmest balm of the bunch. While not unpleasant, the texture didn't feel as decadent as the others. But this option was by far the cheapest, and would be great for crafting on a budget. — AP



Photo shows homemade lip balms and mix ingredients. — AP photos

