

Friday Times

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Local

Water is safe



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Congratulations to Kuwait and all its residents for bagging the first place in the Arab world in terms of the high quality of drinking water. Nothing is more important to any human than knowing that the water he consumes is safe. The World Health Organization (WHO) announced that it has placed Kuwait as the top Arab country in the quality of its drinking water and treated wastewater, followed by Bahrain, Jordan, Tunisia, Oman, Morocco and Lebanon, according to WHO standards.

The undersecretary of the ministry of electricity and water said in a press statement that Kuwait's acquisition of this classification is important for Arab countries because it reflects the efforts of all engineers and technicians who are working at water distillation stations and chemical laboratories to achieve the best standards in the quality of water through accurate and continuous tests.

Kuwait is a dry country with poor water resources, while per capita consumption of water here is the highest globally. The cost of electricity and water production is high, with consumption of about 350,000 barrels of oil per day for this purpose. The cost of producing one kilowatt of electricity costs the state about 28 fils, but is sold to the consumer for only 2 fils.

The undersecretary also added WHO is continuously monitoring and evaluating the quality of freshwater in countries around the world and its suitability for human use in accordance with the requirements of the environmental and public health committees in terms of physical and chemical aspects to ensure their conformity with the standards that are set for safe drinking water.

It is a great achievement indeed, because freshwater is a human right that should not be disputed. In fact, water is at the heart of sustainable development and is essential for socioeconomic development, energy, food production and human survival. As the world's population increases, there is a growing need to maintain and preserve water resources to enable communities to obtain adequate water.

But water cannot be viewed in isolation from sanitation. Together, they are vital to reducing the global burden of diseases, as well as their role in improving health, education and economic productivity of the population. I believe that corrupt economies, war, civil conflicts and poor infrastructure lead millions of people, especially children, to death every year from diseases associated with insufficient water supplies. Some studies have estimated that 783 million people do not have access to clean water. This is a large number.

The United Nations General Assembly recently approved the right of a human to adequate water for personal and domestic use (50 to 100 liters per person per day), provided that the water is safe, affordable and available in time and place. Every year, the world celebrates World Water Day on March 22. The International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development will continue its work from the International Water Day in 2018 until 2028. The aim of this global campaign is to urge accelerated efforts to address all challenges related to water, including access to safe water and sanitation, increased pressure on water resources and increased risk of drought and floods.

I believe that the ability of Kuwait to achieve an excellent rank in water quality should not stop efforts to rationalize water consumption. Production of freshwater in Kuwait uses more than 500 million imperial gallons per day, so wastage of water must stop, and all government agencies must act to achieve rationalization of consumption through ongoing awareness campaigns and punishment of those who waste water.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



KUWAIT: Ice cream sellers stroll their karts on a street in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Seeking arthouse cinema in Kuwait

IN MY VIEW

By Aakash Bakaya

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I want to get something out of the way before I begin. Films that are described as 'Arthouse cinema' should not be considered great automatically. They might be different, unique or in a genre you might have never seen before but the qualities of what makes a film good or bad still come to an individual's preference.

With that out of the way, let's get to the heart of the matter - seeking out 'arthouse' or 'independent' movies in Kuwait. The most straight-forward response would be - check your local movie listing in a movie chain near you. If you scroll past the usual array of the latest blockbusters, Bollywood tripe and the occasional mediocre animation you can actually find a few films that have done great in International film festival circuits or are picking up traction for the award season.

Recently 'Mandy', a grindhouse-inspired thriller, was running in a few cinemas and even for Kuwait that was quite surprising. I've seen a good amount of indie films in Kuwait but to see something from upcoming visionary director Panos Cosmatos on the big screen was an outing at the cinema I eagerly anticipated. Unfortunately, I could not catch it in the cinemas as the timings of the shows and the short 6 day duration of its run made it difficult to attend. This is an issue that affects the indie movie scene both in Kuwait and around the world.

Cinemas pay the movie's distributor (usually the producer or the studio partner) to screen a movie. Big blockbusters are guaranteed money-makers for all parties involved so opening weekend audiences and front-loading these features are vital. Even then, not every screen can be used to show only the most popular movies of the week. Scarcity, whether natural or man-made, increases demands even though these scenarios may lead you to get a really bad seat near the front. So where does this leave the screening of those smaller, lesser known films?

In these cases, the risk lies wholly on the cinema house themselves. They still pay the movie studio to show the film but for a smaller amount and only for a limited amount of time. This plus the fact that the halls they are screened in are half the size of the regular ones either makes these films successful enough for them to run for another week or they simply fade away into obscurity with little attendance to show for it. It's a tricky situation for both the cinemas who want to diversify their movie-listings and the cinephiles desperately trying to cleanse their palettes after the most recent superhero movie.

My own experience with arthouse cinema in Kuwait has been a mixed-bag. Dragging a group of friends for 'It Comes at Night' was immensely fun. The harrowing, brutal nature of the story created this uneasy feeling when exiting the cinema and we ended up discussing the story and its climax for hours afterwards. On the other hand, the showing of 'Ex-Machina' had crucial scenes and discussions censored and this left the film feeling confusing and pretty much pointless. But my worst was the time I had gone all the way to 360 Mall to catch Hayao Miyazaki's 'The Wind Rises'. It just happened to be on a Monday (the usual day for half-day prices for tickets) but I went simply because it was the last day I could possibly go. When I reached, the ticket counter told me that they don't show limited releases on Mondays as this was their busiest day. I am not sure if they still follow that same procedure but it showcased the dismal attitude cinema chains hold towards smaller films. I never ended up watching what is supposed to be Miyazaki's final film in a cinema and the disappointment of that night lingers.

There are other ways to catch indie films in Kuwait however. Film clubs and sometimes just individuals themselves promote outdoor film screenings and even embassies arrange showcases of their nation's films. These may not be every one's cup of tea but the options still exist. Arthouse films don't show up on cinema listings weeks in advance, sometimes they show up the week or even the day before its release. So if you're interested, checkout the movies being shown on Thursday as that's the day new releases are first screened. Who knows, you just may end up having a cinematic experience you won't soon forget.

Kuwait Times

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Canadian-Indian designer recalls his designs for Kuwaiti stamps

Interview by Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Stamps, the price paid to send a letter, were often utilized not only as a revenue source for the postal service but also as a way to commemorate a country's milestones or achievements. Designing those commemorative stamps are an important part of the process and often involve artists from all over the world.

One such designer is Denny Varghese Kurien, who won a contest to design stamps for Kuwait in 1998. Now based in Toronto, Kurien cannot forget his childhood memories of Kuwait and the iconic buildings he grew up seeing.

KT: Tell us more about yourself.

Denny: My name is Denny Varghese Kurien. My job title is Creative Director & Co-Founder of Rayvn Design (www.rayvn.io). It's a creative design studio based out of Toronto and Boston that does logo identity design, website design and digital and social media marketing.

KT: How long have you been working in Canada?

Denny: I've been in Canada since 2002. I'm currently residing and working in Toronto. I spent my childhood in Kuwait (from 1979 to 1996) before heading to the US to do my undergraduate degree. After that I returned back to Kuwait, worked for three years, then immigrated to Canada.

KT: How do you compare Canada and Kuwait?

Denny: Weather-wise, it's the exact opposite of Kuwait. It gets super cold and sometimes goes down to -40 C. Job-wise, I worked in Kuwait for three years (1999 to 2002) - this was right after I graduated from university. I worked in the marketing department of an IT company called Path Solutions, as well as the Commercial Bank of Kuwait in their marketing department. Since I work in the creative sector, I think working in Canada and the US is a lot more beneficial for me - there

are a lot more creative freedoms and creative opportunities for my kind of work. The people of Canada are super friendly, and I now consider it my home. I'm now a Canadian citizen - I've lived in Toronto for 15 years. I have a wife, a 7-year-old son, 3-month-old daughter and a dog.

KT: What do you miss most about Kuwait?

Denny: I have very fond memories of Kuwait - especially growing up in Hawally and attending the New English School (class of 96). I miss my parents and extended family (most of my cousins are still living and working there). Friends I went to school with at NES are now all over the world, and I still make it a point to keep in touch with them via Facebook or WhatsApp.

KT: Describe your favorite place/s in Kuwait when you were here and why?

Denny: I miss the food - Naif Chicken shawarma and eating at Mais Alghanim - these were popular hangout spots for me and my friends from high school. They don't have very good shawarma here in Canada. I also miss the KFC Spicy Zinger burger, Hardees roast beef sandwich and Caesar's mini-pizzas -we don't have those too here in Canada.

KT: When was your last visit to Kuwait?

Denny: The last time we visited Kuwait was in 2011. My parents and much of my extended family are still in Kuwait. My parents come to visit us in Canada every other summer. In January 2019, I'll visit Kuwait with my family for a couple of days.

KT: Tell us about your entry in the stamp competition. Where did you see the ad? What were the inspiration and the reason behind the design?

Denny: It was in 1998, when I was attending University of Denver (studying graphic design). I had come home to Kuwait



KUWAIT - Photo shows the two winning designs by Denny Kurien, based on iconic Kuwaiti landmarks, parliament building (purple stamp) and the Grand Mosque (blue stamp).
— Photo courtesy Denny Kurien



during the summer vacation, and my younger brother Benny saw an ad in a local newspaper calling for entries to design Kuwait's 8th Liberation Day anniversary stamp. He convinced me that I should design something. This was during the early days of Adobe Photoshop. The concept and inspiration for my design were based on two particular landmarks in Kuwait - the Kuwait parliament building (purple stamp) and the Kuwait Grand Mosque (blue stamp). Both these illustrations were hand-drawn. After I submitted my designs, I got a call from my dad saying that the Kuwaiti government had selected my design. This became my claim to fame.

KT: Why from so many iconic places in Kuwait did you select these particular buildings?

Denny: My initial postage stamp design was an illustration of the Kuwait Towers. But then I got a request to explore other landmarks so that they could create different denominations of the stamp. So I drew the Assembly building, the Grand Mosque and the old Kuwaiti gates. I grew up around these iconic landmarks, so it was only natural I chose them as my design inspiration (this was before the telecommunication tower was completed).

KT: Tell us about the challenges you faced while drawing?

Denny: Back then I didn't really consider myself an artist - it was me experimenting with traditional drawing media, and then bringing it to the computer and adding CGI elements to it. Like I mentioned, this was during the early days of Adobe Photoshop - there were no layer tools, and the

"glow filter" had to be done manually.

KT: How long did it take to make the designs?

Denny: It took me three days to design them - I submitted three design options.

KT: What did you gain by winning?

Denny: An interview on KTV, reports published in the newspaper and recognition from the Kuwaiti government. Designing a postage stamp is like designing currency - there is an archive of the collection. I even had stamp collectors from all over the world come to see me, interview me, get autographs and take pictures with me for designing the stamp.

KT: How much prize money did you get?

Denny: KD 250, but the fame and recognition was much more. The news even spread to my extended family and friends in Kerala (where I was born). A report was published in Malayalam Manorama (an Indian newspaper). I was the first Indian to design a Kuwaiti stamp.

KT: What year the stamp was released and how long was it in circulation?

Denny: The stamp was released in 1999 on Kuwait's 8th Liberation Day anniversary.

Snail mail memories

By Ben Garcia

Before the onset of smart and digital communications, snail mail was the most popular tool of communication. Many of us still remember the postage stamps we used during that period. Some people also collect stamps as a hobby. I started my career in the information and broadcast industry in Kuwait in 2000 with Radio Kuwait. Back then, the only way to communicate with us was by calling the telephone landlines at the information ministry or sending mail through our mailbox.

The mailbox was not the virtual drop box we use now via the Internet - it was a literal box placed outside the gate of establishments. The receptionists sorted letters from the mailbox so that porters could deliver them to their respective addresses. That was the way we worked before the advent of digital communications. I still remember receiving 20 to 50 letters thrice a week related to my broadcast program on Radio Kuwait's Filipino service. The sample letters are pictured to showcase the stamps used at that time.

JET SKI CRACKDOWN

‘Youth under 18 no longer able to ride jet skis’

By Nawara Fattahova

Riding a jet ski without a license is now a violation that may lead to the seizure of the jet ski. Repeated accidents caused by jet skis and the increasing number of complaints by families swimming on the beach of the reckless behavior of jet ski users was behind issuing a new law regulating its use. The ministry of communications' decree no 63/2018 regarding issuing a sea skipper (nokhatha al-bahri) license sets new rules for riding jet skis and small boats. According to this law, it's not allowed to drive a marine motor vehicle without a license.

The license is valid for a period of five years, and can be issued to Kuwaiti citizens, GCC nationals, bedoons and expats with valid residency in Kuwait. Visitors and tourists are not included in this list, which means that they won't be able to rent a jet ski or even ride one of their friends'.

Fahd Al-Fouzan from the coastguard department, which is in charge of applying the law and sanctioning

violators, said the law should have been issued earlier. "The number of jet ski accidents increased during the past two years, especially by youngsters. So this law should limit these accidents as it forbids kids from riding jet skis. I consider the jet ski even more dangerous than vehicles, as it doesn't have brakes. Moreover, children are not allowed to drive cars or ride motorcycles," he told Kuwait Times.

A violator who rides a jet ski without a license will risk losing the jet ski. "We cruise around the coast during the daytime to ensure safety. We used to stop jet ski riders not wearing lifejackets or if they were nearer than the permitted distance from the shore. But now we stop any jet ski to check for the license. If the rider doesn't have a license, we seize the jet ski by towing it with our boat and taking the rider with us in the boat," added Fouzan.

If the violator ignores the coastguard's warning to stop, then they may take serious action. "We have the authority to stop any jet ski for checks, even by force. So if we ask him by the bullhorn to stop and he refuses,

we can ram him with our boat to stop him. In serious cases, such as near the borders, we are even allowed to shoot if they don't stop and surrender. This usually happens in regional waters, especially in the north," he explained.

Salah, 34, owns a jet ski and agrees with this new decree. "I haven't obtained a license yet, but definitely will do so soon. I won't be driving my jet ski without a license as I respect the law. I think the new law will increase responsibility, as previously violators broke the law and sped away without being sanctioned. The jet ski rental firms are responsible for most of the violations, especially in the chalets area in Khairan and Zour. So even if the coastguards don't stop the jet ski, they may issue the fine to the jet ski rental agency for renting it without a license," he pointed out.

The new law is issued by the ministry of communications, but the coastguard, under the ministry of interior, is charged with enforcement and issuing fines. The law doesn't mention the value of the fine, but the interior ministry said it will be set soon.



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Local

MP proposes major changes to employ Kuwaitis in public, private sectors

Ministry lifts age restrictions for expats to bring parents on visit visas

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Askar Al-Enezi yesterday made a comprehensive proposal to create a large number of jobs in the public and private sector enough to employ Kuwaitis seeking jobs. The lawmaker called for major changes to existing legislation and procedures in addition to conducting comprehensive surveys in the two sectors to make it easier for unemployed nationals to find suitable jobs.

Enezi called on authorities to survey all Kuwaiti job seekers based on their qualifications and experience besides the jobs they want. After that, authorities must conduct a compulsory survey on expatriates employed in public sector jobs and conditions and experience needed for such jobs, he said. This should be followed by procedures to employ Kuwaitis in place of expatriates based on experience and education, the lawmaker proposed.

Enezi then said the authorities should turn to the private sector and survey the types of jobs that are available and can be filled by Kuwaitis. He said that in the process, the labor law in the private sector and other related legislation must be revised to create a better competitive environment for Kuwaitis to work in the private sector.

The lawmaker said that the recruitment of for-

eign labor should be given exclusively to the ministry of social affairs and labor which should accelerate such recruitment only when there are no Kuwaitis to take up the job.

Age restrictions

In the meantime, the interior ministry has lifted age restrictions for expatriates to bring their parents on

visit visas. The department of residency was not issuing such visas for parents above 60 years of age. But now, expatriates can obtain visit visas for their parents regardless of their age after authorities began collecting medical charges for the treatment of the parents. The department said that the visas will be for one month

KD 10,000 fine proposed for housing bachelors

that can be renewed by directors of departments in various governorates.

In a related development, a Kuwait Municipality committee yesterday discussed raising the financial penalty for allowing expatriate bachelors to live in the so-called model areas to up to KD 10,000. Committee members said that the number of expatriate singles has swelled to around 1.2 million, or around 35 percent of expatriate population.



MP Askar Al-Enezi

Kuwait applies anti money-laundering strategy: Judge

VIENNA: The State of Kuwait is currently enforcing a national all-out strategy to fight money-laundering and terror finance, a Kuwaiti judge said yesterday. The strategy in question aims at the promotion of international cooperation efficiency, Secretary of Kuwait's Court of Appeal Justice Nasr Al-Haid said at the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Kuwait appreciates the effective sharing of knowledge, expertise and practices among the states with a view to propping up international coordination in this regard, he added. Kuwait, represented by the Ministry of Justice, has worked out a national piece of legislation meant to offer legal help, he said, noting that relevant procedures were underway to adopt the bill. It is also playing a role in regional cooperation by means of working with other countries in the region to set the initial formula of a set of relevant agreements and laws pertinent to legal and judicial



Justice Nasr Al-Haid

cooperation, the Kuwaiti judge remarked.

A Kuwaiti delegation, led by Kuwait's Ambassador in Austria and Permanent Representative at International Organizations in Vienna, is partaking in the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which winds up today. — KUNA

News in brief

Amir sends condolence cable to Sudan's President

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to Sudan's President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir yesterday over the death of Sudan's former president Marshal Abdel Rahman Suwar Al-Dahab, expressing his deepest sorrow and grief. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent similar cables to President Bashir. — KUNA

Tunisia floods

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah cabled Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi, expressing heartfelt solace on demise of Tunisians in the floods that swept some Tunisian regions, inflicting casualties and demolishing properties. His Highness the Amir wished heavenly mercy for souls of the deceased, wished the injured quick recovery and for empowering the Tunisian leaders to cope with the catastrophe. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah addressed cables of identical content to the Tunisian president. — KUNA

Amir congratulates MP Hashem on IPU post win

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable of congratulations to MP Safaa Al-Hashem on being named as deputy head of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) Standing Committee for UN Affairs. His Highness the Amir said that the win, which occurred on the sideline of the IPU's 139th conference in Geneva, reflected the global community's trust in Kuwaiti lawmakers. His Highness Sheikh Sabah affirmed that Kuwait was proud of Hashem's achievement, wishing her the best in her future endeavors. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent cables of alike sentiment to MP Hashem. Winning the post was the fruit of strenuous efforts made by Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and others members of the Kuwaiti delegation to the 139th conference of IPU, Hashem said in a press statement following the win. Kuwait managed to get this very important position at the standing committee tasked with the UN affairs, she added. Hashem promised to continue her role in tackling and solving problems during her membership in the committee.

Positive achievements

Meanwhile, Ghanem praised yesterday the efforts exerted by the Kuwaiti parliamentary delegation during the 139th IPU conference and the positive achievements the delegation made through coordinative meetings with Arab, Islamic, and Asian groups. Ghanem made these remarks in a press release on the conclusion of the conference.

Ghanem noted that bilateral committee meetings made very good results on many critical issues pertaining to the Arab and Islamic worlds. Ghanem added that Arab and Islamic coordination resulted

in confronting a proposal by some countries regarding 'gay rights', which was "an issue against all sacred religions and ethics," stressing the importance of rejecting discussions on similar issues.

Regarding the Arab urgent resolution, Ghanem said that the number of votes garnered by the resolution was satisfying, expressing her appreciation to all whom supported it. He stressed on the importance of continuing to push on the proposed-resolution due to it being representing the point of view of Arabs Muslims. The Speaker said that bilateral meetings with several parliaments on the sidelines of the conference "had a significant role in delivering our message as a Kuwaiti parliament and our important issues, rallying support for stronger and better steps in the future." "I cannot talk about the details at this time, but certainly we are preparing for more advanced steps in the future," Ghanem added

'Successful' participation

The Kuwaiti participation in the conference was successful thanks to the efforts of the head of the delegation and Speaker Ghanem, said a lawmaker yesterday. In a press release after the conclusion of the IPU conference, Kuwaiti MP Nayef Al-Mardas Al-Ajmi said that his country's delegation focused on positively contributing to the various meetings held on the sideline and during the course of the event.

The Kuwaiti delegation contributed to the success of the Kuwait-Jordan urgent proposal in support of UNRWA operations for the Palestinian people, said MP Ajmi, adding that Kuwait had a hand in halting a proposal aimed at promoting 'LGBT rights'. Meanwhile, MP Ajmi lauded the participation of a delegation consisting of members of Kuwait's 'students' parliament', affirming that the delegation the country's possible legislative future. — KUNA



MP Safaa Al-Hashem

Kuwait drops to second place regionally in Food Security Index

Explosives needed to push housing project works forward

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait dropped to second place in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in the 2018 Global Food Security Index, which was issued recently by the Economist Intelligence Unit. Qatar came in first place in the region and 22 internationally, followed by Kuwait which placed 28 internationally. Oman came third regionally and 29th internationally. The Global Food Security Index aims at identifying countries that are less likely to face food security risks. The index is a dynamic model for qualitative and quantitative measurement in 113 countries

around the world.

Housing project

State Minister for Services and Housing Affairs Dr Jenan Boushehri said that one of the companies working on the infrastructure of Al-Mutlaa housing project is facing difficulties, adding that officials at the housing affairs ministry are working hard in order to help complete delayed operations,



PAS pays KD 15 million in penalties

adding that she noticed a tangible positive response from the company. The company had struggled in removing solid soil at the site, which required contacting the interior ministry to provide 40 tons of explosives in order to pave way for the works to move forward; a process that caused the aforementioned delay, the minister explained. Boushehri has informed company officials that work should be completed before April 2019.

KD 15 million

The Public Authority for Sports (PAS) has paid over KD 15 million to plaintiffs as per court verdicts made from 2011 to July 2018. Minister of Information and State Minister for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri said PAS incurred over KD 10 million due to five rulings forcing it to pay in exchange of the financial support to sports clubs decided by law 7/2007. Jabri added that the largest compensation went to the sea club at KD 3.279 million. He said PAS paid KD 4.85 million in 12 court rulings for several clubs that sued it for failure to pay allocations required by the law to help them sign athletes to pro deals.

Man injured in Hawally building fire

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Hawally firemen led by Lt Colonel Jassim Al-Saqaai tackled a blaze reported in a 10-floor building in the area yesterday. Firemen evacuated the building then fought the fire which had erupted inside the kitchen of a seventh floor apartment. A man sustained burns on his hand and was taken to hospital by paramedics. Investigations are underway to find out the cause of fire.



KUWAIT: The scene inside the kitchen of a Hawally apartment after firefighters tackled a blaze there.

Safety violations

Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD), in cooperation with Kuwait Municipality, carried out a campaign in Mubarakia Market in order to remove safety violations. The campaign, which covered several stores, resulted in issuing multiple citations for violations including random storage that obstruct pass-ways and emergency exits, which can be dangerous in case of fire. Municipality workers removed the violations immediately, KFSD said.



This photo taken by KFSD during a recent crackdown in Mubarakia Market shows chairs and other equipment stored at a staircase, blocking emergency exits that should remain clear to facilitate evacuation in case of fires.

Authority issues regulations on banning, unbanning foodstuff imports

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) yesterday recommended banning and unbanning the importation of food products from several countries. The Supreme Committee recommended in its 12th meeting to ban and lift the ban on the

import of foodstuffs and products from Australia, Ukraine, Russia and South Korea for specific reasons, according to Secretary of the supreme committee for food safety Adel Al-Suwait.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry decided to lift the ban on the importation of fresh strawberry fruit from Australia and decided to temporarily ban the importation of all types of beef, sheep and goats (all fresh and frozen) and their derivatives from Ukraine due to the outbreak of anthrax, he added.

The ministry also decided to lift the ban on the import of all types of beef, sheep and goats (fresh and frozen) and their derivatives from the Russian Federation due to the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, he said. He also said that the ministry decided to lift the ban on the import of all kinds of beef, sheep and goats (fresh and frozen) and their derivatives from South Korea due to the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, he said. —KUNA

KD 675,000 transformers stolen from 135 wells

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Electricity and Water began emergency operation of several ground water wells in Shiqaya while they wait for a solution after thieves stole power transformers from 135 wells. Each transformer costs KD 5,000, setting the total value of the stolen transformers at KD 675,000. Meanwhile, informed sources said the ministry is preparing a tender to buy new transformers to replace the stolen ones which are necessary to operate the wells, adding that workers were able to operate 10 wells through 11 kilovolt power lines. The wells are used to mix distilled and brackish water to supply several areas with irrigation water for gardens and to wash cars and homes, the sources added.

Woman electrocuted

A woman died by electrocution at her mother's farm, Al-Rai reported. The woman was walking around in the farm when she stepped into a muddy pond, then fell unconscious after shaking violently. Paramedics were called and they rushed the woman to Jahra hospital, where she was later pronounced dead after doctors failed to resuscitate her. Police discovered that water leaked to a power cable near the pond, which caused the electrocution. The victim's body was recovered by the coroner.

Fatal accident

A motorist stopped to allow a pedestrian to cross the street, but a car hit her vehicle from behind, pushing it forward to hit the man and leave him with fatal injuries. The accident occurred at a street in Jahra, where the female driver called police immediately after it happened. Police and paramedics arrived to the scene shortly after and they took the victim to hospital, where he was pronounced dead. The woman, along with the male driver of the vehicle that hit hers, were taken to Jahra police station for further questioning.

Wedding spoiled

Faulty wiring briefly spoiled a wedding as guests were asked out of the hall when thick smoke filled the place. Firefighters, paramedics and policemen rushed to the place in response to an emergency call, and discovered the source of the problem, which was repaired in a short time, then guests were allowed back in. — *Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa*



Hindu hardliners block
 Indian temple to women
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Trump threatens to close US-Mexico border over migrant 'onslaught'

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BRISSELS: Britain's Prime minister Theresa May answers journalists' questions upon her arrival at the European Council in Brussels. — AFP

UK PM mulls longer Brexit transition

Open letter warns British PM against Brexit surrender

BRUSSELS: European leaders insisted yesterday that Prime Minister Theresa May must do more to avoid Britain crashing out of the EU without a deal, even after she indicated she was open to extending a Brexit transition period if it helped unblock negotiations. At a summit in Brussels, May confirmed that she is considering the extension idea floated by the EU as a possible way to break the deadlock over how to keep Britain's border with Ireland open after Brexit.

But other EU nations warned this may not resolve the impasse, which has raised fears of the potentially catastrophic scenario of Britain crashing out in March without any agreement. May's own officials also admitted that an extension—which has sparked outrage among eurosceptics at home—would not affect London's position on the Irish border. Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel repeated an earlier call from EU Council President Donald Tusk for the prime minister to act, saying: "More than ever, the ball is in Britain's court."

Longer transition

This week's Brussels summit had been set as the deadline for a draft deal, but the other 27 EU leaders were left once again demanding more

progress from London. Arriving for the second day yesterday, May noted that both sides remained at odds over a "backstop" plan to avoid frontier checks between Britain and Ireland if and until a new trade deal to resolve the issue can be signed. "A further idea that has emerged—and it is an idea at this stage—is to create an option to extend the implementation period for a matter of months," she told reporters.

Currently a transition phase is planned from Brexit next March until the end of December 2020, to allow time to sign a new EU-UK trade deal. Extending this could reduce the likelihood of having to use any "backstop" plan, thus taking the heat out of the most contested Brexit issue. The EU suggests that the British province of Northern Ireland stay aligned to its single market and customs union until a new trade deal is agreed.

But Britain has rejected this, proposing instead that the whole United Kingdom temporarily follow EU customs rules—something Brussels

in turn has said is not possible. A senior British official confirmed yesterday that even if the transition were extended, Britain remained opposed to the EU's backstop plan. EU nations also questioned whether the idea would change the situation. A source in the French presidency warned that an extension "could be part of the discussion but is not an ideal solution".

Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel added that Britain's general approach remained a problem. "It's not possible that the UK keeps all the advantages from the common market but only under its own conditions," he told reporters.

Embarrassing climbdown

Even if May's suggestion of an extension to the transition is unlikely to break the deadlock in Brussels, it energized her critics in London. The Conservative leader has been struggling since the 2016 vote for Brexit to find a compromise divorce deal that is acceptable to both the

EU and her own MPs, who could block the final accord in the House of Commons. Boris Johnson and David Davis, two former ministers who quit in July over her approach to Brexit, signed a joint letter demanding Britain avoid the "purgatory of perpetual membership of the EU's customs union".

On the other side of the political divide, the anti-Brexit Liberal Democrats said extending the transition was another "embarrassing climb-down" for May. May did little to deflect their anger by suggesting that she did not expect any extension to be used, because she expected a trade deal before December 2020. The prime minister had made a personal plea to fellow EU leaders on Wednesday to recognize the progress made so far and keep negotiating.

Over dinner afterwards, they agreed to keep talking, but upped the pressure by refusing to sign off on a planned special summit next month to seal the divorce. Failure to meet in November could see a draft Brexit deal pushed back to a December summit, leaving little time for its ratification by the British and European parliaments. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said EU leaders had asked the bloc's executive "to work with even more vigor on a no-deal scenario". —AFP

“ The ball is in Britain's court ”

International

One year after IS 'defeat,' Syria's Raqa still in fear

SDF struggle to stem infiltration by IS sleeper cells

RAQA, Syria: A year after a US-backed alliance of Syrian fighters drove the Islamic State group from the northern city of Raqa, traumatized civilians still live in fear of near-daily bombings. "Every day we wake up to the sound of an explosion," said resident Khaled al-Darwish. "We're scared to send our children to school... there's no security," he added. The jihadists' brutal rule in Raqa was brought to an end in October 2017 after a months-long ground offensive by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces supported by air strikes from a US-led coalition.

But despite manning roadblocks at every street corner, the SDF and the city's newly created Internal Security Forces are struggling to stem infiltration by IS sleeper cells. At Raqa's entrance, soldiers verify drivers' identity papers and carefully sift through lorry cargoes.

Inside the city, there are regular foot patrols and armored vehicles sit at strategic points. Women wearing the niqab are asked to show their faces to female security members before entering public buildings.

"If there wasn't fear about a return of IS, there wouldn't be this increased military presence," said Darwish, a father of two, speaking near the infamous Paradise Square. It was here that IS carried out decapitations and other brutal punishments,

earning the intersection a new name—"the roundabout of hell".

'We are exhausted'

While the nightmare of jihadist rule may be gone, most of the city still lies in ruins and there are near daily attacks on checkpoints and military vehicles, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Although a series of stinging defeats have cut IS's so-called caliphate down to desert hideouts, the jihadists still manage to hit beyond the patches of ground they overtly control. Some Raqa residents say the city's new security forces lack the expertise to cope.

"We are exhausted. Every day we don't know if we will die in a bomb explosion or if we will go home safe and sound," said Abu Younes, sitting in

his supermarket near a roundabout not far from Paradise Square. "There is no security — (the new security forces) on the roadblocks are not qualified and there is a lot of negligence," he complained. "There are faults that enable IS to infiltrate the city easily and carry out attacks."

But despite the continued attacks, a semblance of normal life has returned to the city. Shops have reopened and traffic has returned to major roads—albeit choked by the impromptu checkpoints. In a



RAQA, Syria: A member of the Raqa civil council's local security forces gestures to a vehicle at a checkpoint securing vehicles entering into the eastern Syrian city and former Islamic State (IS) group stronghold.—AFP

public garden, children climb up a multi-colored slide and onto dilapidated swings as their mothers sit on nearby benches carefully keeping watch. They are set amidst an apocalyptic backdrop of twisted metal and splayed balconies—the remnants of buildings torn apart by US-led coalition air raids.

Nearby, Ahmed al-Mohammed pauses as he listens to music on his phone. Like others, he does not hide his disquiet. "We're scared because of the presence of IS members in the city," the 28-year-old said. "The security forces need to tighten their grip."

Nightmare

Ahmed Khalaf, who commands Raqa's Internal Security Forces, defended the work of his men and claimed successes against the jihadists. He said patrols are highly organized and that a "joint operation cell" had recently been established with coalition forces to monitor the city's security. "Recently we arrested four (jihadists) — it was a cell that took part in attacks that terrorized the city," said Khalaf, sporting plain green fatigues. —AFP

Hamas pledges Gaza rocket fire probe as calm returns

GAZA CITY: Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas pledged an investigation yesterday into rocket fire at Israel the previous day in an apparent bid to calm fears of a new war. Israeli children returned to schools near the border which had been closed on Wednesday after the pre-dawn rocket fire from Gaza badly damaged a family home in the southern city of Beersheba. But the risk of a new war, whether through miscalculation or design, remained.

The family of three children had a narrow escape after the mother moved them into the safe room, as much of the rest of the house was destroyed, the army said. Hamas, which has ruled Gaza for a decade, issued a joint statement with its ally Islamic Jihad publicly disavowing the rocket fire. But Israel rejected their denial, saying they were the only groups armed with rockets of a range sufficient to reach Beersheba — 40 kilometers — and the sea off Tel Aviv — 70 kilometers.

Israel in any case holds Hamas responsible, as Gaza's de facto ruler, for all fire from the territory regardless of who launches it. "There are security service investigations in Gaza to uncover who is behind the rocket fire and there will be harsh measures against those (found guilty)," senior Hamas official Bassem Naim said. He said the rocket fire "aimed to sabotage Egyptian efforts" to broker a long-term truce between Hamas and Israel, which have fought three wars since 2008. A video published by Hamas's military wing on Thursday showed militants preparing rockets for launch, with the caption: "Read us correctly, a mistake would not benefit," written in Hebrew.

Near daily protests along the border since March 30 against Israel's crippling 11-year blockade of the impoverished enclave have

sparked repeated clashes with the army. More than 200 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire, while one Israeli soldier has been shot dead. Wednesday's rocket fire triggered retaliatory Israeli air strikes that killed one suspected militant and raised fears of a new escalation.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu chaired a meeting of the security cabinet lasting several hours on Wednesday evening.

But no statement was released afterwards and Israeli media reported that ministers had failed to agree on how to respond to the rocket fire and the persistent protests. The mass circulation Yediot Aharonot newspaper said the swift action of the mother in Beersheba to protect her family had probably prevented a new war. "If the rocket attack had resulted in casualties, the political echelon's manoeuvring room would have been reduced to zero, and Israel would have launched, just like it did four years ago, a military operation that it neither wants nor which it believes will be effective."

Hamas seized control of Gaza from loyalists of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas in a near civil war in 2007 and the split has made peace negotiations with Israel harder. Egypt and the UN have been seeking to broker an agreement that would see Israel relax its blockade of Gaza in exchange for a prolonged period of calm from Hamas. Abbas's Fatah movement opposes any such deal, saying it amounts to a recognition of Islamist control in Gaza.

Egyptian Intelligence Minister Abbas Kamel was expected in Gaza yesterday for his first visit since taking up the post in January, fuelling talk of a deal. Egypt is one of only two Arab states to have official relations with Israel and plays a key role in indirect negotiations between the Jewish state and Hamas. The visit had been expected on Wednesday, but Hamas official Naim said the minister was forced to postpone it due to timetabling clashes.

Mukhaimer Abu Saada, a political analyst in Gaza, said those who fired the rockets wanted to prevent the visit and "stop reconciliation and a truce." Fringe Islamist groups opposed to Hamas have previously fired rockets. Suspicion could also fall on factions within Hamas and Islamic Jihad opposed to a truce deal. —AFP

Lebanon govt to be formed very soon

BEIRUT: Lebanon's president said yesterday a government would be formed very soon as political parties intensified negotiations to break a deadlock more than five months after elections. Prime Minister-designate Saad al-Hariri has been negotiating with Lebanon's rival parties since a parliamentary election in May to form a new power-sharing cabinet, but they have so far been unable to reach consensus.

Asked by reporters yesterday if a government would be agreed on, President Michel Aoun replied: "Yes, the government will be very soon or sooner." The major parties have jostled over the number of cabinet seats they should get and over the apportionment of the most powerful ministries. In recent days stepped-up talks between leaders have increased optimism that the deadlock may soon be broken.

"Forming the government is taking longer than expected but we will get there," Hariri said on Tuesday. Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri is expected to return to Lebanon from a trip abroad today. The delay has increased concern over the threat of an economic crisis in the heavily-indebted country. Lebanon has the third largest debt-to-GDP ratio in the world at more than 150 percent, and a new government is expected to start moves towards bringing down the deficit.—Reuters

International

Crimea teen gunman spoke of bullying revenge; investigators seek motive

Crimea mourns after fatal college attack

KERCH: A teenage gunman who killed 20 people in a Crimean college had spoken of taking revenge for bullying, a girl claiming to be his ex-girlfriend said yesterday, while Russian President Vladimir Putin said the massacre was influenced by American shootings. Putin said at a forum in the southern city of Sochi that the killing was the “result of globalisation” and the continuation of a trend that had begun in the US.

“We do not create enough good (online) content for young people. This leads to this kind of tragedy,” said the president, whose government has in recent years increased its control on the internet. Putin’s remarks came as investigators sought to establish what prompted 18-year-old Vladislav Roslyakov to open fire on fellow students at a technical college in Kerch, a city in the Moscow-annexed Crimean peninsula, before killing himself. More than 40 others were injured.

In an interview with state media, a girl claiming to be his ex-girlfriend described him as a “kind and considerate” person who had complained of bullying. “He would say that he lost trust in people when his classmates began humiliating him for not being like everyone else,” a 15-year-old named as Zlata told the Kremlin-funded RT outlet. “Vladislav was always telling me about his frequent fights with people

around him,” she said, adding that he “didn’t want to live” because of it.

The girl, who broke up with Roslyakov at an unspecified time before the killing, said he was a shooting enthusiast. “I’m sorry for the people he shot and I’m very sorry that he killed himself. He was a very good friend,” she said.

Horrific injuries

Russia’s health ministry put the latest death toll at 20. A few hours earlier, city authorities published a list of 19 of the victims—nine of them under the age of 18. A 15-year-old boy, Sergei Stepanenko, was the youngest to die in the shooting. One of the girls who died, 16-year-old Darya Chegerest, “tried to help others” as the attack

unfolded but was killed, her fellow first-year student Viktoria Voiko told AFP.

Russia’s Columbine

Many of those hospitalized were injured by an explosion that blasted metal ball bearings and other items into their bodies, ripping into organs. Health minister Veronika Skvortsova told journalists that most of those who died suffered gunshot wounds. She said the explosion made “mincemeat” of the victims and several had limbs amputated.

The gunman “moved from room to room and, like



SIMFEROPOL, Crimea: A woman cries during a church service for the victims of the Kerch’s college in Simferopol, Crimea. —AFP

an experienced special forces fighter, first threw a home-made grenade before going to shoot people,” Russian daily Kommersant wrote. It called the shooting an “unprecedented crime in Russia”, which has strict gun controls. Several media outlets made a comparison with the 1999 Columbine High School shooting in the US, which left 13 people dead.

They described photographs circulating on the internet showing Roslyakov wearing a similar T-shirt to Eric Harris, one of the Columbine killers. “On paper, he had an ideal character. We simply do

not understand,” Crimean leader Sergei Aksyonov told journalists. According to Kommersant, the teenager “grew up in a rather poor family” with a disabled father.

The paper said Roslyakov’s mother is a Jehovah’s Witness—a Christian organisation considered “extremist” and banned in Russia. Russian television reported she works as an orderly at one of the hospitals that treated victims. According to the RIA Novosti agency, security forces raided Roslyakov’s family home following the killings. —AFP

World leaders to attend Paris WWI commemorations

PARIS: More than 60 world leaders, including US President Donald Trump and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, will travel to Paris next month for commemorations of the end of World War I a century ago, French officials said yesterday. On November 10 — a day before the commemorations in Paris—French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel will also attend a ceremony near Compiègne, northern France, where the armistice ending the war was signed on November 11, 1918, Macron’s office said.

The main ceremony will take place at the Arc de Triomphe war monument in Paris at 11 a.m. on November 11 — marking the time when guns finally fell silent after four years of trench warfare and general European slaughter. Later in the day, guests will be invited to participate in a Peace Forum, to be opened by Merkel, an event which France wants to turn into an annual

multilateral peace conference.

Earlier in November, Macron will spend a week touring the country’s WWI battlefields, including Verdun, scene of the longest-lasting battle which left at least 700,000 dead on both sides. “The idea is to commemorate our ‘poilus’ (hairy) ancestors,” the presidency said, using a nickname for French WWI rank-and-file troops. Macron will also “pay homage to the French people’s extraordinary capacity—which has never failed—to rebuild and start anew after a war,” the presidency said.

A special cabinet meeting will be held in Charleville-Mezieres, in the Ardennes, an area which saw much destruction during the war and which today suffers from de-industrialization and high unemployment. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier will also attend a Franco-German friendship concert on November 4 in the eastern city of Strasbourg, part of the Alsace region which was returned to France in 1918 after being seized by Prussia in 1870.

Only countries which “sent troops or workers to the European theatres of war” have been invited to the Paris ceremonies, the presidential office, said when asked to explain the absence of countries such as Saudi Arabia. —AFP

Facebook launches ‘war room’ to combat manipulation

MENLO PARK: In Facebook’s “War Room,” a nondescript space adorned with American and Brazilian flags, a team of 20 people monitors computer screens for signs of suspicious activity. The freshly launched unit at Facebook’s Menlo Park headquarters in California is the nerve center for the fight against misinformation and manipulation of the largest social network by foreign actors trying to influence elections in the United States and elsewhere.

Inside, the walls have clocks showing the time in various regions of the US and Brazil, maps and TV screens showing CNN, Fox News and Twitter, and other monitors showing graphs of Facebook activity in real time. Facebook, which has been blamed for doing too little to prevent misinformation efforts by Russia and others in the 2016 US election, now wants the world to know it is taking aggressive steps with initiatives like the war room.

“Our job is to detect ... anyone trying to manipulate the public debate,” said Nathaniel Gleicher, a former White House cybersecurity policy director for the National Security Council who is now heading Facebook’s cybersecurity policy. “We work to find and remove these actors.” Facebook has been racing to get measures in place and began operating this nerve center—with a hastily taped “WAR ROOM” sign on the glass door—for the first round of the presidential vote in Brazil on October 7.

It didn’t take long to find false information and rumors being spread which could have had an impact on voters in Brazil. “On election day, we saw a spike in voter suppression (messages) saying the election was delayed due to protests. That was not a true story,” said Samidh Chakrabarti, Facebook’s head of civic engagement. Chakrabarti said Facebook was able to remove these posts in a couple of hours before they went viral. “It could have taken days.”

Humans and machines

At the unveiling of the war room for a small group of journalists including AFP this week, a man in a gray pork pie hat kept his eyes glued to his screen where a Brazilian flag was attached. He said nothing but his mission was obvious—watching for any hints of interference with the second round of voting in Brazil on October 28. The war room, which will ramp up activity for the November 6 midterm US elections, is the most concrete sign of Facebook’s efforts to weed out misinformation. —AFP

US to merge Jerusalem consulate into embassy

‘This decision will improve efficiency of our operations’

WASHINGTON: The United States will merge the US Consulate General, which serves Palestinians, with its new embassy into a single diplomatic mission in Jerusalem, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said yesterday. “This decision is driven by our global efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations,” Pompeo said in a statement. “It does not signal a change of US policy on Jerusalem, the West Bank, or the Gaza Strip.” The consulate-general in Jerusalem is the top mission for Palestinians, who want East Jerusalem for their capital.

“We will continue to conduct a full range of reporting, outreach, and programming in the West Bank and Gaza as well as with Palestinians in Jerusalem through a new Palestinian Affairs Unit inside US Embassy Jerusalem,” Pompeo said. He said the Trump administration was committed to a peace effort between Israel and the Palestinians. US President Donald Trump outraged the Arab world and stoked international concern by recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital in December and moving the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in May.

The status of Jerusalem is one of the



JERUSALEM: In this file photo, a woman poses for a picture next to an inauguration plaque during the opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem. — AFP

thorniest disputes between Israel and the Palestinians and Palestinian leaders accused Trump of sowing instability by overturning decades of US policy. Palestinians, with broad international backing, seek East Jerusalem as the capital of a state they want to establish in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Israel re-

gards all of the city, including the eastern sector it captured in the 1967 Middle East war and annexed, as its “eternal and indivisible capital,” but that is not recognized internationally. The Trump administration has avoided that description, and noted that the city’s final borders should be decided by the parties. — Reuters

EU-Arab summit set for February 24-25 in Egypt

BRUSSELS: EU and Arab leaders will meet in Egypt in late February for their first summit as part of efforts to forge a new European-African alliance and fight migrant smuggling, EU officials said yesterday. European Union leaders first mentioned the summit in Austria last month as they vowed to intensify talks with Egypt and other north African countries to curb illegal migration. “The European Council welcomes the holding of the forthcoming first summit between the 28 EU Member States and the League of Arab States, hosted by Egypt on 24-25 February 2019,” the council of EU leaders said after a summit in Brussels.

The Cairo-based Arab League includes North African countries Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco as well as those in the Middle East and Gulf. EU officials said the summit was part of a broader push to build closer ties with Africa outlined by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in September. “It is now much more than about migration and fighting traffickers,” an EU official told reporters. —AFP



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International

Trump threatens to close US-Mexico border over migrant 'onslaught'

Trump to send National Guard troops to border

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump threatened yesterday to send the military to close its southern border if Mexico fails to stem the "onslaught" of migrants from Central America, in a series of tweets that blamed Democrats ahead of the midterm elections. The attack comes with Trump's Republicans fighting to retain control of Congress in the November 6 vote, and as thousands of migrants from impoverished Honduras were marching north through Guatemala toward the United States.

"I am watching the Democrat Party led (because they want Open Borders and existing weak laws) assault on our country by Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, whose leaders are doing little to stop this large flow of people, INCLUDING MANY CRIMINALS," Trump said. "In addition to stopping all payments to these countries, which seem to have almost no control over their population, I must, in the strongest of terms, ask Mexico to stop this onslaught - and if unable to do so I will call up the US Military and CLOSE OUR SOUTHERN BORDER!"

The tweets came as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo prepared to embark on a tour of the region that will see him visit Mexico ahead of its December inauguration of President-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, as well as Panama. Trump has made cracking down on illegal immigration and building a wall that stretches the

length of the 1,954-mile border a keystone of his presidency, but his animus toward Mexico had cooled since Obrador's election in July.



Trump gives FBI a week to investigate

Despite their sharp differences, the US and Mexico have made progress on several issues, including the signing of an updated transcontinental trade pact, the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). But, possibly with an eye on November 6 polls that will determine whether Republicans retain control of Congress, Trump returned to the fiery rhetoric that has marked his past relations with Mexico. "The assault on our country at our Southern Border, including the Criminal elements and DRUGS pouring in, is far more important to me, as President, than Trade or the USMCA," he said.

Caravan presses on

It was not immediately clear what form of mil-



SANTA TERESA: In this file photo workers replace an old section of the wall between the US and Mexico in Santa Teresa, New Mexico, close to Ciudad Juarez in Mexico's Chihuahua State. —AFP

itary deployment Trump had in mind. The president announced plans in April to send thousands of National Guard troops to the border, where they could remain until his promised wall is constructed. At least five US states later refused to send the troops amid an outcry over a policy to

separate migrant children from their parents, since discontinued.

Exhausted after tramping in the sun and rain, an advance group of the Honduran migrants on Wednesday took refuge in a church-sponsored shelter in the center of Guatemala City. —AFP

Political newbies jump into US electoral fray

WASHINGTON: Hundreds of everyday Americans with zero political experience are jumping into the fray for the mid-term congressional elections in a country that has become ever more polarized since Donald Trump was elected president in 2016. AFP has spoken to a dozen or so of these people who have moved past the party-primary stage and will fight for a seat in Congress on November 6, when all 435 seats in the House of Representatives and a third of the 100-member Senate are up for grabs, as are myriad local positions.

"We have people in Congress right now who ... don't know what it's like" to be without food or proper health care, said Deb Haaland, 57, a Democrat running for a House seat and the distinction of becoming the first Native American woman to serve in Congress. Haaland has been active in local politics in her native New Mexico. But she says it was Trump's surprise win that got her interested in joining politics at the national level.

That sentiment is found among many new Democratic hopefuls, including a record number of women, who have left their mark on the American political scene since their sometimes shock victories in the primaries. A former refugee, Ilhan Omar, 36, could become the first Somali-American woman in the House and one of its first Muslim women. Ayanna Pressley, a 40-something African-American woman who is trying to move from local politics in Boston to a seat in Washington, promises to be "part of a movement that brings change and a new perspective to Washington." —AFP

Italy, Austria at odds over S Tyrol dual citizenship

BOLZANO, Italy: A diplomatic row threatens to disrupt Italy's Alpine province of South Tyrol over the question of national identity and whether some of its inhabitants should have the right to Austrian citizenship. Italy's wealthiest province elects its new autonomous parliament on Sunday as Vienna and Rome lock horns over a proposal by Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz to offer Austrian passports to South Tyroleans. But the offer extends to speakers of German or the regional language Ladin—not to those who only speak Italian.

While the passport issue isn't on the ballot per se, and other issues such as immigration have dominated the campaign, the dual-nationality question has nevertheless been a hot-button topic. Proponents of dual citizenship claim it will forge a stronger European identity in the face of growing far-right and populist forces. But critics fear offering Austrian nationality only to German- and Ladin-speakers could prove divisive in a territory often held up as a model of peaceful cohabitation between the different linguistic



BOLZANO, Italy: A man passes by election posters in Bolzano, Italy. — AFP

groups. And a furious Italian government sees Kurz's proposal as an attack on its sovereignty. "You can't give away passports without our consent," Interior Minister Matteo Salvini said at the weekend. "A dual passport is out of the question." Vienna, which has yet to draw up a concrete roadmap for its scheme, has recently sought to calm the waters, promising to proceed solely with Rome's consent.

"We have nothing to do with Italy"

In South Tyrol's capital Bolzano, the low-key campaign is in evidence only through a few political posters in the town's green spaces. For retired bank employee Rene, Austrian citizenship would be a dream come true. "We have nothing to do with Italy. It'll give us back a feeling of

belonging to our Austrian homeland," he said. Part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire for over five centuries, South Tyrol was ceded to Italy after World War I, but awarded autonomous status.

Subjected to forced "Italianization" by Benito Mussolini from the 1920s, just before World War II the province's German speakers were offered the option of "returning" to Nazi Germany or remaining as fully fledged Italians. In 1948, the rights of the three main language groups—German, Italian and Ladin—were enshrined in the territory's autonomy statute. But for many the dream of rejoining Austria, or attaining independence from Italy, never faded. There was even a series of separatist bombings during the 1950s and 1960s. —AFP

Trump pulling out of pact that discounted foreign postal deliveries

Change to benefit US merchants, shippers, including Amazon

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration will begin withdrawing from a United Nations pact that offered low rates for foreign postal deliveries of small packages in the United States, the latest move to challenge practices it sees as unfairly advantageous to China. White House officials said on Wednesday the United States would start the process of leaving the Universal Postal Union (UPU), a Switzerland-based organization that connects postal services worldwide.

The White House said the UPU enables foreign postal services to take advantage of cheap shipments to the United States, creating an unfair cost advantage over US companies that ship goods, and hurting the US Postal Service. Shares of internet-based mailing and shipping provider Stamps.com fell nearly 9 percent after the announcement. Online shoppers in the United States have often benefited from the arrangement, gaining access to foreign goods at little cost.

US President Donald Trump is distancing the United States from international multilateral organizations and accompanying policies that he says hurt US interests. Trump has announced US withdrawal from the Paris agreement to mitigate climate change and an international deal with Iran to curb Tehran's nuclear program. The White House will seek to renegotiate the terms of the UPU rules during the year-long withdrawal process, officials said.

"If negotiations are successful, the adminis-

tration is prepared to rescind the notice of withdrawal and remain in the UPU," White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said in a statement. China's foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said that China regretted the US decision to pull out of the UPU, adding that the pact has had a positive effect on trade and communications. China's consistent position was to safeguard multilateralism and it would continue to participate in and support the work of the union, he told a regular news briefing.

UPU Director General Bishar Hussein said he would seek meetings with US officials to discuss the matter. "The UPU remains committed to attainment of the noble aims of international collaboration by working with all its 192 member countries to ensure that the treaty best serves everyone," he said in a statement. One senior White House said the treaty's "subsidy" had facilitated the transfer of a high level of counterfeit goods and the narcotic and fentanyl trade.

Another official said the system allowed for a 40 to 70 percent discount on small packages arriving in the United States from China compared to what it would cost to send them domestically, costing \$300 million. The official described it as an economic distortion that the administration wanted to correct. A change could benefit US merchants and shippers, including Amazon.com Inc, which have called on US officials for years to address foreign postal services' access to low



CALIFORNIA: This file photo shows a mailbox for United States Postal Service (USPS) and other mail outside a home in California. — Reuters

rates. Amazon declined to comment. The National Association of Manufacturers called the agreement "outdated" and said it "contributes

significantly to the flood of counterfeit goods and dangerous drugs that enter the country from China." — Reuters

Freed Vietnam blogger 'Mother Mushroom' arrives in US

CHICAGO: A dissident Vietnamese blogger known by her pen name 'Mother Mushroom' has arrived in the United States after her surprise release from prison, telling a large crowd of supporters she will "never keep silent" in her fight for democracy in the one-party state. Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, 39, was quietly freed from a jail on Wednesday in Vietnam and put on a plane with her elderly mother and two young children who were seen smiling and hugging her in images shared on social media.

Her unexpected release after two years behind bars came as US defense chief Jim Mattis visited Vietnam as part of warming ties between the former foes, who are eager to counter China's rising influence in Asia. Neither the Pentagon nor the Vietnamese government commented on the timing of Quynh's release, though the US embassy in Hanoi said they welcomed the move.

The outspoken blogger, whose name comes from her daughter's nickname "mushroom", smiled and spoke to a large crowd of friends and supporters, many livestreaming



TEXAS: In this handout photo, Vietnam dissident blogger Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, center, is surrounded by well-wishers as she arrives at Houston George Bush airport in Houston, Texas. — AFP

the chaotic scene on Facebook, at Houston's George Bush airport where she arrived just before midnight on Wednesday. She said it was not an easy move leaving her country but vowed to "never keep silent" in her fight for rights issues back home.

"I will continue to raise my voice until there is human rights in Vietnam, real human rights," she told AFP by phone before getting into a car with her family. Quynh has been behind bars since her arrest in 2016 when she was arrested while visiting a fellow activist in prison. She was later convicted for "anti-state propaganda" for publishing damning Facebook posts about deaths in police custody, a toxic spill in central Vietnam and the criticisms of the ruling communist party.

She was sentenced to 10 years in jail last year, a heavy ruling that drew swift rebuke from the US, the EU and UN. Earlier this year police moved her to a prison hundreds of kilometres from her hometown Nha Trang in central Vietnam, which she said had taken a toll on her family who were exhausted by the travel. "It was time for me to think of my family, I made this final decision (to leave) for the future of my two kids," she said. The US embassy in Hanoi said Quynh had requested to go to the US if released and urged Vietnam to free other activists. "We will continue to call on the government of Vietnam to immediately and unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience," embassy spokeswoman Karen Tang said. —AFP

Military men on threshold regaining power in Brazil

RIO DE JANEIRO: More than three decades after the end of military dictatorship, army men look to be on the threshold of returning to power in Brazil, this time through elections in a crime-ridden country whose official motto is "Order and Progress." The comfortable favorite in an October 28 presidential run-off is Jair Bolsonaro, a former army captain who has chosen a newly retired general, Hamilton Mourao, as his vice president if he wins.

At least four others with military backgrounds are tipped to enter government under a president Bolsonaro. The 63-year-old candidate has vowed to rule "with authority, but without authoritarianism"—though his nostalgic talk of the 1964-1985 dictatorship he served, his promises to arm "good" citizens, and his talk in favor of torture have chilled many voters.

In Brazil, a 1979 amnesty gave immunity to those responsible for the 434 murders and the torture of thousands during the dictatorship, counted by a national truth commission. A declassified CIA report revealed that the elimination of opponents was ordered at the highest levels of the government at the time. In many democracies, evoking such brutal rule positively in a campaign would be anathema. But in Brazil today, with more than 62,000 murders annually and a constant fear of armed robberies, the law and order evoked by past military times has lent it support among younger voters. — AFP

International

Hindu hardliners step up campaign to block Indian temple to women

Local Hindu groups declare 12-hour shutdown

NILACKAL, India: Hindu hardliners blocked intersections, threatened drivers, threw stones at buses and ordered a 12-hour strike yesterday as they stepped up their campaign to bar women from one of India's holiest temples. The Lord Ayyappa temple at Sabarimala in the southern state of Kerala was meant to allow women from Wednesday following an order by India's highest court last month. But hundreds of traditionalists, throwing stones at baton-wielding police, defied the order-surrounding and shouting at any woman attempting to make it to the hilltop site.

Angry young men also surrounded and smashed the car windows of female television reporters and threatened others, including an AFP reporter. Another female correspondent was kicked. The activists blocked the path and shouted at another female journalist yesterday.

Overnight local Hindu groups declared a 12-hour shutdown of local businesses, telling drivers that their vehicles would be attacked if they took anyone towards the temple. "Some men came to the parking lot early yesterday and warned taxi drivers against defying the shutdown call," taxi driver Praveen, in the town of Pathanamthitta, said.

"They warned drivers at several nearby parking lots and hotels. Anyone who defies it will be risking damage to his vehicle," he added in an ac-

count corroborated by other drivers. "No one will get to the temple today because all the drivers are scared for the safety of their cars," one hotel receptionist said. Shops, businesses and schools in the area were shut. State authorities have insisted that they will ensure access, imposing restrictions on public gatherings of more than five people that came into force from midnight, and laying on buses for devotees.

Kerala police, who have drafted in hundreds of extra officers, many with helmets and body armor over their khaki uniforms, provided escorts to some buses. Police also patrolled through the night and reinforced their presence at Nilackal, the base camp below the temple. Press reports said around 40 people were arrested. But groups of between 50 and 100 young men gathered at intersections yesterday,

Female correspondent was kicked

checking vehicles.

"Traditions that have existed since before courts cannot be tampered with," Krishna Kumar, a tall muscular man in his 20s at one crossroads in the town of Kozhencherry, said. In some areas, protesters threw stones at the buses. The situation at the actual temple was calm, meanwhile, with the first pilgrims arriving. But none of them were women older than 10 or younger than 50, an AFP photographer said.

movement in India gained traction in recent weeks. Akbar has denied wrongdoing and said he was stepping down so that he could fight the allegations in court. A Delhi court began proceedings on Thursday in a defamation suit filed by Akbar against one of the women who leveled accusations against him. The next hearing will be on Oct 31.

The previous government passed a workplace harassment act and an act to amend criminal law in 2013. The latter made sexual harassment, stalking and voyeurism crimes. But women's groups say a requirement that accusations be made to a workplace complaints committee within three months is unfair as some women cannot quickly muster the courage to take that step. The government should review certain provisions of the sexual harassment prevention law, said Rebecca John, a lawyer who is defending the woman against whom Akbar has filed a defamation suit.

"The provision of filing a complaint within three months should be made more flexible," she said. In the case of many of the recent complaints against journalists, actors and other public figures, many of which were made under the #MeToo hashtag on social media, the accusations related to incidents that happened years ago. Women's groups also say that the law doesn't make clear who in a workplace is in charge of ensuring compliance and is therefore responsible if its provisions are not followed. —Reuters



NILACKAL, India: Indian police take a Hindu activist into custody as protesters rallied against a Supreme Court verdict revoking a ban on women's entry to a Hindu temple, in Nilackal in southern Kerala state. —AFP

Impure

Last month India's Supreme Court overturned a ban on females of menstruating age-judged between 10 and 50 — entering and praying at the hilltop temple, reached by a tough uphill trek. Women are permitted to enter most Hindu temples but female devotees are still barred from some. The entry of women at Sabarimala was long taboo, with a ban formalized by the Kerala High Court in 1991. But last month India's Supreme Court overturned the ruling.

The restriction reflected an old but still prevalent belief that menstruating women are impure, and the fact that the deity Ayyappa was reputed to have been celibate. The Supreme Court ruling enraged traditionalists, including supporters of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Biju S. Pillai, a local man in his 30s, was one of those opposed to the court ruling, telling AFP that he returned from working in Dubai to "protect the sanctity of the temple". —AFP

India looks to tighten sexual harassment laws

NEW DELHI: India is considering tightening sexual harassment laws, government officials said yesterday, after an avalanche of complaints of abuse lodged by women in recent weeks thrust the issue to the forefront of politics. Changes to the laws are being considered as the government weighs different proposals to tackle harassment, one of the officials said. "The official announcement could come next week," said the official, who works in the prime minister's office.

The officials declined to give any details about possible changes. The government focus on the law has come after women's rights groups complained that the existing laws do not go far enough to address the widespread problem of sexual harassment. A junior government minister resigned on Wednesday after he faced sexual harassment accusations from more than a dozen women.

The allegations related to when the junior foreign minister, M J Akbar, was a top newspaper editor. He is the biggest casualty since the #MeToo

Bhutan seeks happiness in new govt

THIMPHU, Bhutan: The Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, wedged between India and China, voted in a national election yesterday guaranteed to usher in a new ruling party which must boost the economy without compromising the country's fierce independent streak. The country of 800,000 people, famed for its Gross National Happiness index, is holding only its third democratic election since the ending of the absolute monarchy in 2008.

The capital's streets were mainly empty as authorities declared a holiday for the election. Many voters looked forward to seeing a new government tackling problems including Bhutan's large foreign debt, mainly owed to India. "We expect a new broom to sweep well," said engineer Gopal Chettri after voting in the capital Thimphu. "It is a country with a limited budget so what can you say. Whatever party wins has to cope with it."

Results of the runoff vote-to be announced Friday-could see a government formed by a party only registered in 2013. Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa (DNT) narrowly led the first round of voting on September 15 with 92,722 votes, just ahead of the Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT),



THIMPU, Bhutan: A Bhutanese voter casts his ballot at a polling station in Thimphu. —AFP

which won Bhutan's first election in 2008, on 90,020. Harvard-educated prime minister Tshering Tobgay conceded defeat after his ruling party slumped to third place.

The rivals have vowed to bolster the economy and health system and improve government transparency. Corruption, rural poverty, youth unemployment and criminal gangs are all problems for the "Land of the Thunder Dragon." The key will be making money from the country's hydro-electric power, which is mainly exported to India. The DPT wants more hydro-power construction while the DNT is more wary of increasing Bhutan's foreign debt.

Hydropower financing—which comes to more than \$1.5 billion—accounts for more than 80 percent of Bhutan's foreign debt. Most is owed to India, which has financed four out of five of the kingdom's new hydro-electric projects. —AFP

International

Friday, October 19, 2018

Afghan Taliban issues fresh call to boycott foreign plot of elections

Thousands of police deployed across to ensure security

KABUL: The Taliban issued a fresh call for Afghans to boycott this week's parliamentary elections yesterday, denouncing the vote as a foreign-imposed process that went against both Islam and Afghan culture. The statement was the third such call and followed a similar message on Wednesday telling teachers not to participate as election workers in polling stations, many of which are located in schools. It said the elections "have no Islamic or Afghan essence but are a foreign plot to prolong occupation" and said it was the duty of every Afghan and Muslim to oppose them.

"Consequently, preachers and prayer leaders must inform their constituency, while tribal leaders and influential figures must prevent participation by the public," the statement said. The elections for the lower house of parliament are due to take place on Saturday but preparations have been dogged by chaotic organization and allegations of widespread fraud as well as worries that polling stations will be attacked.

Thousands of police and soldiers have been deployed across the country to ensure secu-

rity but already nine candidates have been assassinated and hundreds of people have been killed and wounded in election-related attacks. Although the Taliban say they will not deliberately target civilians, security officials say attacks are likely on Saturday morning to deter voters from going to polling stations. The Taliban's strong opposition to the vote comes against a backdrop of contacts with US officials over possible talks to end the 17-year war

in Afghanistan, with both sides attempting to secure the upper hand before any formal negotiations begin.

The elections, which have been repeatedly delayed, are seen as a key credibility test for Afghanistan's democratic institutions but with two days left until

the vote, officials were still rushing to complete preparations. Untested biometric voter registration equipment introduced at the last minute at the demand of political parties was still being sent out and set up in remote provincial voting centers and it was unclear whether it would be ready in time.

Some 8.8 million names have been registered but millions of these are believed to be

Elections have no Islamic or Afghan essence



KANDAHAR: Afghan policemen stand guard at a checkpoint ahead of parliamentary election in Kandahar. —AFP

fraudulently recorded and the real number of likely voters is unknown. The lower house of parliament, with 249 seats and an extra seat reserved for the small Sikh community, has little power but the elections are seen as a vital step before more important presidential elec-

tions in April next year. District council elections, which were due to be held alongside the parliamentary elections, have been abandoned and in Ghazni province voting will be delayed because of arguments over the representation of different ethnic groups. —Reuters

Tunisia flash floods leave five dead

TUNIS: Flash flooding in Tunisia has killed at least five people while a further two are unaccounted for, the interior ministry said yesterday. Two died in the Kef region in the northwest and another in Grombalia in the north, ministry spokesperson Sofiene Zaag said. On Wednesday a six-year-old child drowned in Sidi Bouzid in central Tunisia and a 40-year-old man was swept away by a seasonal river in the neighboring province of Kasserine, the ministry said.

One person has been missing since Wednesday in Kasserine and another in Zaghouan in northeastern Tunisia, Zaag added. The drownings come less than a month after torrential rains killed at least five people in the northeastern region of Cap Bon. Water levels have risen in several cities, including Tunis and its outskirts, where most schools were closed yesterday. Some commuters parked their cars and took off their shoes as



TUNIS: People drive through a street flooded by torrential rains in the Tunisian capital Tunis. —AFP

they navigated flooded routes to work in the capital.

Schools also remained closed in Kasserine, Sidi Bouzid and several other affected areas. The interior ministry urged drivers to take care, as numerous roads across the country are impassable. People have lashed out at the authorities for failing to maintain drainage systems or clear rubbish from seasonal riverbeds, despite frequent heavy rains in the autumn. —AFP

Czech soldiers wounded in Afghan attack

PRAGUE: Five Czech soldiers have been injured in an attack in Afghanistan only two months after three others were killed, the Czech defense ministry said yesterday. "The attack on the Czech patrol occurred on Wednesday around 1220 GMT near the Bagram base in the Parwan

province," the ministry said in a statement. The five soldiers were injured when a civilian vehicle loaded with explosives was blown up near an armored vehicle which then rolled over, it added. One soldier with serious injuries underwent surgery and his life is no longer in danger.

Another with light injuries remained in hospital while the other three were released, the ministry said. On August 5, three Czech soldiers were killed in a suicide bombing while on patrol in the eastern Parwan province alongside a US soldier and two Afghan soldiers, who were wounded. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. It was the deadliest assault on NATO soldiers in many months. —AFP

Top Afghan official killed in shooting

KANDAHAR: The top US commander in Afghanistan, General Scott Miller escaped unhurt after a burst of gunfire in the governor's compound in Kandahar province yesterday but the powerful police chief General Abdul Razeq was killed, officials said. A senior security official said

the governor's bodyguard opened fire and hit Razeq in the back as soon as officials came out of the meeting. The governor and the local head of the NDS intelligence service were wounded.

Several Afghan and international security officials said Razeq, one of Afghanistan's most powerful commanders with a fearsome reputation as an enemy of the Taliban, had been killed. Miller, who had been attending a meeting with security officials ahead of parliamentary elections on Saturday, was not injured but two Americans were wounded in the crossfire and had been evacuated, NATO spokesman Colonel Knut Peters said. —Reuters

Pope gets invite to North Korea, indicates will consider visit

South Korea's Moon speaks of peace hopes

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis yesterday received an invitation to visit North Korea and the pontiff indicated that he would consider making what would be a landmark trip to the hermit nation, according to South Korean officials. South Korean President Moon Jae-in relayed the invitation from North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to the pope verbally during a 35-minute meeting in the Vatican.

Any visit would be the first by a pope to the reclusive state which does not allow priests to be permanently stationed there. There is little information on how many of its citizens are Catholic, or how they practice their faith. Kim told Moon, a Catholic, of his wish to meet the pontiff during a meeting last month and the South Korean leader announced before the trip that he would be relaying a message.

According to the president's office, Francis expressed his strong support for efforts to bring peace to the Korean peninsula. Moon's office quoted the pope as telling Moon: "Do not stop, move forward. Do not be afraid." Asked if Kim should send a formal invitation, Moon's of-

fice quoted the pope as responding to Moon: "your message is already sufficient but it would be good for him to send a formal invitation." "I will definitely answer if I get the invitation, and I can go," the president's office quoted the pope as saying.

Reconciliation

The pope is expected to be in Asia during a trip to Japan next year. A Vatican statement made no mention of the verbal invitation from Kim. It spoke only of "the promotion of dialogue and reconciliation between Koreans" and "the common commitment to fostering all useful initiatives to overcome the tensions that still exist in the Korean Peninsula, in order to usher in a new season of peace and development."

The two Koreas have held three summits this year. Kim also held an unprecedented summit with US President Donald Trump in Singapore in June, and promised to work toward denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Any trip to the North, however brief, could be contentious for the pope. North Korea's constitution guar-



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis, center, South Korean President Moon Jae-in, left, and his wife Kim Jung-sook (R) pose during a private audience at the Vatican. — AFP

“Do not stop, move forward”

antees freedom of religion as long as it does not undermine the state. But beyond a handful of state-controlled places of worship, no open religious activity is allowed.

Aides close to the pope have said he is open to taking what they call first steps in places where the Church has been persecuted

in the hope that the situation could improve. Church officials estimate that North Korea had a Catholic community of about 55,000 just before the 1950-53 Korean War. Religious agencies have estimated the number remaining from the few hundreds to about 4,000. —Reuters

Desperate times for Australian govt as crunch election looms

SYDNEY: Australia's embattled centre-right government faces a make-or-break test this weekend, with by-election voters in Sydney's wealthy beachside suburbs apparently poised to wipe out Prime Minister Scott Morrison's slender parliamentary majority. Polls show the government losing in Wentworth on Saturday and with it their one-seat parliamentary majority, in what has been described as the most consequential by-election in modern Australian history.

Defeat in the once safe Liberal seat would be a huge embarrassment for Morrison—whose two-month tenure as prime minister has been marked by crisis and party infighting—and would send him limping into next year's general election. The sprawling constituency takes in the famous Bondi Beach and the haunts of stars like Russell Crowe and Hugh Jackman.

"It could not come at a worse time for Scott Morrison because sometimes even winning a by-election might not be enough for a new leader—you have to win it convincingly," politics expert Nick Economou of Monash University said. Analysts believe a



SYDNEY: An election poster of independent candidate Kerryn Phelps is seen on a street in the seat of Wentworth in Sydney. — AFP

loss and a minority government would derail the Liberals' legislative agenda, make Morrison a virtual lame duck prime minister and perhaps even trigger a vote of no confidence in his premiership.

Crumbling before our eyes

The by-election was triggered by the resignation of Malcolm Turnbull as an MP after he was turfed out of the prime ministership in a party coup, despite calls for him to stay on and not jeopardize the coalition's hold on power. "Since the Turnbull demise, they have really been crumbling before our eyes. They are abandoning policies left, right and centre, a reshuffle has left them all at sea,

issues that they were strong on they've lost their way on," said Economou.

Morrison has invested heavily in the vote, appearing multiple times on the stump with Liberal candidate Dave Sharma and upending decades of Australian foreign policy in a desperate bid to woo Wentworth's Jewish voters. Morrison floated the idea of moving the Australian embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a move that prompted Palestinian anger and infuriated Australia's Muslim-majority neighbor Indonesia. Opinion polls show Sharma, a former Australian ambassador to Israel, trailing independent candidate Kerryn Phelps by around ten points. —AFP

Australian state legalizes abortion

SYDNEY: Queensland lawmakers have voted to legalize abortion, overturning a century-old "morality" law and capping a 50-year campaign in Australia's most conservative state. The state parliament approved 50-41 late Wednesday the law allowing women to terminate pregnancies at up to 22 weeks, and later with the approval of two doctors. The legislation also creates 150-metre "safe access" zones around clinics offering abortions where protests are banned, and it requires doctors who refuse to perform abortions to refer women elsewhere.

Pro-choice campaigners had been seeking since the 1970s to overturn an 1899 criminal code adopted from British law that criminalized abortion as an "offence against morality". Abortions were rarely prosecuted in the state, but pro-choice campaigners had until now been unable to overturn the criminal code. This week's vote came at a time when women hold positions of influence in Queensland politics. The state government is headed by two-term Labor Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, whose deputy, Jackie Trad, is a long-time pro-choice campaigner.

Queensland's main conservative opposition Liberal National Party (LNP) is also led by a woman, Deb Frecklington. The LNP remains officially opposed to abortion, but Frecklington allowed its lawmakers to vote their conscience, helping push the measure through. "History has been made," Palaszczuk tweeted after the vote. "Women will no longer have the fear of committing a crime when making the deeply personal decisions over their own bodies." Anti-abortion campaigners vowed to pursue their efforts. —AFP

Lifestyle

Friday Times

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www.kuwaittimes.net



A model presents a creation from the fashion brand 'TOKUKO 1er VOL' for the 2019 Spring/Summer collection at Tokyo Fashion Week in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

Myanmar Buddhist temple now a nirvana for snakes

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Russian director Serebrennikov set for trial over fraud case



Russian stage and screen director Kirill Serebrennikov enters a courtyard in Moscow yesterday. — AFP

The trial of Russian stage and screen director Kirill Serebrennikov started yesterday, more than a year after he was placed under house arrest in a controversial embezzlement probe. Prosecutors say Serebrennikov embezzled over \$2 million of state funding for a theatre project. He has dismissed the charges against him as “absurd” and insists the money went on mounting productions. Supporters see the probe as part of a crackdown on artistic independence under President Vladimir Putin.

The closed hearing at Moscow’s Meshchansky court at 10am (0700 GMT) will allow the sides to present their arguments before a judge. A date will also be set for further hearings on the substance of the case. The 49-year-old has been held under a repeatedly extended house arrest since August 2017. A number of his collaborators were detained and are facing charges. Serebrennikov’s movie “Leto” (Summer), based on the story of a cult late-Soviet rock group, was screened in competition at the Cannes film festival this year in his absence.

He was unable to attend the premiere of his ballet based on the life of Russian dance legend Rudolf Nureyev at the Bolshoi Theatre

late last year. The production was itself mired in controversy and its opening was delayed by six months. Management cited an under-rehearsed cast but others said the ballet’s explicit homosexual themes or the criminal case against its director were the real cause. In 2012 Serebrennikov was appointed to oversee a failing, state-run theatre now known as the Gogol Centre.

Under his management it became one of Moscow’s best theatres and a hotspot for the capital’s liberal intelligentsia. But his appointment and experimental work there—frequently featuring nudity and strong language—angered cultural conservatives. “There was a battle against him ever since he took over the Gogol Centre,” John Freedman, a Moscow-based expert on contemporary Russian theatre, told AFP. Four months after he was placed under house arrest, a court seized his assets, including his apartment and car. Dozens of prominent figures in Russia and international stars, including Cate Blanchett and Ian McKellen have called for Serebrennikov to be freed without charge. Since the criminal case against him Serebrennikov has become the most recognizable face of Moscow theatre, with calls for his release at premieres and curtain calls in the capital. — AFP

Wilson to reprise role alongside Farmiga in Annabelle 3

Patrick Wilson is to reprise his role alongside Vera Farmiga in the ‘Conjuring’ franchise to star in the third ‘Annabelle’ movie. The 45-year-old actor and Vera, 45 – who play Ed and Lorraine Warren in the film series – appeared in the earlier films in the franchise, and are set to play supporting roles in the untitled ‘Annabelle’ project, Deadline reports. The third ‘Annabelle’ movie will open with the Warrens bringing the Annabelle doll to their Artifacts Room, assuming it will stop the doll from creating chaos. But in actual fact, Annabelle awakens the room’s evil and then targets Judy, the Warrens’ ten-year-old daughter.

Mckenna Grace will play the role of Judy in the Gary Dauberman-directed movie. Meanwhile, James Wan previously revealed he always had ambitions to turn ‘The Conjuring’ into something bigger. The director – who helmed the first movie in the movie-spinning franchise – discussed his long-term ambitions for the series prior to the release of ‘The Nun’, which was a spin-off of ‘The Conjuring 2’. — Bang Showbiz



Elba in talks to join Cats cast



Idris Elba is reportedly close to agreeing a deal to star in Tom Hooper’s adaptation of ‘Cats’. The London-born actor is being eyed to appear alongside the likes of Sir Ian McKellen, Jennifer Hudson, James Corden, and Taylor Swift in the much-anticipated adaptation of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s money-spinning musical, Variety reports. Idris, 46, has already played a feline role in his career, starring as Shere Khan in 2016’s ‘The Jungle Book’. The ‘Cats’ movie is to be produced by Tom, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner and Debra Hayward, while Steven Spielberg will be one of the executive producers of the project. The adaptation has been in the works for years, with Tom – who directed ‘Les Misérables’ – previously teasing the ambition back in 2016.

In recent years, Idris has also been repeatedly linked with the role of James Bond. Speculation has frequently suggested that the ‘Luther’ star could replace Daniel Craig as the next 007, but an insider recently claimed that the coveted role is set to be handed to Richard Madden instead. A source said: “It’s seriously looking like he [Madden] is going to get the job.” Barbara Broccoli, the executive producer at Eon Productions, is likely to have the final say on who will become the next Bond. — BangShowbiz

Melissa McCarthy wormed her way into new movie

Melissa McCarthy “wormed her way in” to her new film ‘Can You Ever Forgive Me?’ The 48-year-old actress usually opts for comedy roles but wanted to take a part in the new biopic after her husband Ben Falcone was cast in the movie. She said: “He was cast first, and then I wormed my way in. That’s what he gets for showing me the script! ... I felt a little disappointed in myself that I didn’t know who she was. I lived in New York during this time period, and I thought, ‘I should have known her.’ Then to find out the FBI got involved and she was convicted ... I was like, ‘Why don’t I know the story?’” Melissa plays real-life author Lee Israel.

In a bid to prop up her failing writing career, she forged letters from famous artists to make money and was later caught out and pleaded guilty to conspiracy to transport stolen property, serving six months under house arrest. Speaking about being able to show off her dramatic skills, she added to Good Morning America: “It was fantastic. I know that it is tonally something that I’m not really known for.. but for me it’s like, I still fall in love with the character, I fall in love with the story. — BangShowbiz



Lifestyle | Feature



Britain's Prince Harry (second right) and Meghan (right), Duchess of Sussex speak with surf life savers at South Melbourne beach in Melbourne, Australia yesterday. — AFP photos

Fans face rain to greet Harry and Meghan on Down Under tour



Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, Duchess of Sussex visit Albert Park Primary School in Melbourne.

Thousands of royal fans in Melbourne waited in the rain yesterday to get a glimpse of Prince Harry and his pregnant wife Meghan, with some overwhelmed by the experience. Clutching flowers and waving flags, the screaming crowds turned out to welcome the pair, who were delayed in traffic after flying in from Sydney on the third day of their tour Down Under. "I love everything they stand for. As a human being you have so much to look up to with them," one young fan who had been waiting since before dawn told national broadcaster ABC.

A teenage girl cried tears of joy after being greeted by the prince, while Meghan was inundated by gifts and flower bouquets. The Duchess was wearing a tan trench-coat, believed to be by Paris-based Australian designer Martin Grant, and holding a Gucci Sylvie clutch. After the public meet-and-greet, the couple will spend some time with the Victorian Governor Linda Dessau in an official reception at Government House, before heading to a restaurant that mentors indigenous chefs.

They will then follow in the footsteps of Harry's grandmother Queen Elizabeth during her 2011 visit by taking a tram ride in Melbourne. The couple are due to return to Sydney later this week for the opening of the global sports championship the Invictus Games, which was set up by Harry for wounded military personnel after his decade of service in the army. —AFP



Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, Duchess of Sussex shake hands with local schoolchildren as they take a ride on a tram in Melbourne.



Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, Duchess of Sussex visit Albert Park Primary School in Melbourne.



Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, Duchess of Sussex visit Albert Park Primary School in Melbourne.



Snakes resting on a window of the Baungdawgyoke pagoda, outside Yangon.



A monk touching a snake resting in his room in the Baungdawgyoke pagoda, outside Yangon. — AFP



A snake resting on a Buddha statue at the Baungdawgyoke pagoda, outside Yangon.

Myanmar Buddhist temple now a nirvana for snakes

Crossing a bridge to the middle of a lake in Myanmar’s Yangon region, pilgrims arrive at a temple to pin their hopes on the pythons slinking across the temple’s floors and draped across windows. “People come here because they believe that their prayers will be fulfilled when they ask for something,” said Sandar Thiri, a nun residing at the Baungdawgyoke pagoda—dubbed the “snake temple” by locals. “The rule is that people can only ask for one thing, not many things,” she said. “Don’t be greedy.”

In the main room of the temple is a tree with figurines of Buddha around it. The serpents move slowly through the branches, their forked tongues darting in and out as they gaze down on the worshippers prostrating themselves.

Many locals regard the presence of the dozens of pythons, some measuring up to two or three meters in length, as a sign of the pagoda’s power. Win Myint, 45, said he has been coming to Baungdawgyoke since he was a child. “Now I am older and I come to give offerings, which has made some of my wishes come true.”

Nearby, a monk dozes on a chair with two serpents curled at his feet, their thick bodies holding 1,000 kyat notes (worth about 60 US cents) tucked in between their coils by hopeful visitors. A

woman, brave enough to venture close to a python, gently caresses it. The mythical “naga”—a Sanskrit word for snake—is a common figure seen in temples throughout Southeast Asia, where Buddhist, Hindu and animist influences are intertwined. Nagas are usually carved out of stone and placed at the entrances. But seeing a live snake slithering among Buddha statues is rare, and for some visitors, that serves as a draw to visit Baungdawgyoke—a short drive southwest of downtown Yangon.

With snakes curled up next to meditating monks, the image is reminiscent of a story in Buddhist mythology when the Buddha sat under a tree to meditate. According to the legend, as it started to rain, a cobra protected Buddha by fanning its hood wide over his head to act as a shelter. Nay Myo Thu, a 30-year-old farmer, believes he will receive good fortune by bringing the snakes he finds in his fields to the temple instead of killing them, adhering to a Buddhist belief that all animals are sentient beings that can be reincarnated as humans. “I don’t want to bring about any misfortune by killing a creature,” Nay Myo Thu said. “Catching and donating the snakes brings me good fortune instead.”—AFP



The Baungdawgyoke pagoda, as seen from a lake outside Yangon.

Bruce Willis film cancelled after Fan Bingbing tax case

A Chinese World War II epic featuring Hollywood A-listers Bruce Willis and Adrien Brody has been shelved after co-star Fan Bingbing was targeted by authorities for tax evasion, local media reported. Fan is one of China’s most high-profile celebrities, and has appeared in blockbusters “X-Men: Days of Future Past” and the Chinese version of “Iron Man 3”. But the 36-year-old megastar disappeared from the public eye for months this year, fuelling speculation that she was being investigated in her home country.

She has since apologized and been ordered to pay nearly \$130 million in back taxes and fines, the official Xinhua news agency reported on October 3. Her latest film, by Chinese director Xiao Feng, was due to open next week. But Xiao wrote on China’s Twitter-like Weibo platform on Wednesday that it was “time to let go” of his latest feature “Air Strike” after eight years of work, though he added that “letting go is not giving up”. Xiao, who apologized to the film’s distribution companies and fans, did not say if or when the movie’s debut would be rescheduled.

State-run media Global Times also posted on Weibo on Wednesday that the movie had been “cancelled without explanation”. Beijing News and news website Sina, citing unnamed sources from film promotion firms, also reported

the cancellation. The halting of “Air Strike” comes as China’s film industry faces a broader reckoning from tax authorities. Celebrity TV host Cui Yongyuan—who leaked Fan’s movie contract documents earlier this year—called “Air Strike” a “huge fraud” after the actress apologized, without elaborating.

Xinhua has reported that authorities have declared a wider crackdown on the entertainment industry, with offenders given an amnesty until December 31 to pay any taxes they owe. The tax scandal has put a spotlight on the alleged use of “yin and yang” dual contracts in China, in which people sign one document for income declared to tax authorities and a second one is kept secret. — AFP



This file picture shows Chinese actress Fan Bingbing posing as she arrives for the screening of the film “Ash is Purest White (Jiang hu er nv)” at the 71st edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

Noel Gallagher scoops two prizes at music Q Awards

British rocker Noel Gallagher triumphed at the Q Awards in London on Wednesday, scooping two prizes at the annual ceremony hosted by UK music magazine Q. The former Oasis songwriter, who released his third album “Who Built the Moon?” with his High Flying Birds band last year, won Q Best Solo Artist and Q Outstanding Contribution To Music at the awards which were established in 1990. Singer-songwriter Paul Weller, who came to fame with The Jam in the 1970s and last week played a career-spanning gig at London’s Royal Festival Hall, was named Best Act In The World Today.

Pop duo Let’s Eat Grandma took the Q Best Album award for “I’m All Ears” while Q Best Breakthrough Act went jointly to bands Goat Girl and Idles. Both categories are among several voted for by readers of the magazine. Other honourees included Suede lead singer Brett Anderson, who took the Q Lifetime

Achievement Award, Chic co-founder Nile Rodgers, who was given the Q Legend honor while the Q Icon went to Echo & The Bunnymen frontman Ian McCulloch. Indie band Wolf Alice, who last month won Britain’s respected Mercury Prize for the critically-acclaimed “Visions of a Life” album, took Q Best Live Act. — Reuters



Noel Gallagher



Costume designer Ane Crabtree attends Comic Con in New York where she was part of a panel judging costumes. — AFP



A pity to throw it away: Insurer stores damaged art in Germany

What happens to artworks which are too badly damaged to be restored once the insurer has paid out the claim? Up to 300 of them - scratched, torn or punctured works by well-known artists including Gerhard Richter, Christo and Giorgio de Chirico - are stored in an AXA warehouse near the western German city of Cologne. One of the world's biggest art insurers, AXA receives claims every year for damage to paintings, sculptures and drawings. Some 80 percent of them can be restored. The rest, which either cannot be or are too expensive to be repaired come to this warehouse.

"We store artworks, objects and collector items by notable artists for which we have compensated our customers, we take ownership of them and keep them for the future," said Kai Kuklinski, head of AXA Art Insurance. "The main goal is to keep this art as it is too much of a pity to throw it away," he said. AXA gives some pieces, which include paintings, collector items and antiquities, to research projects. Some are auctioned for charity and others kept, in case they can be repaired later, once restoration techniques have improved. "Otherwise, we keep things for many years, up to decades, in our warehouse," said Kuklinski. Works in the Cologne warehouse include a damaged offset print of Christo's "Wrapped Reichstag". Another is "Black Red Gold", a painting by Gerhard Richter which was damaged because of the way it was hung. One of the most unusual items is a painting by Giorgio de Chirico which was almost destroyed when a wrecking ball from next door ripped through it as it hung on the wall of a house. — Reuters



Naief Abou of German art logistics company Roggendorf Master Packer unpacks the damaged sculpture "Waescherin" by an unknown artist during a media tour in a depot of German art insurer AXA Art that stores damaged art in Cologne, Germany. — Reuters



Employees of German art insurer AXA Art unpack the damaged artwork 'Fragile Identity 9r' by Matias Putus during a media tour.

#MeToo personal for 'Handmaid's Tale' costume designer

From the United States to Argentina, by way of Ireland and Poland, the red habit and white bonnet synonymous with "The Handmaid's Tale" have become a powerful symbol of the #MeToo movement. Yet its potency has come as a shock to 54-year-old costume designer Ane Crabtree, the creator of the now iconic outfit for the runaway-hit television series based on the dystopian 1985 novel by Margaret Atwood. "It's a very big thing. It's grown bigger than the purpose I designed it for," Crabtree told AFP during a recent visit to New York to be a judge at Comic Con.



Women dressed as characters from the novel-turned-TV series "The Handmaid's Tale" stand in an elevator at the Hart Senate Office Building.

The book's success has been amplified by the wild popularity of the Hulu series, which first aired in April 2017 just as liberal America started contending with the presidency of Donald Trump. Atwood's nightmare of an America transformed into a totalitarian society, where women are reduced to sexual slavery, quickly became a parable to many about the political shift to the right and the national reckoning about sexual abuse. Since then, female protesters have donned the costumes worn on TV by the persecuted women on Gilead all over the world.

In Washington, women who opposed the confirmation of new Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh—in part because of sexual assault allegations against him—donned the habit. Others wore it at abortion rallies in Buenos Aires and Dublin, or at anti-Trump rallies in Warsaw. Crabtree, the daughter of a US father from Kentucky and a Japanese mother from Okinawa, admits she was oblivious to the phenomenon at first. "For two and a half years, I was doing 'The Handmaid's Tale'. I did not really see the impact," she says.

Filming was intense and breaks were rare. It was only afterwards that Crabtree, who worked in fashion in the 1990s before moving into television, realized that her design had taken on a life of its own. "For me, it's brilliant news—it's something that's quite emotional and emotionally satisfying," she tells AFP. "As

an artist, you are trying to express the times, aren't you? Trying to understand how to communicate and emotionally commune with people."

'Normal and terrifying'

Her costume—which instantly evokes dread—clearly struck a chord, even if the design cost her countless sleepless nights and lengthy periods of self-doubt. "I had great love for the story and respect for the story," she said. "I didn't want to get it wrong." But she knew she wanted "to do something different, not just do a period look that nobody would relate to in 2016," explained Crabtree. "I wanted people to be afraid. I wanted it to be normal and terrifying. Sometimes the most terrifying things are the most normal things and then you think, 'Oh my God, it could happen—this really could be me.'"

Crabtree's bet paid off, but she didn't escape unscathed. The two seasons she spent working on "The Handmaid's Tale" dredged up a past she had been keen to forget. "This show triggers too much of my own personal life and I didn't realize this until this month," she said. US President Donald Trump's 2016 election victory left her "so angry" that she threw her rage into her work and says the experience brought to the surface sexual abuse she suffered as a child.

'Healing'

"I didn't remember anything till I was 28 and it is still buried in many ways," she said. "It was not at the forefront when I began this journey with 'The Handmaid's Tale' but it has absolutely highlighted everything," she added. The mental toll became so onerous that she left the series after two seasons, despite the show's enormous success and the boost it had given her career. "It's so healing in the long run, it's both very painful and beautiful at the same time... how it keeps coinciding with real life."

While she has since worked on other projects—notably a "feminist" film with "Mudbound" director Dee Rees and another with actress Anjelica Huston—Crabtree is happy to see her costumes take on a life of their own. Reality star Kim Kardashian made a "Handmaid's Tale" statement—albeit an incongruous one with a plunging neckline, bulging cleavage and thigh-high slit. Lingerie website Yandy caused uproar with a "Brave Red Maiden Costume" for Halloween—a skimpy, skin-tight minidress with long red cape and white bonnet, which it was forced to withdraw in late September under a storm of controversy. Crabtree laughs it off. "Everyone is going to dress themselves the way it fits them," she says. "I am a purist—any artist would want to see it the way they envisioned—but maybe that's ego and maybe we should just let people be." — AFP



This file photo shows a woman taking photographs as people sit in front of the Sacre Coeur Basilica in Montmartre in Paris. — AFP photos



Tourists look at the work of painters in Place du Tertre in the Montmartre district of Paris.

Mass tourism sparks battle for Montmartre's soul

Inside a dark, low-ceilinged room once frequented by Picasso and Modigliani when they were still struggling artists, a group of tourists from Russia, Canada and Australia are listening to traditional French songs. This is the Lapin Agile, a small house surrounded by acacia trees which is home to the last cabaret in Montmartre, an iconic neighborhood perched on a hilltop in the middle of Paris. But in recent decades, this village-like district of steep, hills and sweeping views has been transformed by the arrival of mass tourism.

"It's the last of the traditional cabarets," says owner Yves Mathieu, grumbling about the proliferation of souvenir shops selling Paris mugs and Eiffel tower key rings clogging the nearby



Tourists walking past painters at the Place du Tertre (Tertre square) as they visit the Montmartre hill.



The Villa Leandre on Junot street in the Montmartre neighborhood of Paris.

cobblestoned streets. "I'm 90 years old but I'm not giving up," he says pointing to the cabaret's sparse furnishings of plain wooden tables and benches. Its walls are decorated with copies of works by Pablo Picasso and Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, artists whose original paintings once helped pay for their meals there.

Many folk singers also made their debut here—among them Leo Ferre, Georges Brassens and Charles Aznavour who passed away earlier this month aged 94. But these days, the top of the hill—"la Butte"—which was once a 19th-century mecca for artists, risks being swamped by industrial-scale international tourism. Some 12 million tourists tramp up its slopes every year, usually to admire the white-stone Sacre Coeur basilica, the panoramic views of Paris, or to visit the most famous of the French capital's vineyards.

But the Place du Tertre, a village-like square at the top, is threatening to become some sort of "Disneyland", says Alain Coquard, president of the self-proclaimed "Republic of Montmartre", an association set up in 1921 to oppose urban development. For now, Montmartre hasn't yet turned into Venice, he says of the historic Italian city which is visited by around 24 million tourists annually every year. "There is still stuff worth saving," says Coquard. But for long-time residents, it's another story. "Here, at the top of the Butte, it's game over," sighs this 76-year-old, sitting at his usual table in a restaurant once painted by Vincent Van Gogh.

Property prices gone wild

Spiralling rents have driven out ordinary shopkeepers, says Frederic Loup who owns a pharmacy which has been serving local residents since 1927. Today, it is the only local shop left in the area. "The baker left. The butcher also left. The problem is the rents, which only the souvenir shops can afford," he says. Once favored by penniless artists at the end of the 19th century for its cheap lodgings, Montmartre has seen property prices sky-rocket over the past three decades, with its homes snapped up by the rich and famous.

Already a hit with the tourists, Montmartre won further acclaim when its picturesque streets hit the big screen in 1991 with the release of "Amelie", a light-hearted romantic comedy which painted a rosy, idealized version of the neighborhood. But while the area's unique charm has caught the attention of stars like Hollywood actor Johnny Depp, locals are moving out. Thirty years ago, the cost of an apartment was around 1,500 euros per square meter (\$1,700 for 10 square feet).

Today, buyers are looking at 10,000 or even 20,000 euros per square meter, says Brice Moyse who heads Immopolis, an estate agency which specializes in properties in Montmartre. With such prices, there no chance that any struggling writer or artist could even think of following in the footsteps of Pissarro or Renoir by moving into the district.

Painters squeezed out

Those artists who do work there tend to make a living by rushing off pencil sketches of tourists or more elaborate paintings of city landscapes which they sell to visitors. But even they fear being chased away. Much of the artwork in local tourist shops is made in China and sold at bargain prices. "They are forgers, parasites!" fumes street artist Midani M'Barki, referring to the Chinese competition. M'Barki, who heads the Paris-Montmartre artists' association, also rails against the way local cafes and restaurants have increasingly taken over the pavements, squeezing out painters.

A recent bylaw gives street artists the right to ply their trade on the pavements, but the space taken by restaurant tables and chairs has expanded. "We're now in the gutter and the terraces are thriving," says M'Barki who has worked in the area since 1970. "We should be given half the space," he says angrily. "If we don't get it, we'll leave. And without us, there won't be any Montmartre." — AFP

Billions lost to creatives who can't manage, says Puttnam

"Brilliant" entertainment businesses are "falling like flies" because creatives do not know how to manage, the legendary British film producer Lord Puttnam has claimed. The veteran Oscar-winner behind "The Killing Fields" and "Chariots of Fire"—and the only non-American ever to lead a Hollywood studio—said the problem is putting a massive brake on the multi-billion-euro industry.

David Puttnam told MIPCOM, the world's top entertainment showcase in Cannes, that creatives from film to games tend to end up ditching good businesses when they begin to grow out of their control. "What happens is potentially brilliant businesses fall like flies once they start doing well because people did not get into this to manage, and they walk away. "The moment you dislocate yourself from the creative process and you become a manager is awful," Puttnam admitted. "I hated every single day of my two years at Columbia Pictures. It was horrible," he told the gathering in the French Riviera resort, which ends Thursday.

'Hopelessly unsuited'

"I was unprepared, unqualified and hopelessly unsuited to being a manager. So how do you get gifted people to run nice-sized businesses that are comfortable—but understand that is different to sitting down at a drawing board doing animation?" He said the creative industries in Britain, Germany and France generate 161 billion euros (\$185 billion) a year and 2.2 million jobs, with revenue nearly doubling in the UK in five years.

"The need for clear-sighted leadership has never been more critical," said the producer and educator as he launched a new executive MBA course for the screen industries with the University of Arts London (UAL). "Our sector is different," argued Puttnam, who ran Britain's National Film and Television School for a decade and is credited with predicting pay TV as early as 1981. Conventional MBAs don't work for creatives because they "teach managerialism for much bigger companies," he said.—AFP



In this file photo Lord David Puttnam poses for photographs after winning the 'Academy Fellowship' award at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) awards ceremony.—AFP

Lifestyle | Feature



Ballet dancers perform during a rehearsal before the opening night of a Ballet production at the Municipal Theater in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP photos

After long hiatus, *Rio's* ballet dancers return to the stage

Ballet is a world conjuring images of luxury and entertainment, a preserve for the cultured, the elite. That may be true in many cases. But in Rio de Janeiro, a city exemplifying Brazil's staggering divide between rich and poor, where favelas hug the hills next to luxury apartments, the ballet venue is a stunning exception in a country in turmoil. The Art Nouveau building that is Rio's Municipal Theater rises in the center of the coastal city. Built in the early 20th century, it was inspired by Paris's ornate Opera Garnier. It is publicly funded and ordinary citizens can buy ballet tickets for as little as \$2. The shows are put on inside a luxurious marble interior that resembles those of the world's premier opera houses. Behind the facade, though, the ravages of Brazil's economic crisis are plain.

In 2017, many of the Municipal Theater Ballet company's dancers were forced to accept food donations. Some turned to driving for Uber to make ends meet. The Ballet was hit hard. On June 23, 2018 it held its first show in a year. There was a frisson of excitement and tension as the ballet dancers came together and prepared to perform once more in their grand, historic space. Some had not seen each other for a very long time.

The dancers knew the importance of this first night. They practiced and trained with renewed determination, going over every minute detail. It was fraught in the dressing rooms too. They were back-and they wanted the public to know it. The curtain rose on the opening night and even the most experienced dancers took deep, nervous breaths as they peered from behind the theater's huge curtains. This was a new kind of pressure. Had they done enough? Would they be able to perform to the level of perfection and precision expected?

The orchestra started and finally after one year it was time. Margueritta Tostes, one of the ballerinas, said: "As soon as I stepped onto the stage I wanted to cry. We had been away for too long. Way too long, because of injuries, or financial difficulties. I cried with relief that I was out there again, dancing with my colleagues." The final curtain fell to huge applause. Backstage, the dancers rushed to the center from both sides, screaming, shouting, crying, celebrating. It looked more like the final of a Brazilian football match than the climax of a night of restrained elegance. But instead of jerseys and football boots, there were pink ballet shoes and white tutus rushing onto the stage. Brazilians are known to give free rein to their emotions. And, after a year of waiting, pent-up frustration and tension were released, giving way to a wave of sheer joy. —AFP



Kadikoy's leafy Moda area

10 places to soak up the vibe of Istanbul's Kadikoy neighborhood

Artsy, eclectic Istanbulers are flocking to the city's once-sleepy Asian side and its lively cafes, galleries, bars, shops, and eateries. For visitors staying near the historic sights of Sultanahmet, a short and scenically stunning ferry ride across continents is all it takes to join them. The central parts of the Kadikoy district are the hub of all this activity and an area that rewards wandering, with densely packed markets, relaxed tree-lined streets, and eye-catching walls filled with the large-scale works of Mural Istanbul ([facebook.com/muralistanbul](https://www.facebook.com/muralistanbul)) artists as well as politically tinged graffiti. Here's where to start your explorations of Istanbul's 'other side'.

Indulge your senses in the Kadikoy Pazar?

With its vibrant displays of fresh fruit and vegetables, colorful dried pepper and aubergine husks hanging from stalls, and fishmongers calling out the catch of the day, the Kadikoy Produce Market is a feast for the senses. Nibble your way through with tastes of olives, dried fruits, pickle juice, and fresh-off-the-comb honey, or sit down for a heartier repast while watching the crowds go by at Ciya Sofrasi, known for its regional Turkish cuisine, or the no-frills lahmacun and pide (flatbread topped with meat or vegetables) shop Borsam Tasfirin ([facebook.com/BorsamTasfirin-Lahmacun](https://www.facebook.com/BorsamTasfirin-Lahmacun)).

Pay tribute to a Turkish rock great at the Bar?s Manco Evi

One of the leading lights of the Anatolian rock genre, which

mixed traditional instruments with psychedelic sounds in the 1960s and 1970s, the late singer-songwriter Baris Manco is beloved in Turkey. (There's even an Istanbul ferry named after him.) His music is piped through his former home in the leafy Moda section of Kadikoy, now a museum (barismanco.kadikoy.bel.tr) filled with collections of his family photos, recordings, personal effects, paintings, gifts from fans abroad, and flamboyant stage costumes.

Get a caffeine boost at Montag Coffee Roasters

The worn steps next to a mobile-phone accessory shop don't look very enticing, but as the message written on them promises, they lead to good coffee. Just one of a slew of 'third-wave' coffee shops sweeping the area, Montag Coffee Roasters ([facebook.com/MontagCoffee](https://www.facebook.com/MontagCoffee)) offers siphon and pour-over coffee along with cappuccinos and espressos. And yes, there's traditional Turkish coffee too. The cozy upstairs cafe overlooks a bustling square centered around a quirky Kadikoy landmark: a small statue of a crocodile.

Art and community at ArHere

With its long shared work tables, paintings on the walls, and books and magazines scattered about, ArHere may look like a typical cafe, but this artist-run space is that and much more. Founded by a Syrian photographer, it serves as gallery, studio, community centre, and even temporary housing for Syrian artists to work with their Turkish and international counterparts. At least once a month

ArHere hosts a movie night, musical performance, artist talk, or workshop for a polyglot public audience.

Turkish fast food with a gourmet twist at Basta

The two young chefs behind Basta Street Food Bar ([facebook.com/Basta-Street-Food-Bar](https://www.facebook.com/Basta-Street-Food-Bar)) met while working in fine-dining restaurants in France and have now applied their culinary training to the humble durum, a Turkish fast-food classic. But this is no ordinary grilled meat rolled up in a thin flatbread wrap. Instead you'll find creative combos like homemade lamb 'chorizo' sausage with hummus - as well as a hearty, healthy salad of the day that's a welcome break from the typical tomato-cucumber-onion combo.

Riffle through recent history on Antikaclar Sokak

Cobblestone-paved Tellalzade Sokak, near the Kadikoy Produce Market, is lined with antique vendors, ranging from stuffy showrooms of gaudy furniture and lamps to cluttered jumbles of vintage magazines, records, glassware, jewelry and ephemera. You can easily while away a couple of hours browsing here - and pick up some old photos of Istanbul or a classic portrait of Ataturk, the revered founder of the Turkish Republic, for a souvenir.

Get in the collective spirit at Circuit and Halka

They may not draw the big-name artists and deep-pocketed collectors of the swish art galleries in Beyoglu and Nisantasi, but the in-



Kadıköy rooftops



Goztepe Park, Kadıköy's green sanctuary

dependent arts and culture initiatives Halka Art Project (halka-artproject.net) and Circuit Istanbul (circuitistanbul.com) offer something else: the chance to engage with local artists, buy affordable works, and join in activities. Circuit is home to weekly yoga and drawing/painting classes in English, while Halka hosts artist talks by international participants in their residency programme and eco-friendly food and gardening workshops led by the Istanbul Permaculture Collective.

Unwind at the Moda Cay Bahçesi

To get a million-dollar view for pocket change, head to the Moda Cay Bahçesi (Moda Tea Garden), a cluster of outdoor purveyors of tea, coffee and light snacks scattered around a promontory overlooking the Marmara Sea. It's a simple place with plastic chairs and tables, but between the big trees creating a lush canopy above and the mesmerizing sight of the sparkling water, there's no more relaxing place in Kadıköy – or perhaps even all of Istanbul. The waterfront below is ideal for a stroll, especially with an ice-cream cone from Meshur Dondurmacı Ali Usta in hand.

Eat the world at Komsu Kafe

An international spirit pervades the funky little Komsu Kafe Collective (facebook.com/komsukafecollective), which regularly hosts communal dinners featuring different global cuisines – Syrian, Ethiopian, French, Iranian, German, Creole and more – often with a vegan/vegetarian emphasis. Other nights there might be a flamenco guitar player holding court, or an open jam session for musicians. This 'neighbours' cafe' seeks to promote an alternative economy, so everything is pay-what-you-can-afford.

Party the night away on Barlar Sokak

Quiet during the day, Kadife Sokak – better known as Barlar Sokak, or 'Bars Street' – is hopping after dark with music-



Kadıköy street art

lovers and revelers. Though Kadıköy nightlife has spilled well beyond the confines of this short strip, bar/performance spaces like Arkaoda, with its large back garden, and Karga, whose intimate nooks are spread throughout a rambling old house, are still firm favorites. (www.lonelyplanet.com)



Haydarpasa Railway Station is a Kadıköy landmark

Once upon a time in Iceland: Epic adventures in the northwest



The scenery of northwest Iceland provides a suitably grand backdrop to the Sagas

The Icelandic Sagas, epic tales of heroes and heroines, might have been written centuries ago but their legacy is alive and well today. Violence, ghosts, poetry, love triangles and family feuds are just some of the themes found in the sagas, coming together to create iconic literature that both helped document Iceland's history and shaped the country. Modern Icelanders still know these stories, place names recall the colorful characters, writers like Tolkien and George RR Martin were influenced by them, and landscapes and natural features are little changed from when those intrepid settlers first arrived here in the 9th and 10th centuries.

Northwest Iceland

Iceland's northwest, particularly the Westfjords region, includes some of the most beautiful and least visited areas of the country. It's the oldest part of Iceland, both geologically and historically, and is where most of the original settlers lived and where most of the sagas are set. It's a region whose inhabitants still live in tiny settlements located in picturesque, isolated valleys just as the pioneering settlers would have centuries ago. It's easy to appreciate the

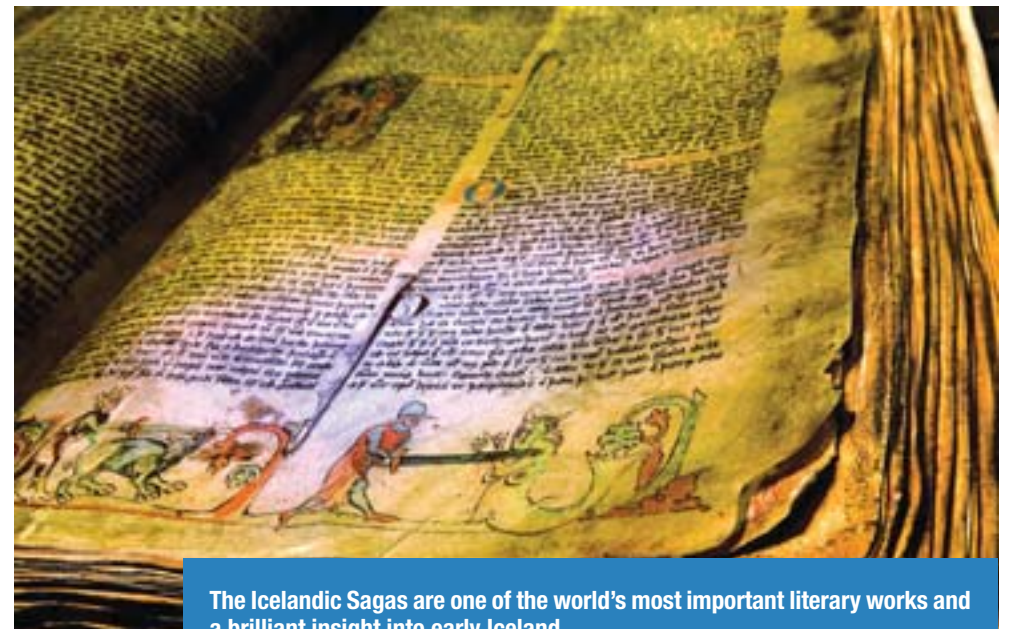
importance of getting along with your neighbors in tiny outposts set in often unkind nature like this. And equally easy to see how small disputes in such claustrophobic communities could have been blown out of proportion with violent ends - just as they did in many of the sagas. Here we take a journey through the northwest, from south to north, exploring some of the most famous sagas, visiting sites connected to their larger-than-life characters, and enjoying the modern-day delights on offer.

The Saga of Egil: Borgarnes

A key sight for saga enthusiasts, or anyone interested in better understanding Iceland in general, is the Settlement Centre in Borgarnes. The museum is a tale of two, er, tales. One the story of the earliest settlers of Iceland, a mix of Norwegians fleeing turbulent times back home and captured slaves from Britain and Ireland; the other the story of Egil, one of the most famous of the saga characters with a whole, long, eventful story dedicated largely to his long, eventful life. Best described as a poet-murderer, he recited his first poem at the age of the three and murdered his first victim at the age of seven, another child who taunted him after los-

ing a ball game. Later in life he travelled widely, offending the Norwegian king and queen in the course of his voyages and only saving himself

from death by composing another poem, Head Ransom, that so impressed the monarch that he spared Egil's life.



The Icelandic Sagas are one of the world's most important literary works and a brilliant insight into early Iceland

Lifestyle | Travel

Many of the places mentioned in the saga lie in and around Borgarnes and can be visited today – ask at the centre. These include Br-kin, the spot where Egil's family's slave jumped off a cliff to her death after saving the boy from the wrath of his father. Another is Skallagrimsgarour, the burial mound of both Egil's father and his son: the death of the latter gave rise to another of his most famous poems, Son's Loss, composed after his daughter cleverly brought him out of his grief. One spot you won't find on your saga circuit here is where the elderly and blind Egil buried his silver hoard, interred somewhere in the region with the help of two slaves – who, along with the silver, were never seen again (and were presumably Egil's last victims).

The Saga of Erik the Red: Eiriksstaour

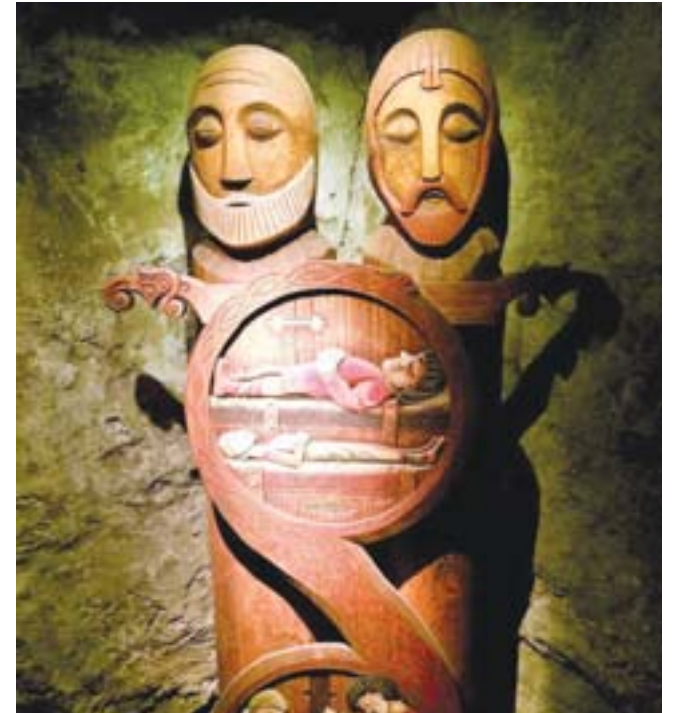
By any normal standards, Erik the Red would be deemed quite a man. Involved in violent retaliation after his slaves were murdered by a neighboring farmer in Iceland, he was banished and sailed west into the unknown. Eventually reaching land, he became the first European inhabitant of Greenland, founding a settlement on the southwest corner of the island and giving it its name in the hope of attracting more settlers. He had several children, including one, Leif Erikson, whose famous exploration of North America, five centuries before Columbus' trip, overshadowed his father's not-exactly-unimpressive achievements.

For a fascinating look at how Erik and his contemporaries lived, visit Eiriksstaour, a reconstruction of his longhouse, complete with brick walls, a turf roof and a dark, atmospheric interior where living in close proximity with your housemates takes on

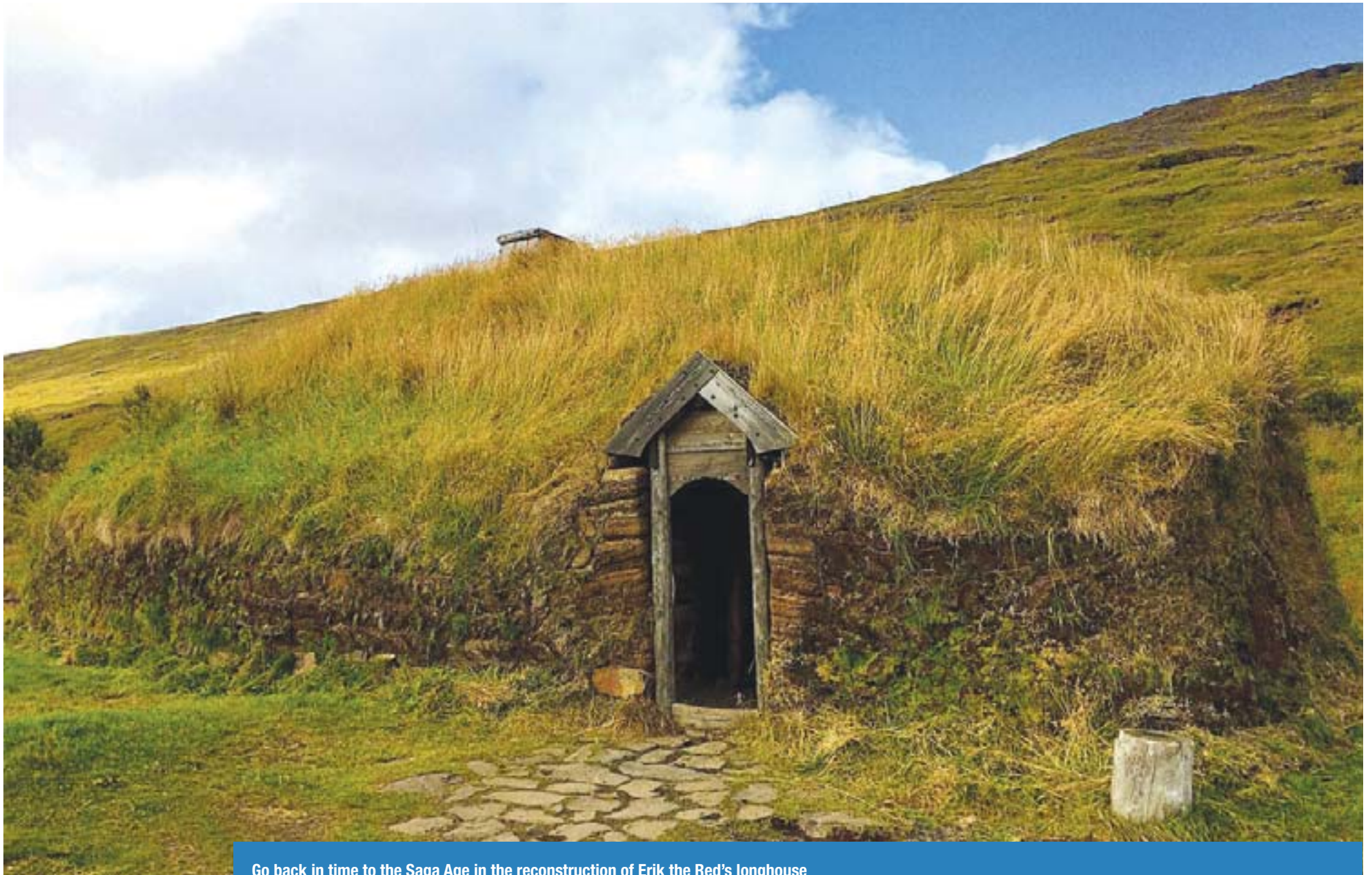
a whole new meaning. Proud locals, dressed in period costumes, are happy to tell more details of Erik's and Leif's extraordinary lives, while nearby, in the beautiful valley, stand the scant remains of the original buildings. The small town of Budardalur, a few kilometers away, is an original Saga-era port – which is fitting given that it was from here that Islendingur, a replica of Leif's ship, set sail in 2000 on a voyage to commemorate the 1000th anniversary of the explorer's journey. The ship is now on display in the Vikingaheimar museum in south Iceland.

The Saga of the People of Laxardal: Laugar and Dalir

Romantic intrigues are common in the Icelandic Sagas but none is better known than the love triangle at the centre of the Saga of the People of Laxardal, a story thought to have been written by a woman with extensive personal knowledge of the Dalir region where most of the events take place. Gudrun, 'the most beautiful woman ever to have grown up in Iceland', is courted by inseparable foster brothers, Kjartan and Bolli (you can probably see where this is going). Although in love with Kjartan, Gudrun is persuaded by Bolli to marry him while his foster brother is in Norway. A tense atmosphere following Kjartan's return to Iceland soon turns violent, leading to Kjartan's death at the hands of Bolli and a series of revenge murders, spurred on by Gudrun. Marrying four times in total, this 'femme fatale' eventually became a nun, but not before seeing the ghost of her last husband and enigmatically replying to her son, when asked which of the many men in her life she had loved most, 'He I treated worst, I loved best'. Scholars still debate exactly who she meant.



Egil's grief at losing his son is depicted in this carving at the Settlement Centre



Go back in time to the Saga Age in the reconstruction of Erik the Red's longhouse



Enthusiastic and knowledgeable Gisli impersonator at Haukadalur

For a relaxing space to ponder the quote yourself, take a dip in Guðrúnarlaug, a hot pot pool favored by Guðrún. Few other tangible ruins remain, but the landscapes across Dalir region are largely unchanged and names like Hjardarholt, the farm in which Kjartan and Bolli grew up together, remind visitors of the lasting impact of the sagas and the original settlers.

The Saga of Gisli: fingeryi and Haukadalur

More family feuding runs through the Saga of Gisli. Brothers and brothers-in-law come to blows after blood oaths are not fulfilled and wives fantasise about men other than their husbands. Gisli himself murders one of the saga's main characters and is then outlawed, living on the run in the Westfjords for 13 years. Aided by his loving wife, Aud, who refuses to give up his whereabouts despite being plied with silver, fate finally catches up with him and he is killed, valiantly fighting his assailants, his wife at his side until the end, 'his last blow no weaker than his first' (though not before, in true Saga style, reciting a quick poem).

Just travelling around the spectacular Westfjords region gives an idea of the difficulties Gisli would have faced while on the run. High mountains and wide fjords that draw gasps of delight from visitors today would have been obstacles to a man needing to constantly stay ahead of those out to get him. Beautiful Dyrafjörður is the centre of much of the action in the saga, and its main 'town', Þingeyri (population 281) has the excellent Skallin Viking Centre where you can get your inner Norse on, dressing up in costumes, making bread and drinking beer (all with a 'Viking' prefix) while hearing how the earliest settlers lived in this harsh environment. They also sell handmade, top-quality Icelandic sweaters. If you're here in late June/early July you can enjoy the Dyrafjörðardagur Viking Festival, and also head a few kilometres northwest to even tinier Haukadalur, site of Gisli's farm. Here an enthusiastic local saga sage and his friends perform an abridged version of the tale in a small theatre, dressed in 10th-century outfits, and lead tours round the area, pointing out its many Gisli connections. (www.lonelyplanet.com)



A hot pot with history, Guðrún's pool in Dalir

Comic

Word Search

Fantasy World 2

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 29 letters spell the name of a popular fantasy book

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

- ARCHERS
ARMOR
ARROWS
AXE
BARD
BLACKSMITH
BOW
COURT
CRYSTAL BALL
DRAGON
- DIWARF
ELF
EVIL
FAERIES
GOBLET
GOLD COINS
GOOD
HEADSMAN
KING
KNIGHT
- LORDS
MAGIC
MARKET
MINOTAUR
MOUNTAINS
PALACE
POTION
PRINCESS
SHIELD
SILVER
- SPELL
SWORD
THRONE
TROLL
UNICORN
VILLAGE
WAGON
WAND
WIZARD
WRAITH

Yesterday's Solution

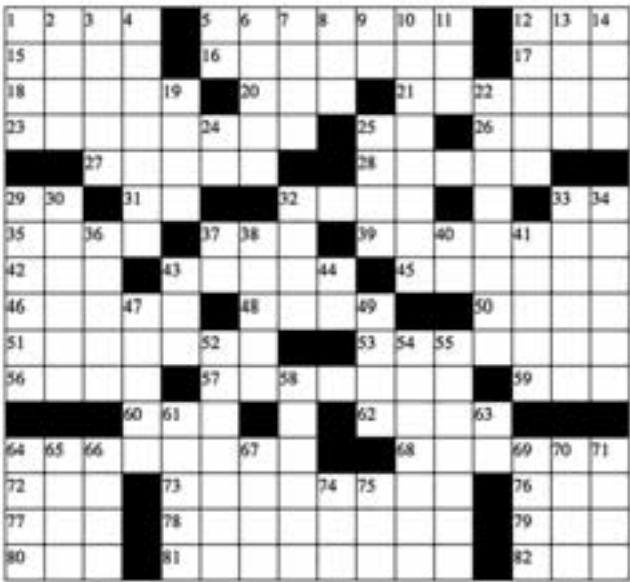
Fantasy World 1

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

- ALE
BATTLE
CASTLE
CENTAUR
CHALICE
CROSSBOW
CROWN
DAGGER
DRAWBRIDGE
DUNGEON
- ELVES
FARM
FOREST
GIANTS
GNOMES
GOLD
GUARDS
HERO
HORSE
INN
- LANCE
MACE
MAGIC
MINSTREL
MOAT
OGRE
PEASANT
PEDDLER
POISON
PRINCE
- QUEST
SERVANT
SPEARS
SPRITE
STEW
TOWER
WARLOCK
WEAPONS
WINE
WITCH

The hidden message is: THE LORD OF THE RINGS

Crossword 2038



ACROSS

1. Disabled in the feet or legs.
5. A state in the southeastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico.
12. Lap that forms a cloth border doubled back and stitched down v l.
15. A fee charged for exchanging currencies.
16. (British) A minicar used as a taxicab.
17. A flat wing-shaped process or wing-like part of an organism.
18. Tall hat.
20. Either extremity of something that has length.
21. Marked by smartness in dress and manners.
23. Low stingless nettle of Central and South America having velvety brownish-green toothed leaves and clusters of small green flowers.
26. The content of cognition.
27. A leisurely walk (usually in some public place).
28. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
29. Half the width of an em.
31. A soft yellow malleable ductile (trivalent and univalent) metallic element.
35. Make small marks into the surface of.
39. A male ballet dancer who is the partner of a ballerina.
42. Hormone released by the hypothalamus that controls the release of thyroid-stimulating hormone from the anterior pituitary.
45. The world's largest desert (3,500,000 square miles) in North Africa.
46. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
48. South African term for 'boss'.
50. Showily imitative of art or artists.
51. The largest of the Balearic Islands.
53. The basic unit of money in Equatorial Guinea.
56. Cry plaintively.
57. Someone who places an order to buy.
59. A doctor's degree in education.
60. The act of hopping (jumping upward or forward (especially on one foot)).
62. A federally sponsored corporation that insures accounts in national banks and other qualified institutions.
64. Periodic maintenance on a car or machine.
68. A volcanic island (part of Campania) in the Tyrrhenian Sea at the north end of the Bay of Naples.
72. A column of light (as from a beacon).
73. Match badly.
76. An associate degree in applied science.
77. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
78. Of or relating to or in the manner of the playwright Henrik Ibsen.
79. An acute inflammatory disease occurring in the intestines of premature infants.
80. The part of the nervous system of vertebrates that controls involuntary actions of the smooth muscles and heart and glands.

Daily SuDoku

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

DOWN

1. A fastener for a door or lid.
2. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
3. A woody climbing usually tropical plant.
4. A doughnut-shaped chamber used in fusion research.
5. Before noon.
6. Owing or owed feudal allegiance and service.
7. A former copper coin of Pakistan.
8. An authoritative direction or instruction to do something.
9. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
10. A chain of coral and volcanic islands in Micronesia halfway between New Guinea and Japan.
11. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
12. A member of a seafaring group of North American Indians who lived on the Pacific coast of British Columbia and southwestern Alaska.
13. Other than what is under consideration or implied.
14. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
19. Fast-growing herbaceous evergreen tree of South America having a broad trunk with high water content and dark green oval leaves.
22. Something considered choice to eat.
24. Being nine more than forty.
25. In bed.
30. Conforming with or constituting a norm or standard or level or type or social norm.
32. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
33. Move with or as if with a rushing sound.
34. Worn away or tattered along the edges.
36. Largest crested screamer.
37. A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
38. An imaginary elephant that appears in a series of French books for children.
40. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
41. Worn or shabby from overuse or (of pages) from having corners turned down.
43. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
44. Unknown god.
47. A blind god.
49. (medieval Europe) A person who is bound to the land and owned by the feudal lord.
52. An oleoresin used in varnishes and ointments.
54. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
55. 8th and most important avatar of Vishnu.
58. A prehistoric megalith typically having two upright stones and a capstone.
61. Of or relating to or measured in ohms.
63. Being ten more than one hundred ninety.
65. Characteristic of false pride.
66. An unfledged or nestling hawk.
67. A former communist country in eastern Europe and northern Asia.
69. The (prehensile) extremity of the superior limb.
70. The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
71. United States writer (born in Poland) who wrote in Yiddish (1880-1957).
74. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
75. God of war and sky.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings

Friday, October 19, 2018



00:35 Cold Zone
02:15 XXX: Return Of Xander Cage
04:15 Killer App
05:55 Term Life
07:35 The Northlander
09:20 Sacrifice
11:00 XXX: Return Of Xander Cage
12:55 Patriot Games
15:00 The Saint
17:05 Go With Me
18:35 Gridlocked
20:30 Runner Runner
22:05 Chosen
23:55 Enter The Warrior's Gate



00:45 North Woods Law
01:40 Expedition Mungo
02:35 Devoured: Man-Eating Super Snake Returns
03:25 Whale Wars
04:15 North Woods Law
05:02 Mutant Planet
05:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
06:36 Animal Battlegrounds
07:00 Animal Battlegrounds
07:25 Rugged Justice
08:15 Animal Cops Houston
09:10 Whale Wars
10:05 North Woods Law
11:00 Mutant Planet
11:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
12:50 Devoured: Man-Eating Super Snake Returns
13:45 Animal ER
14:40 North Woods Law
15:35 Expedition Mungo
16:30 Rugged Justice
17:25 Animal Cops Houston
18:20 The Beauty Of Snakes
19:15 Extinct Or Alive
20:10 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
21:05 Mutant Planet
22:00 Expedition Mungo
22:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
23:50 Extinct Or Alive



00:10 Friday Night Dinner
00:35 Mum
01:05 Back
01:30 Holby City
02:25 Friday Night Dinner
02:50 Mum
03:20 Death In Paradise
04:15 Father Brown
05:00 Hold The Sunset
05:30 Hold The Sunset
06:00 Doctors
06:30 EastEnders
07:00 Holby City
08:00 Casualty
08:50 Father Brown
09:40 Death In Paradise
10:35 Casualty
11:30 Casualty
12:25 Holby City
13:20 Father Brown
14:10 Death In Paradise
15:05 Casualty
16:00 Doctors
18:30 Shakespeare And Hathaway: Private Investigators
19:20 Shakespeare And Hathaway: Private Investigators
20:05 Line Of Duty
21:10 The Witness For The Prosecution
22:10 The Last Post
23:10 Father Brown
23:50 Doctors



00:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
01:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
01:55 The Killing Season
02:50 It Takes A Killer

03:20 It Takes A Killer
03:45 The First 48
04:30 Crimes That Shook Australia
05:15 Homicide Hunter
06:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
07:00 It Takes A Killer
07:20 The First 48
08:05 Cold Case Files
08:50 Homicide Hunter
09:35 Homicide: Hours To Kill
10:30 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
11:25 Crimes That Shook Britain
12:20 Cold Case Files
13:15 It Takes A Killer
13:45 It Takes A Killer
14:10 The First 48
15:05 Crimes That Shook Australia
16:00 Homicide Hunter
17:00 The Menendez Murders: Erik Tells All
21:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
22:00 It Takes A Killer
22:30 It Takes A Killer
23:00 The First 48



00:10 Tosh.0
00:32 Key And Peele
00:55 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
01:20 Another Period
01:45 Russell Howard's Stand Up Central
02:10 Tosh.0
02:35 Key And Peele
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:25 Tosh.0
03:50 Tosh.0
04:15 Sweat Inc.
05:05 House Of Food
05:55 Disaster Date
06:20 Disaster Date
06:45 Workaholics
07:10 Lip Sync Battle UK
07:35 Lip Sync Battle UK
08:00 Lip Sync Battle
08:25 Lip Sync Battle
08:50 Sweat Inc.
09:35 Snack Off
10:00 Snack Off
10:25 House Of Food
11:15 Lip Sync Battle
11:40 Lip Sync Battle
12:05 Friends
12:30 Friends
13:05 Friends
13:30 Kroll Show
13:55 Kroll Show
14:20 Impractical Jokers
14:45 Impractical Jokers
15:10 Disaster Date
15:35 Disaster Date
16:00 Workaholics
16:25 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
16:50 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
17:15 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
17:40 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
18:00 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
18:20 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
18:45 Lip Sync Battle
19:10 Lip Sync Battle
19:35 Friends
20:00 Friends
20:35 Friends
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 Natasha Leggero: Live From Bimbos
22:25 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
22:50 Tosh.0
23:15 Tosh.0
23:40 John Oliver's New York Stand Up Show



00:30 Destroyed In Seconds
00:55 Kids Do The Craziest Things
01:20 How It's Made
01:45 How It's Made

02:10 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
03:00 Tanked
03:50 Biggest And Baddest
04:40 Weather Gone Viral
05:30 NASA's Unexplained Files
06:20 How It's Made
06:40 How It's Made
07:00 Destroyed In Seconds
07:25 Kids Do The Craziest Things
07:50 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 Tanked
10:20 Biggest And Baddest
11:10 Destroyed In Seconds
11:35 Kids Do The Craziest Things
12:00 How It's Made
12:25 How It's Made
12:50 Weather Gone Viral
13:40 NASA's Unexplained Files
14:30 The Food Inspectors
15:20 Rip Off Food
16:10 Country House Rescue
17:00 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
17:50 Tanked
18:40 Destroyed In Seconds
19:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
19:30 Ultimate Ninja Challenge
20:20 The Carbonaro Effect
20:45 The Carbonaro Effect
21:10 How It's Made
21:35 How It's Made
22:00 Biggest And Baddest
22:50 Ultimate Ninja Challenge
23:40 The Carbonaro Effect



00:45 Twisted Sisters
01:40 Evil Lives Here
02:35 The Killer Beside Me
03:30 Murder Comes To Town
04:25 Killer Instinct With Chris Hansen
05:20 Forbidden: Dying For Love
06:10 I Almost Got Away With It
07:00 California Investigator
07:25 Grave Secrets
08:15 Disappeared
09:10 A Crime To Remember
10:05 Forbidden: Dying For Love
11:00 Murder Calls
11:55 Grave Secrets
12:50 I Almost Got Away With It
13:45 Killer Instinct With Chris Hansen
14:40 Forbidden: Dying For Love
15:35 Murder Comes To Town
16:30 Grave Secrets
17:25 Disappeared
18:20 I Almost Got Away With It
19:15 Killer Instinct With Chris Hansen
20:10 Forbidden: Dying For Love
21:05 Evil Online
22:00 Murder Among Friends
22:55 Murder By Numbers
23:50 Twisted Sisters




00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
00:50 Evermoor Chronicles
01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:30 Binny And The Ghost
02:55 Hank Zipzer
03:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
03:20 Hank Zipzer
03:45 Alex & Co.
04:10 Alex & Co.
04:35 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
05:00 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
05:25 Binny And The Ghost
05:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
05:50 Rolling With The Ronks
06:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
06:25 Raven's Home
06:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
06:55 Tangled
07:20 Bizaardvark

07:45 K.C. Undercover
08:10 Bunk'd
08:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
09:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
09:25 Tangled
09:50 Tangled
10:15 Bizaardvark
10:40 Bizaardvark
11:05 Liv And Maddie
11:30 Liv And Maddie
11:55 K.C. Undercover
12:20 K.C. Undercover
12:45 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
13:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
13:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
14:00 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
14:15 Bunk'd
14:40 K.C. Undercover
15:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
15:10 A.N.T. Farm
15:35 Bizaardvark
16:00 Tangled
16:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
16:50 Raven's Home
17:15 Stuck In The Middle
17:40 Bunk'd
18:05 K.C. Undercover
18:30 Bunk'd
18:55 Descendants Wicked World
19:00 Raven's Home
19:25 Liv And Maddie
19:50 K.C. Undercover
20:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
20:20 A.N.T. Farm
20:45 Bizaardvark
21:10 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
21:35 Stuck In The Middle
22:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
22:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
22:50 Lolirock
23:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:35 Binny And The Ghost



00:10 Minnie's Bow-Toons
00:15 Zou
00:30 Henry Hugglemonster
01:00 PJ Masks
01:25 PJ Masks
01:50 The Hive
02:00 Zou
02:15 Zou
02:30 Henry Hugglemonster
02:55 Henry Hugglemonster
03:20 The Hive
03:30 The Hive
03:40 Zou
03:55 Zou
04:10 Zou
04:25 The Hive
04:35 The Hive
04:45 Henry Hugglemonster
05:10 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 The Hive
05:45 PJ Masks
06:00 PJ Masks
06:15 PJ Masks
06:30 PJ Masks
07:00 Muppet Babies
07:20 Puppy Dog Pals
07:35 PJ Masks
07:55 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
08:10 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
08:29 Vampirina
08:45 Vampirina
09:00 Sofia The First
09:30 Elena Of Avalor
10:00 Puppy Dog Pals
10:20 Puppy Dog Pals
10:40 Puppy Dog Pals
11:00 Muppet Babies
11:20 Paprika
11:30 Paprika
11:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
12:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
12:40 PJ Masks
13:00 PJ Masks
13:20 PJ Masks
13:40 Paprika

13:50 Paprika
14:00 Claude
14:20 Claude
14:35 PJ Masks
14:40 Trulli Tales
14:55 Trulli Tales
15:10 Paprika
15:20 Paprika
15:30 Vampirina
15:50 Vampirina
16:05 Vampirina
16:25 Muppet Babies
16:40 Paprika
16:50 Paprika
17:00 Claude
17:15 Claude
17:31 Puppy Dog Pals
18:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
18:15 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
18:30 Vampirina
18:45 Vampirina
19:00 PJ Masks
19:15 PJ Masks
19:30 The Lion Guard
20:00 Sofia The First
20:25 Minnie's Bow-Toons
20:30 Elena Of Avalor
21:00 Puppy Dog Pals
21:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
21:45 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
22:01 Vampirina
22:20 Vampirina
22:40 PJ Masks
22:55 PJ Masks
23:15 The Lion Guard
23:45 Sofia The First



00:15 Street Outlaws
01:05 Salvage Hunters
01:50 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
02:35 Guy Martin: Wall Of Death
03:20 Street Outlaws
04:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier
04:50 Dirty Jobs
05:35 Storage Hunters
06:00 Auction Kings
06:23 Container Wars
06:45 Storage Hunters
07:10 How Do They Do It?
07:35 Alaska: The Last Frontier
08:20 Auction Kings
08:45 Container Wars
09:10 Impossible Engineering
09:55 Alaska: The Last Frontier
10:45 Dirty Jobs
11:30 Street Outlaws
12:20 Auction Kings
12:43 Container Wars
13:05 Storage Hunters
13:30 How Do They Do It?
13:55 Impossible Engineering
14:40 Street Outlaws
15:30 Salvage Hunters
16:15 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
17:05 Guy Martin: Wall Of Death
17:50 Abandoned Engineering
18:40 Impossible Engineering
19:25 Street Outlaws
20:15 Street Outlaws
21:00 Diesel Brothers
21:50 Street Outlaws: No Prep Kings (Special)
22:40 Street Outlaws: No Prep Kings
23:30 Gold Rush



00:05 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
00:30 Boyster
00:55 Boyster
01:20 Counterfeit Cat
01:45 Counterfeit Cat
02:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
02:35 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:00 Boyster
03:20 Boyster
03:45 Dude That's My Ghost
04:10 Dude That's My Ghost
04:35 Counterfeit Cat

05:00 Guardians Of The Galaxy
05:29 Marvel's Avengers Assemble
06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:29 Big Hero 6 The Series
07:00 Milo Murphy's Law
07:29 Big City Greens
08:00 Milo Murphy's Law
09:00 Phineas And Ferb
09:29 Phineas And Ferb
10:00 Kickin' It
10:29 Kickin' It
11:00 Big Hero 6 The Series
11:30 Big Hero 6 The Series
12:00 Lab Rats
12:29 Lab Rats
13:00 Phineas And Ferb
13:29 Furki Wheels
14:00 Disney 11
14:29 Marvel's Spider-Man
16:29 Supa Strikas
17:00 Big City Greens
17:29 Right Now Kapow
18:00 Disney 11
18:29 Lab Rats
19:00 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
19:29 Kickin' It
20:00 Lab Rats: Crush, Chop & Burn
21:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
21:29 Star Wars Rebels
22:00 Phineas And Ferb
22:25 Phineas And Ferb
22:50 Dude That's My Ghost
23:15 Dude That's My Ghost
23:40 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja



00:05 Model Squad
00:55 Model Squad
01:50 E! News
02:50 WAGs
03:40 Botched
04:35 Botched
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Mariah's World
06:55 E! News Middle East
07:10 Mariah's World
08:10 E! News: Daily Pop
09:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
10:05 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
12:00 E! News Middle East
12:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:00 E! News Middle East
15:15 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Model Squad
19:00 E! News
20:00 Ashlee+evan
22:00 Life Of Kylie
22:30 Life Of Kylie
23:00 E! News Middle East
23:15 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry



00:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Don't Tell The Bride
03:25 This Time Next Year
04:20 Cannonball
05:15 Who's Doing The Dishes?
06:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
07:10 Don't Tell The Bride
08:05 This Time Next Year
09:00 Cannonball
09:55 Who's Doing The Dishes?
10:55 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
11:50 Don't Tell The Bride
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Coronation Street
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
15:10 Don't Tell The Bride
16:00 The Voice UK 2018
17:25 Culinary Genius USA
17:50 Who's Doing The Dishes?
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Coronation Street
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 Don't Tell The Bride

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You are greatly admired as a go getter. Today you may be focused on deep rooted and lasting relationships. Maybe the sense of loneliness has you focused on this. Go ahead and make that date or apply for that job. Make sure your presence is known today. Aries. Fight through any frustration you are feeling, or any obstacles placed in your way. You have successfully turned stumbling blocks into stepping stones in the past and these will be no exception. Your heart is filled with love, share it. Today is a great day to sit down and have that long talk with a loved one. You may find yourselves communicating at a much deeper level than usual.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You seem to be entering a time in your life where control is a main focus. Whether this is healthy or not is all up to you. In a sense you are learning and focusing more on manipulation. You tend to tell others what they want to hear in order to get your way. Stop and take note of your words. Remeber there is a fine line between stretching the truth and becoming a out right liar. Make sure you are being honest with yourself and others. Dishonesty can bring tormoil into your life. Sometimes the reward is far from worth the risk.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may feel as if you are encountering negativity and not everyone is supportive when it comes to very sensitive issues you are dealing with in your life. These issues are very personal, and you may just be sharing with the wrong people. You will find someone close to you who will serve as a confidant who is extremely understanding and supportive of all that makes you unique. Gemini, now is a great time to think outside of the box and follow that new path or project that is calling your name. You may reap great reward from trying something new.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Seems as if all is well in your world. You should be experiencing much love and support from those around you. You are able to sense and respond to the needs of others. This is a quality that draws many to you. You are the friend others not only want to have but also wish they could be. You are extremely sympathetic and understanding to others and this is a trait that finds you surrounded with many friends. This may be a very spiritual time in your life and you could find yourself going above and beyond for someone very close to you. Count your blessings and continue to bring blessing to the lives of those around you.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Your dedication and devotion to your career could bring up some issues in your personal life. Someone close to you may feel as if they are no longer a priority in your life. They may feel ignored and left out. It is a sticky situation for you as the drive to climb to the ladder will be very rewarding in the end. The question weighing on your mind is will it be worth the risk of losing someone close to you. You are able to realize this is just temporary but unable to convince those around you who are not fond of the amount of focus and time you have placed on your career. It is a time to learn to juggle your focus and time so not only does your career prosper but also your personal relationships with others. Leo, use caution as you begin to perform this juggling act.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Your peers are appreciative of your ability to be able to make constructive suggestions or to help them with practical decisions, which relate to group issues. Knowing exactly what the public wants at this time is yet another feather in your hat. Your name and reputation are spreading quickly. Expect an upgrade soon in your job identity and pay. The idea of value or a greater appreciation for things of value is fun to comprehend this afternoon. It is most assuredly a time when tangible things have a great deal of importance. Your emotions or the feelings of those around you should be quite clear, making it a great time to reflect and truly understand individual family members and your connection in the family.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Have you ever wanted to just click your heels and be someone or somewhere else? Today may find you craving just that. An adventure is in order. Keep an open mind if you find yourself in discussions concerning politics or religion. You always can walk away from an experience with new knowledge. Keep your calm and approach any emotionally charged drama that comes your way with a kind heart and a listening ear. You never know. You just may learn something new.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Out with the old and in with the new. You are ready for a change. This is a time you are high energy and feel as if you have the world in the palm of your hand. Ambition is overflowing. You seek freedom from all habits and challenges that have been present in your past. You are ready to pave new roads and find your way to all that is new. This excites you. You are ready to take on the world.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Things may seem too good to be true. In an almost magical sense it seems that all of your dreams are coming true. Goals seem attainable now. Everything seems to be falling in your lap. You are being smiled upon and you have a new love for life. This is the result of your hard work and dedication. You may find that karma has a way of repaying your good deeds and there seems to be no other explanation for this vast array of good fortune. This is a great time to get all of your affairs in order and continue to dream big.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Why do today what you can put off until tomorrow? This seems to be your attitude today and you may be creating a stressful situation that can be avoided. Get in gear. Snap out of your dreamy state and take care of business. You may find others becoming frustrated with your lack of ambition today. Take a walk and a few deep breaths. Refresh and restart. There is no time like the present to get your focus back and get things done. Great reward will come from your hard work today.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may be feeling drawn and even turned on by that which is taboo. Sex, power, and the pursuit of wealth are beginning to be a driving force behind your emotions. You are fascinated by people. What makes the do the things they do? What makes them tick? You desire a fresh start in your life and major changes. You know this may only be accomplished by turning your back on all you believed and starting over with an open mind and a new outlook on life in general.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may have discovered you are giving more than you are receiving. You have a tendency to give too much of yourself to others. This is a time you may need to turn your focus on you. Get serious about your health and mental well-being. Remember taking care of you is a necessity. You tend to see this as being selfish. Remember if you do not take care of you, you will not be able to continue the constant care you give to others. Feed your soul, spoil yourself, but most of all, learn to relax. Today is the day to take a deep breath, grab a quick nap, and face the world with a new refreshed attitude, Pisces. Learn to put yourself first.

Country Codes

Afghanistan	0093	Jordan	00962
Albania	00355	Kazakhstan	007
Algeria	00213	Kenya	00254
Andorra	00376	Kiribati	00686
Angola	00244	Kuwait	00965
Anguilla	001264	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Antiga	001268	Laos	00856
Argentina	0054	Latvia	00371
Armenia	00374	Lebanon	00961
Australia	0061	Liberia	00231
Austria	0043	Libya	00218
Bahamas	001242	Lithuania	00370
Bahrain	00973	Luxembourg	00352
Bangladesh	00880	Macau	00853
Barbados	001246	Macedonia	00389
Belarus	00375	Madagascar	00261
Belgium	0032	Majorca	0034
Belize	00501	Malawi	00265
Benin	00229	Malaysia	0060
Bermuda	001441	Maldives	00960
Bhutan	00975	Mali	00223
Bolivia	00591	Malta	00356
Bosnia	00387	Marshall Islands	00692
Botswana	00267	Martinique	00596
Brazil	0055	Mauritania	00222
Brunei	00673	Mauritius	00230
Bulgaria	00359	Mayotte	00269
Burkina	00226	Mexico	0052
Burundi	00257	Micronesia	00691
Cambodia	00855	Moldova	00373
Cameroon	00237	Monaco	00377
Canada	001	Mongolia	00976
Cape Verde	00238	Montserrat	001664
Cayman Islands	001345	Morocco	00212
Central African Republic	00236	Mozambique	00258
Chad	00235	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Chile	0056	Namibia	00264
China	0086	Nepal	00977
Colombia	0057	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Comoros	00269	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Congo	00242	New Caledonia	00687
Cook Islands	00682	New Zealand	0064
Costa Rica	00506	Nicaragua	00505
Croatia	00385	Nigar	00227
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark	0045	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia	00246	Norway	0047
Djibouti	00253	Oman	00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	0092
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Philippines	0063
Eritrea	00291	Poland	0048
Estonia	00372	Portugal	00351
Ethiopia	00251	Puerto Rico	001787
Falkland Islands	00500	Qatar	00974
Faroe Islands	00298	Romania	0040
Fiji	00679	Russian Federation	007
Finland	00358	Rwanda	00250
France	0033	Saint Helena	00290
French Guiana	00594	Saint Kitts	001869
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Lucia	001758
Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
Georgia	00995	Samoa US	00684
Germany	0049	Samoa West	00685
Ghana	00233	San Marino	00378
Gibraltar	00350	Sao Tome	00239
Greece	0030	Saudi Arabia	00966
Greenland	00299	Scotland (UK)	0044
Grenada	001473	Senegal	00221
Guadeloupe	00590	Seychelles	00284
Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala	00502	Singapore	0065
Guinea	00224	Slovakia	00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
Haiti	00509	Solomon Islands	00677
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Somalia	00252
Honduras	00504	South Africa	0027
Hong Kong	00852	South Korea	0082
Hungary	0036	Spain	0034
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sri Lanka	0094
Iceland	00354	Sudan	00249
India	0091	Suriname	00597
Indian Ocean	00873	Swaziland	00268
Indonesia	0062	Sweden	0046
Iran	0098	Switzerland	0041
Iraq	00964	Syria	00963
Ireland	00353	Taiwan	00886
Italy	0039	Tanzania	00255
Ivory Coast	00225	Thailand	0066
Jamaica	001876	Toga	00228
Japan	0081	Tonga	00676

Health

Climate change batters US cities

WASHINGTON: When flash floods tore through Ellicott City, Maryland, this spring, Governor Larry Hogan called it a "once-every-1,000-year" event - even though it was the second such catastrophe within two years.

Speaking to reporters in May, Hogan was channeling the bewilderment of many communities in the United States at the existential threat posed by the impacts of climate change. Floods and mega-storms - including two that hit the US East Coast in the past month - are increasingly battering the country, and recovery costs are spiraling upwards.

Yet, the federal government has no overarching plan to deal with a crisis that is likely to render many communities unsustainable, with some experts already calling for a "managed retreat" to safer areas away from coasts and rivers.

Privately, many people are "resigned to the fact that they're on borrowed time in their (waterfront) properties," said Amy Cotter of

the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. "But then if you talk to a room full of people or politicians, nobody wants to step out there and say we need to sell, to make a change."

About 300,000 coastal homes, valued at almost \$118 billion, are at risk of chronic flooding by 2045, according to advocacy group the Union of Concerned Scientists, which predicted in June that the figure would rise to \$1 trillion by the end of the century.

Inland, about 41 million Americans are threatened by river flooding - three times the government's current estimate - according to a report earlier this year by researchers from the University of Bristol.

"We have seen escalating flood damage every decade from the 1980s until now, to the point that it almost seems to be doubling every decade," said Chad Berginnis, executive director of the Association of State Floodplain Managers. Despite the rising threat, he said, it remains difficult to discuss the idea of buying

properties and moving populations. "Politically it just isn't acceptable to a lot of citizens," Berginnis said.

Nonetheless, some municipal governments are coming up with creative responses. In Ellicott City, that meant a strategy to abandon a flood-prone section of the historic town, which sits in a valley and is crisscrossed by three rivers. The county council this month approved a five-year flood-mitigation plan, which includes the purchase and demolition of 19 commercial and residential buildings and the expansion of a waterway.

Kelly McMillan, who owns two buildings in the city's downtown, including one where she lives, said she supports the plan.

"It's impossible to see how it would be safe to rebuild properties built over a stream in an area that had two deadly floods in two years," said McMillan. That approach is becoming more common as communities are forced to grapple directly with the effects of climate

change, which are increasingly hard to ignore.

"We have not begun any kinds of discussions about managed retreat, but I've met with all of the major investors and sat down with the maps so I can start that conversation," said Nancy Shaver, mayor of St. Augustine, Florida.

The city is expected to face a sea level rise of two feet (61 cm) by 2030. But even so, Shaver said the discussion is fraught with political pitfalls, as many residents are reluctant to abandon their homes.

"We'll do this at the neighborhood level," she said. "We'll have to do it very carefully, and we're not there yet."

While relocating communities may be safer and less expensive in the long run, the short term question is: Who pays for it? While the federal government has long funded post-disaster home buyouts, little money has been earmarked for pre-disaster programs - although there are signs that may be changing. — Reuters

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM

Consultant Pediatrician

Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American
Board in Pediatrics-Canadian
Board in Pediatric Emergency



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DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED

Consultant of General Surgery
Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery



Academic Certificates – Training

- ◆ Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- ◆ (IFSO) member .
- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
- ◆ Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

Scope of clinical Practice.

- ◆ Bariatric surgeries.
- ◆ Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- ◆ Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- ◆ G.I. surgeries.
- ◆ Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
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ACADEMIC CERTIFICATES:


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Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

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- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
- ◆ Canadian Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- ◆ American Board of Colo - Rectal Surgery
- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care




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Kuwait Times Classifieds

Friday, October 19, 2018

Kuwait Times
Established 1961



Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171	FlyDubai	22414400
Jazeera Airways	177	Qatar Airways	22423888
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536	KLM	22425747
American Airlines	22087425	Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
	22087426	British Airways	22425635
Jet Airways	22924455	Air France	22430224

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DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Relatively hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 38 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear with a slight chance

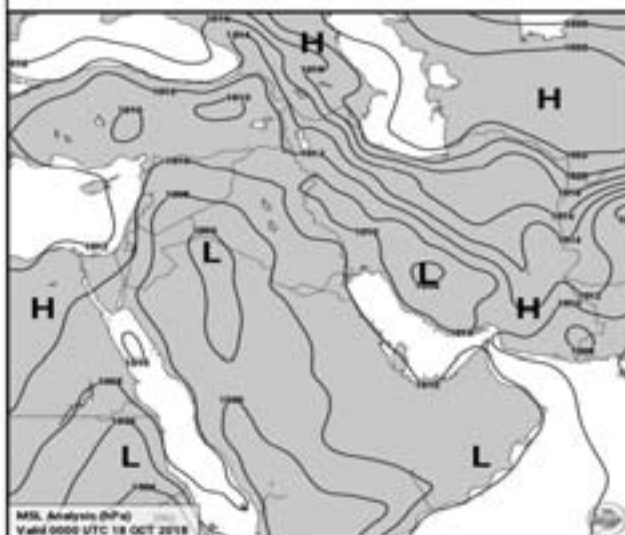
BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy and Humid specially over coastal areas with light to moderate south easterly wind to southerly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas with a

WEATHER WARNING

No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	36 °C	27 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	37 °C	23 °C
ABDALY	38 °C	25 °C
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C
JAHERA	38 °C	26 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	36 °C	26 °C
SALMIYAH	34 °C	28 °C
AHMADI	36 °C	27 °C
NUWAISIB	37 °C	23 °C
WAFRA	38 °C	23 °C
SALMY	37 °C	23 °C

SFC. CHART 18/10/2018 0000 UTC



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	10/19	Partly cloudy and with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	35 °C	22 °C	SE-S	10 - 40 km/h
Saturday	10/20	Relatively hot and Humid specially over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	34 °C	22 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 38 km/h
Sunday	10/21	Partly cloudy and Humid specially over coastal areas causing rising dust with a chance for rain	35 °C	23 °C	S-SE	15 - 42 km/h
Monday	10/22	Partly cloudy and Humid specially over coastal areas causing rising dust with a chance for	36 °C	24 °C	S-SE	15 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	04:32
Sunrise	05:52
Zuhr	11:33
Asr	14:49
Sunset	17:15
Isha	18:32

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	38 °C
MIN. Temp.	23 °C
MAX. RH	72 %
MIN. RH	19 %
MAX. Wind	S 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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I, A.SUDHAGAR (HINDU), S/o: Arunachalam, Passport No. J5548581, Civil ID No. 280031007474, date of birth 10.3.1980, No. 2/98, Mariyamman Koil Street, Palaiya Kunjaram, Villupuram - 607201, has converted Hindu to Islam with the name of MOHAMED JAFEER ARUNACHALAM (ISLAM). (C 5428) 16-10-2018

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Business

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2018

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iPhone XR arrives at Zain on 26 Oct

Customers can preorder iPhone XR beginning today

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, yesterday announced it will offer iPhone XR, bringing the latest iPhone innovations to more people. Customers will be able to pre-order iPhone XR beginning today (19 October) at kw.zain.com and Zain branches, and will be available in stores starting Friday (26 October). For complete pricing details, please visit kw.zain.com.

iPhone XR integrates breakthrough technologies from iPhone XS in all-screen glass and aluminum design featuring a 6.1-inch Liquid Retina display, the most advanced LCD in a smartphone, with wide color support and True Tone for a more natural viewing experience. iPhone XR brings the smartest and most powerful chip in a smartphone with A12 Bionic, a next-generation Neural Engine built for advanced machine learning in everything from photography to augmented reality, the TrueDepth camera system, faster Face ID, an advanced camera system that creates dramatic portraits using a single camera lens, long all-day battery life and six beautiful finishes; white, black, blue, yellow, coral and (PRODUCT)RED. This new design is splash and water resistant with a rating of IP67 and protects against everyday spills including coffee, tea and soda.* iPhone XR also brings Dual SIM to iPhone through the use of digital eSIM.**

For more details on pricing and data plans, please visit kw.zain.com. For more details on iPhone please visit www.apple.com.

*iPhone XR is splash-, water- and dust-resistant, and was tested under controlled laboratory conditions with a rating of IP67 under IEC stan-

Pre-order now and get it delivered on October 26th

dard 60529 (maximum depth of 1 meter up to 30 minutes). Splash, water and dust resistance are not permanent conditions, and resistance might decrease as a result of normal wear. Do not attempt to charge a wet iPhone; refer to the user guide for cleaning and drying instructions. Liquid damage not covered under warranty.

** Dual SIM support will be available via a free software update later this fall. Use of Dual SIM requires two wireless service plans (which may include restrictions on roaming). Certain restrictions apply to use.

effectively syphoning off taxpayers' money into investors' pockets. So far estimates of the damage had ranged from 5.3 billion euros according to the German finance ministry to 30 billion, according to press reports.

But a joint investigation by European media outlets has concluded that at least 55.2 billion euros were stolen from 11 countries: Germany, France, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, Austria, Finland, Norway and Switzerland. Reportedly conceived by well-known German lawyer Hanno Berger, the cum-ex method relies on several investors buying and reselling shares in a company amongst themselves around the day when the firm pays out its dividend. — Reuters

Despite Trump criticism, Fed sees need for more rate hikes

NEW YORK: Federal Reserve policymakers are largely united on the need to raise borrowing costs further, minutes from their most recent policy meeting show, despite US President Donald Trump's view that interest rate hikes have already gone too far.

Every Fed policymaker backed the central bank's September decision to raise the target policy rate to between 2 percent and 2.25 percent, according to minutes of the Sept. 25-26 meeting, published Wednesday.

Participants in the Fed's rate-setting committee also "generally anticipated that further gradual increases" in short-term borrowing costs "would most likely be consistent" with the kind of continued economic expansion, labor market strength, and firm inflation that most of them are anticipating, the minutes showed. "This gradual approach would balance the risk of tightening monetary policy too quickly, which could lead to an abrupt slowing in the economy and inflation moving below the Committee's objective, against the risk of moving too slowly, which could engender inflation persistently above the objective and possibly contribute to a buildup of financial imbalances," the minutes said.

US stocks closed slightly lower and US Treasury yields gained a bit as traders continued to bet on further rate hikes ahead. The benchmark 10-year Treasury yield ticked up 3 basis points to 3.184 percent. The dollar also rose.

Trump told Reuters in August he was "not thrilled" with Fed Chair Jerome Powell for raising interest rates, and has since escalated his criticism, this week saying



Jerome Powell

the central bank is his "biggest threat," and last week calling the Fed "crazy," "loco," "ridiculous," and "too cute."

Though the minutes did not refer to any of Trump's criticism, its message of further rate increases suggests that policymakers are not fazed by it. "For now, the Fed has made it clear that they are focused on their agenda despite rising presidential pressure on their rate decisions," said Mike Loewengart, vice president of investment strategy at E*Trade.

The broadly united front could bolster expectations the central bank will raise rates a fourth time this year in December, but the minutes also show the committee remains split on how much further to raise rates next year. A few participants expected rates would need to rise enough to modestly restrain economic growth, even as two others "indicated that they would not favor adopting a restrictive policy stance in the absence of clear signs of an overheating economy and rising inflation."

Fed officials overall expect rates to rise to 3.1 percent next year and 3.4 percent in 2020, just above their 3 percent estimate for the long-run "neutral" rate at which borrowing costs are neither braking nor stimulating economic growth. Traders of futures contracts tied to the Fed's policy rate see rates topping out at about 3 percent.

In the minutes, policymakers said estimates of the neutral rate would only be "one among many" factors going into monetary policy decisions. — Reuters

Huge tax scam cost Europe 55bn euros

FRANKFURT: A gigantic years-long tax scam saw banks drain 55 billion euros (\$63 billion) from national treasuries in Europe, a far larger sum than previously thought, media from across the continent reported yesterday.

The so-called "cum-ex" deals relied on complex tax trickery that allowed owners of shares to claim several times over refunds for tax paid only once on dividend payouts —

Business

Crude prices ease as supply outlook for 2019 improves

Traders become more confident about supplies

LONDON: Oil prices and calendar spreads have softened significantly this month as traders became more confident about the availability of supplies towards the end of the year and into early 2019.

Iran's exports have not declined as much as predicted a couple of months ago and it is now clear they will not fall to zero, even after US sanctions are re-imposed next month.

Refiners in Turkey, India and possibly China are reportedly negotiating with US officials over waivers to enable them to continue purchasing at least some Iranian oil after Nov 4.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf producers have boosted their exports in response to the earlier rise in prices and pressure from the United States to cool the market. Traders, meanwhile, have become more cautious about the consumption outlook for the rest of 2018/19, with most indicators pointing to a loss of economic momentum outside the United States.

As a result, most major forecasters are

now predicting a significant acceleration in non-OPEC oil supplies in 2019 as well as slower growth in consumption, shifting the outlook from one of continuing deficits back towards a surplus.

In part, the improved supply picture has come about because the surge in oil prices during August and September forced both the White House and Saudi Arabia to adapt their positions. The United States has softened its insistence on forcing Iran's exports towards zero, while Saudi Arabia has ramped up its own exports in October and November to alleviate fears about a possible shortage. In effect, the oil market found the pain threshold for the US administration, which lies at around \$80 per barrel for Brent, and pushed prices high enough to enforce a partial course correction from policymakers.

As the supply outlook has improved, traders have begun to scale back bets on a crude crunch occurring towards the end of the year. Hedge funds and other money managers sold

futures and options linked to Brent prices equivalent to 21 million barrels in the two weeks ending on Oct. 9, after buying 172 million barrels over the previous five weeks.

Portfolio managers have also sold contracts linked to WTI prices equivalent to 90 million barrels over the last five weeks, according to position records published by regulators and exchanges. Total hedge fund long positions in crude have fallen to 865 million barrels, from a recent high of 908 million in late September, while short positions have risen to 93 million barrels from 65 million.

As hedge-fund buying has turned into selling, spot prices have come under pressure, with front-month Brent futures retreating from a four-year high of \$86 on Oct. 3 to just over \$80 on Wednesday and below that so far yesterday. As hedge fund managers tend to concentrate their holdings in contracts close to expiry, which are more liquid, selling pressure has been most pronounced at the front end of the futures curve. Nearby futures prices have



fallen much more heavily than contracts with longer to run before expiry, shifting the entire futures curve from a steep backwardation closer to flat.

Brent's six-month calendar spread has eased from a backwardation of more than \$2 per barrel at the start of the month to just over \$1 on Wednesday. In the past, the Brent calendar spread has been a reliable indicator of the supply-demand balance, and the recent softening of the spread is consistent with an improved near-term outlook for global oil supplies. —Reuters

Vietnam to ratify Pacific trade pact next month

HANOI: Vietnam said yesterday it will ratify a sprawling Pacific trade pact that US President Donald Trump pulled out of last year, calling the deal a "disgrace" for American jobs.

The 11 remaining countries agreed to push ahead with a watered-down version without the world's largest economy, re-branding the pact as the CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership). Vietnam, an export-based manufacturing economy that stood to gain enormously from unfettered access to the US market, said lawmakers would ratify the deal next month.

He said the "important deal" would help Vietnam respond to global economic trends that have been "complicated with the rise of protectionism in major economies," in a veiled reference to the US. Vietnam and Japan—which has lobbied hard to keep the deal alive—last month urged the United States to re-join the sprawling trade pact, whose original signatories would have covered 40 percent of the global economy.

The remaining economies of the CPTPP make up only 13.5 percent.

The terms of the CPTPP leave the door open for Washington to re-join and could also allow non-Pacific countries to sign on. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said this month he would welcome Britain "with open arms" to join the pact as the European nation steps toward finalising Brexit.

Four of the original Trans-Pacific Partnership signatories—Australia, Mexico, Japan and Singapore—have already ratified the deal, which can only come into effect once all members have done so.

Pulling out of the TPP, a deal spearheaded by Trump's predecessor Barack Obama, was one of the American leader's first post-election announcements as he made good on campaign pledges to protect US jobs. —Reuters



KARACHI: A Pakistani artist applies art work on a fiber fishing boat in Karachi yesterday. —AFP

Is Africa starting to choke on China's lending glut?

FREETOWN: It was a time for smiles and handshakes as the delegations from Sierra Leone and China Exim Bank sealed a loan to provide the impoverished West African state with a new airport.

Just months later, the much-trumpeted Mamamah International Airport scheme, estimated to cost \$400 million (347 million euros), has gone up in smoke. Sierra Leone's new government has scrapped the contract, bluntly declaring it "uneconomical". Instead it will use an existing, underused airport and improve access to it. The decision coincides with concern internationally about Africa's mounting debts with China—fears

that are sometimes voiced by individual Africans, but rarely their governments.

"We need Chinese development, but not at the expense of our unborn children who will be paying the debts," said Hassan Dumbuya, a taxi driver using a partly-completed Chinese-built toll road between Freetown and Masiaka.

No revolt

So is Sierra Leone's U-turn on the airport the dawn of an African revolt against Chinese-funded projects? Not so fast, say analysts. "It's not a revolt because African countries cannot revolt—they are seeking finance," said Ivorian political analyst Jean Alabro in Abidjan.

Michael Kottoh, managing partner at Konfidants, an international consultancy firm, explained that the airport cancellation had a limited, local, context. True, it could be seen as "yet more evidence that many African governments are rushing to grab Chinese deals without seeking serious transaction advice to guide their negotiations," he said. —AFP

Business

Postman, shopper, builder: In Japan, there's a robot for that

At World Robot Summit in Tokyo, the focus was on down-to-earth robots

TOKYO: Forget the flashy humanoids with their gymnastics skills: at the World Robot Summit in Tokyo, the focus was on down-to-earth robots that can deliver post, do the shopping and build a house.

Introducing CarriRo, a delivery robot shaped a bit like a toy London bus with bright, friendly "eyes" on its front that can zip around the streets delivering packages at 6km/h (4 miles per hour).

CarriRo "is designed to roll along the pavements and direct itself via GPS to an address within a two-kilometre radius," explained Chio Ishikawa, from Sumitomo Corp, which is promoting the robot.

The lucky recipient of the package is sent a code to a smartphone allowing him or her to access CarriRo's innards and retrieve whatever is inside-post, medicine or a take-away.

Services like this are especially needed in ageing Japan. With nearly 28 percent of the population over 65, mobility is increasingly limited and the country is struggling for working-age employees.

Toyota's HSR (Human Support Robot) may not be an oil painting to look at-standing a metre tall, it looks like a bin with arms-but it can provide vital help for the aged or handicapped at home.

Capable of handling and manoeuvring a variety of objects, it also provides a key interface with the outside world via its internet-con-

nected screen for a head. Japan's manpower shortage is felt especially keenly in the retail and construction sectors and firms at the summit were keen to demonstrate their latest solutions. Omron showcased a robot that can be programmed to glide around a supermarket and place various items into a basket. Possibly useful for a lazy-or infirm-shopper but more likely to be put to use in a logistics warehouse.

Japan also has difficulty finding staff to stack shelves at its 55,000 convenience stores open 24/7 and here too, robots can fill the gap.

HRP-5P

With buildings going up at breakneck pace as Tokyo prepares to welcome the world for the 2020 Olympics, there are construction sites all over the city but not always enough people to work them. Enter HRP-5P. The snappily named, humanoid-shaped machine certainly has the look of a brawny builder, at 182cm tall and weighing in at 101 kilograms. And HRP-5P is designed to carry out the same construction tasks that humans currently perform-even when left to its own devices.

HRP-5P "can use the same tools as a man, which is why we gave it the shape of a human-two legs, two arms and a head," explained one of its creators, Kenji Kaneko from the National Advanced Industrial Science and Technology research facility.

Manufacturers were also promoting the lat-



TOKYO: A woman speaks with the android robot 'totto', which replicates Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, one of the country's top TV stars, at the World Robot Summit in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

est in talking robots, which are becoming increasingly "intelligent" in their responses. Sharp's Robohon, a cute-as-pie humanoid robot standing only 20 centimetres tall, has been employed since last month to recount to tourists the history of the ancient Imperial capital of Kyoto-in English, Japanese or Chinese.

And very popular among Japanese visitors to the World Robot Summit was a robot replica of Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, one of the country's top TV stars. Created in collaboration with Japan-

ese robotics master Hiroshi Ishiguro, the robot replicates the 85-year-old's facial expressions almost perfectly but conversation with the machine hardly flows.

"The difficulty is being able to create fluid conversations with different people," said Junji Tomita, engineer at telecoms giant NTT which is also involved in the project.

"The number of possible responses to an open question is so vast that it is very complicated," admitted Tomita. —AFP

Thousands of Seoul taxi-drivers rally against plans for carpool service

SEOUL: Tens of thousands of South Korean taxi-drivers held a rally yesterday in Seoul, the capital, saying a carpooling service planned by the operator of the country's top chat app would threaten their livelihoods and jobs.

It was the latest challenge to ride-sharing services in South Korea, which has one of the world's highest smartphone penetration rates, with nearly half its population of about 51 million living in the Seoul metropolitan area. Backlash from taxi-drivers and government regulations in Asia's fourth-biggest economy have hampered new transport services launched by US-based Uber Technologies and domestic startups.

Protesters wearing red headbands chanted slogans, waved flags and held up placards with slogans such as, "Let's crush the carpooling industry which ignores the taxi industry," and "Illegal business carpool app out."

A carpooling service would put his job at risk, said one driver, Lee Sun-joo, who has 30 years of experience but works 12-hour days to earn just 2 million won (\$1,762) every month.

"The taxi industry will be long gone at the end," he added. On Tuesday, Kakao Mobility, a unit of chat app operator Kakao Corp, started recruiting drivers for its service, after having acquired domestic carpool startup Luxi from Hyundai Motor and other investors in February.

Kakao, which wants to use its dominant position to jumpstart the service matching up drivers with people seeking a ride in the same direction, said it would run the service only during commuting hours to offset a shortage of taxis. Transport law bans the use of personal vehicles for commercial purposes, but allows carpooling during "commuting hours".

Kakao, which previously said it planned to launch the service by year-end, on Thursday said the timing had not been decided. "We will continue discussions with the taxi industry, related organizations and users before the service launch," it said in a statement.

The taxi drivers' protest worsens the dilemma of South Korea's labor-friendly government, grappling with unemployment that hit an eight-year high in August. South Korea had about 270,000 taxi drivers on June 30. As the economy loses steam, the government has also pledged to promote new industries to cut reliance on big conglomerates, such as Hyundai and Samsung.

"The government is in a bind," said Ko Tae-bong, research head at Hi Investment & Securities. "If they keep dragging their feet over regulatory changes, South Korea will be left behind the global ride-sharing market." —Reuters

Poland opts for LNG from US to ease reliance on Russia

WARSAW: Poland's state-run gas firm PGNiG said on Wednesday that it had sealed an unprecedented 20-year deal for liquefied natural gas (LNG) deliveries from the United States in a bid to ease its heavy dependence on Russian supplies. "Today we can fulfil our efforts to improve the sovereignty, security and competitiveness of our gas sector," Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki told reporters in Warsaw on Wednesday, adding that the deal will help reduce Poland's reliance on Kremlin-backed Russian energy giant Gazprom.

US ambassador to Poland Georgette Mosbacher told reporters the contract was part of a drive by the Trump administration to establish the United States as the "world's largest LNG exporter".

The deal concluded by the Polish Oil and Gas Company (PGNiG) with two subsidiaries of the

US-based Venture Global LNG will provide Poland with up to two million tonnes of liquefied natural gas per year, a PGNiG company statement said.

Once regasified, it is the equivalent of 2.7 billion cubic metres of natural gas. The deal with the US firm is due to take full effect in 2022, just as Warsaw's current contract with Gazprom for 10 billion cubic metres of natural gas per year is set to end. Poland currently relies on the Russian giant for about two-thirds of its gas, with domestic supplies accounting for around a quarter of its market.

Warsaw is also eyeing imports from Norway and Qatar. A value for the Venture Global LNG contract, initially agreed in June, was not provided.

Gazprom spokesman Sergey Kupriyanov told Russia's TASS on Wednesday that the company's "supplies to Poland, amid all the rhetoric against Russian gas, grew by almost 10 percent this year."

Russia's deputy energy minister Anatoly Yanovsky also told TASS that no one can beat the price of Russian gas on the European market.

"Our commodity is a single option. Neither the US, nor Qatar, nor Norway, nor Africa can supply such volumes for a low price like that," he told TASS. —AFP

Business

Lack of Italy debt contagion explodes euro periphery myth

Investors breaking 8-year habit of lumping together bonds

LONDON: The striking lack of financial contagion across the eurozone from Italy's bond-market blowout this year shows investors are breaking an eight-year habit of lumping together the bonds of Italy, Spain and Portugal. In an apparent vindication of European Central Bank efforts to reduce spillover across the bloc each time one of the southern European economies gets into trouble, the market has so far treated the Italian budget dispute as a domestic storm.

For years after the 2010-2012 euro zone debt crisis, Italy, Spain and Portugal - collectively referred to as the "periphery" by bond investors - saw their bonds track each other.

Anything that risked a repeat of the euro zone's existential angst six years ago tarred all the weaker credits with the same brush. Yet six years after ECB chief Mario Draghi pledged to do "whatever it takes" to save the eurozone, the correlation is fading.

An uproar over Italy's budget deficit and risks of a clash between Rome and European Union authorities have barely touched Portuguese and Spanish debt. Such has been the divergence that the premium demanded by investors to hold Italian risk over Spain's hit its widest in over 20 years.

"We are very close to record low levels in terms of correlation between peripheral countries, and it's very clear that from the market per-

spective for the first time in a while a major euro zone bond market incident is not being seen as a threat to the euro system," said Frederik Ducrozet, a global strategist at Pictet Wealth Management.

One reason is that the budget concerns are so far confined to Italy. But idiosyncratic risks have in the past spread across southern European bond markets too-one example being the approach to the Catalan independence referendum last year.

Confidence is higher this time that the Italian debt problem will not threaten the country's euro membership. The country's anti-establishment coalition government has been at pains to stress it has no interest in exiting the zone.

Contagion would return only if the euro's future is in danger, said Arnaud-Guilhem Lamy, a portfolio manager at BNP Paribas Asset Management.

Iain Stealey, a fixed income portfolio manager at JPMorgan Asset Management, said the fund he oversees has been buying Spanish government debt through the recent Italian ruckus.

"If you're a fund manager and you don't want to own Italy, Spain and Portugal are the only realistic alternatives," he told Reuters.

"Spain has been the poster child for European growth in recent years - if you think about 2012, where unemployment rates were, how

strong concerns were over the banking system in the periphery, we are in a very different place now," he said.

Spain has led the eurozone economic recovery in 2016 and 2017, growing more than 3 percent a year and earning multiple credit ratings upgrades to Baa1 from Moody's and A- from both S&P Global and Fitch. Portugal, not long ago rated junk by all three major agencies, last week was restored to full investment-grade status after a Moody's upgrade. Its economy grew 2.7 percent in 2017, outperforming the eurozone.

Both countries have benefited from their share of the ECB's 2.6 trillion-euro (\$3 trillion) stimulus program. But even countries partly or fully outside the ECB program have felt its effect. Cyprus recorded stellar growth of 3.9 percent last year and Greece exited its bailout program in August. This week, Greece said it achieved a primary budget surplus well above target for the year so far.

"The type of investors invested in Spain and Portugal is not the same as it was before," said BBVA rates trading strategist Jaime Costero Denche. "We have seen new investors such as Scandinavian accounts and Middle East and Asian investors who didn't want to buy peripheral debt in the past."

A major factor limiting contagion from Italy is that Portuguese and Spanish banks are in bet-



NUSA DUA: European Commissioner for Economic Affairs Pierre Moscovici talks to AFP on the sidelines of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank annual meetings in Nusa Dua on Indonesia's resort island of Bali. —AFP

ter shape, thanks to authorities' success in tackling bad loans—a road Italy embarked on only recently. Portuguese banks have mostly returned to profit. In June, Moody's lifted its outlook for Spain's banking system to positive. It cited robust economic growth and improved asset quality after disposals of troubled assets. —Reuters

Germany should push Weidmann as ECB chief, says Nowotny

VIENNA: Germany should push Bundesbank chief Jens Weidmann as a successor to European Central Bank President Mario Draghi and the government is making a grave mistake in not pushing harder, ECB policymaker Ewald Nowotny said yesterday.

Draghi's job will become available at the end of next October. By that time Nowotny - the head of the Austrian National Bank and a moderate policy hawk who has often sided with Weidmann - will have left his post too. "I would have welcomed a candidacy of Weidmann very much," Nowotny told the Oberoesterreichische Nachrichten newspaper. "I personally believe it is a grave political mistake by (German Chancellor) Angela Merkel that she is no longer pursuing Weidmann's candidacy further."

Bank of France Governor Francois Villeroy de Galhau is now considered the frontrunner in the race but no real discussion is likely until after the European Parlia-

ment elections next spring, when the ECB job is expected to be decided in a package that also includes the heads of the EU Commission and Council.

Despite the political sensitivity of the race, Weidmann has been outspoken in criticising the fiscal plans of Italy, the euro zone's third biggest economy. He said on Wednesday that monetary policy normalization will place an increasing burden on highly indebted countries so there is no place for leniency with Rome on European fiscal rules.

His repeated spats with Italy over fiscal prudence has irritated political circles in Rome, making opposition to Weidmann's candidacy almost certain.

Weidmann, a top notch economist, has also come under fire for his persistent opposition to the ECB's 2.6 trillion euro asset purchase program.

Unveiled during a period of crisis, the program is credited with reviving growth, and some argue that Weidmann would struggle to unite the Governing Council after having opposed its hallmark policy program for so long. "It would be good if someone from the biggest economy in the euro area stood at the top of the ECB," Nowotny told the paper, adding that an ECB president needs political sensitivity and practical experience as well as being a good economist. —Reuters

Ice cream boosts Unilever sales despite HQ meltdown

THE HAGUE: Unilever saw underlying sales accelerate due partly to heatwave-driven ice cream consumption, the Anglo-Dutch consumer giant said yesterday, as it tries to recover from axing a move of its headquarters.

The firm behind Ben and Jerry's and Magnum as well as household brands like Knorr and Dove said however that third-quarter turnover however dropped 4.8 percent to 12.5 billion euros (\$14.4 billion) due mainly to currency exchange issues.

The huge multinational made no mention in its statement of the decision on October 5 to ditch a plan to move its main corporate base from London to Rotterdam after a shareholder revolt.

"Growth accelerated in the third quarter across all divisions," said chief executive Paul Polman, whose own position was called into question by the backtrack on the headquarters shift.

Unilever, which also makes yeast spread Marmite, Persil washing powder and PG Tips tea, said underlying sales growth was 3.8 percent for the three months to October. "We continue to expect underlying sales growth in the 3

percent - 5 percent range, an improvement in underlying operating margin and strong cash flow," Polman added. Modest growth in Europe was "mainly driven by strong ice cream sales that were helped by both innovations and good weather in Northern Europe", particularly in Germany and the Netherlands, Unilever said.

Much of Europe basked in a heatwave over the northern hemisphere summer. Across the world "ice cream delivered strong growth led by innovations including the new Kinder ice cream and the new Magnum Praline variant". In Latin America, sales increased by 10 percent in Brazil after the end of a truckers strike, although the figure strips out Argentina which Unilever said was now experiencing "hyperinflationary" conditions.

Despite the figures, the shadow of the abandoned London-Rotterdam move still hangs over Unilever's chief exec.

Unilever originally unveiled the planned switch in March in a symbolic decision that was largely interpreted by analysts as a blow to post-Brexit Britain. It also followed a failed hostile bid by US rival Kraft Heinz last year, which analysts said played a key role in Unilever's decision as the Netherlands has stronger rules to protect companies against takeovers.

But Unilever faced mounting opposition from key shareholders angry that the plan would have ended its dual stock exchange listing in London and Amsterdam, meaning that many would have had to sell shares in Britain. Unilever said when it announced the decision to ditch the move that it would "consider its next steps" and still believed simplifying the firm's structure would be in its best interests. —AFP

Business

US weekly jobless claims drop; Labor market conditions tighten

Continuing claims decline 13,000 to 1.64 million

WASHINGTON: New applications for US unemployment benefits dropped last week and the number of Americans on jobless rolls fell back to levels last seen in 1973, suggesting a further tightening in labor market conditions. A strong labor market and robust economy likely keep the Federal Reserve on course to increase interest rates again in December. The US central bank raised rates in September for the third time this year and removed the reference to monetary policy remaining "accommodative."

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits decreased 5,000 to a seasonally adjusted 210,000 for the week ended Oct. 13, the Labor Department said yesterday. Claims fell to 202,000 during the week ended Sept. 15, which was the lowest level since November 1969.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast claims slipping to 212,000 in the latest week. The Labor Department said claims for South and North Carolina continued to be affected by Hurricane Florence, which drenched the region in mid-September. Claims for Florida were impacted by Hurricane Michael.

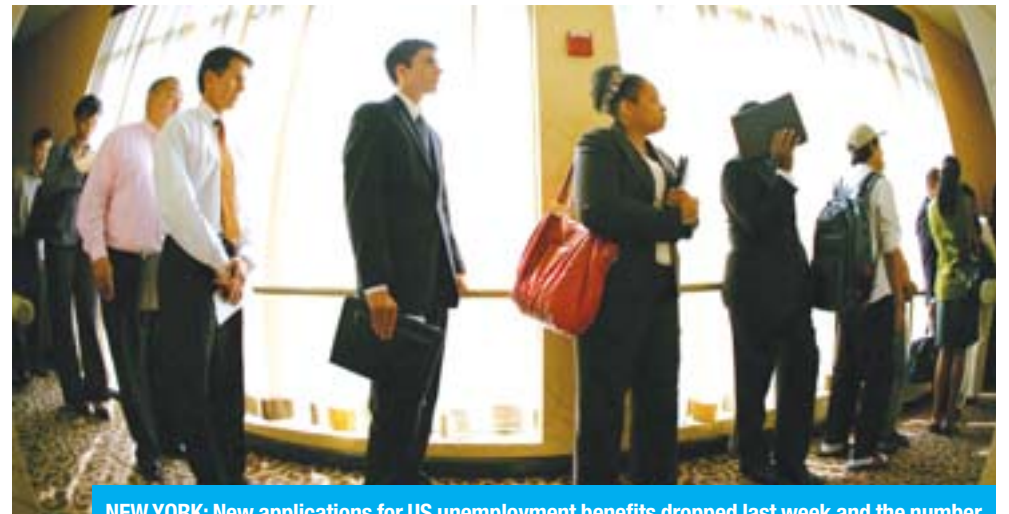
The four-week moving average of initial claims, considered a better measure of labor market trends as it irons out week-to-week volatility, rose 2,000 to 211,750 last week. The claims data

covered the survey period for the nonfarm payrolls component of October's employment report. While the four-week moving average of claims rose 5,750 between the September and October survey periods, that will probably not change expectations for a rebound in job growth this month after Florence depressed restaurant and retail payrolls in September. The economy created 134,000 jobs in September, the fewest in a year. The labor market is viewed as being near or at full employment with the unemployment rate close to a 49-year low of 3.7 percent. There are a record 7.14 million open jobs. Minutes of the Fed's Sept. 25-26 meeting published on Wednesday showed policymakers "generally agreed that (labor market) conditions continued to strengthen."

US financial markets were little moved by the data.

Yesterday's claims report also showed the number of people receiving benefits after an initial week of aid fell 13,000 to 1.64 million for the week ended Oct. 6, the lowest level since August 1973. The four-week moving average of the so-called continuing claims dipped 1,250 to 1.65 million, also the lowest level since August 1973.

A separate survey from the Philadelphia Fed showed its business conditions index for the



NEW YORK: New applications for US unemployment benefits dropped last week and the number of Americans on jobless rolls fell back to levels last seen in 1973, suggesting a further tightening in labor market conditions.

mid-Atlantic region slipped to a reading of 22.2 in October from 22.9 in September amid a drop in new orders. The survey showed higher employment at factories in the region, with more than 30 percent of responding firms saying they

had increased payrolls. The survey's employment index rose 2 points to a reading of 19.5 this month and firms also reported increasing hours for workers. The workweek index jumped to a reading of 20.8 from 14.6 in September. — Reuters

Ericsson turns first profit in two years, shares climb

STOCKHOLM: Shares in Swedish telecoms firm Ericsson shot up by five percent in early trades yesterday after it posted better-than-expected third quarter earnings, turning its first net profit in more than two years. By noon (1000 GMT), the share price was still up by 4.72 percent on the Stockholm stock exchange in an overall market trading 0.6 percent higher.

Ericsson's net profit soared to 2.7 billion kronor (\$301 million, 261 million euros) during the period July-September, compared to a net loss of 3.6 billion a year ago. Analysts had expected a loss of 167 million kronor. "We see improvements across our businesses," chief executive Borje Ekholm said in the report. Once a market leader in the mobile phone industry, Ericsson saw its earnings slump year after year following the meteoric rise of smartphone giants in the United States and Asia. But it has fought on against the odds, adapting to the rapidly shifting market by focusing its attention on research and development of new technologies for telecoms equipment.

The company launched a major 10 billion kronor restructuring drive in July 2017 that has seen 20,500 jobs cut. Ericsson is now finally able to see the light at the end of the tunnel, with good opportunities ahead as operators prepare for the



STOCKHOLM: CEO of Swedish telecom giant Ericsson Borje Ekholm presents the company's third quarter results during a press conference in Stockholm yesterday. — AFP

roll-out of 5G. "There is strong momentum in the global 5G market with lead markets moving forward," said Ekholm, who has headed Ericsson since January 2017. "The global radio access market is recovering from several years of negative growth and our investments in R&D have positioned us well to benefit from this development," he added. Sales during the third quarter rose by 8.9 percent to 53.8 billion. Gross margin, excluding restructuring costs, meanwhile skyrocketed to 36.9 percent, up from 28.5 percent a year ago. Ericsson's networks division, its core operations, saw sales rise by five percent and its gross margin climb to 41.5 percent, up 6.7 points in one year.

Ekholm warned that "more work remains, however, to get all parts of the business to a satisfactory performance level. We remain confident in reaching our long-term target of at least 12 percent operating margin beyond 2020." In the third quarter, Ericsson's operating margin was six percent, compared to -7.4 percent a year ago. — Reuters

Tax bite: Africans fear trend towards levies on data, services

KAMPALA/JOHANNESBURG: The brisk business Julius Kirya did from his cash transfer kiosk in the Ugandan capital has slowed right down with a new tax on mobile money. Many of his customers have returned to sending banknotes by hand, in some cases via motorbike taxi.

How to tax digital revenues, from fintech to social media, is a puzzle authorities around the world are working on. A solution catching on in Africa - levies on usage - has obvious appeal to indebted governments but a big impact on people like Kirya, who saw the tech revolution as a way out of poverty. "I had a dream of steadily growing to middle income status," he said from his tiny cubicle attached to a Kampala petrol station, one of thousands across the country that serve the millions of people without access to bank accounts.

He was making three times the average salary before the tax, was introduced in July. Now his income has slid to half that. "With this tax I have no chance," he said.

It is not just Kirya and his customers who are losing out. Mobile communications have revolutionized life in Africa where telecom company reports show calls and texts are giving way to data services like Facebook-owned WhatsApp, Skype, Viber and WeChat owned by China's Tencent. The telecom companies say taxes on mobile payments introduced by

a string of countries hurt their revenues and threaten much-needed investment in infrastructure. Levies on social media usage brought in by Uganda and Benin and a proposed tax on internet calls in Zambia have taken the shine off a fast-growing market and have all sparked protests.

Officials say the taxes are needed to preserve state revenues as technologies evolve.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), which has long pressed African states to improve tax collection, urges caution. "You want to make sure you don't introduce taxes that are stifling innovation and curtailing activity in the sector," Abebe Selassie, the IMF's top official for Africa, told Reuters this month. "So striking that balance will be important."

The communications sector is evolving fast in Africa, where the convenience and lower communication costs of "over-the-top" (OTT) services via the internet have particular appeal. Data revenues in most African markets are increasing at a much faster rate than SMS and voice revenues are declining, a Reuters analysis of telecom company finances showed. Kenya's Safaricom - part owned by Vodafone - reported its customer base jumped nearly 12 percent last year but voice revenues grew just 2.9 percent while SMS revenues shrank nearly 4 percent and data revenue rose 38.5 percent. — Reuters

Red Sox push World champions Astros to brink of elimination

Red Sox took a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven series

LOS ANGELES: The Boston Red Sox are one win away from a World Series berth after a wild 8-6 victory over the reigning champion Houston Astros Wednesday in the American League Championship Series. The Red Sox took a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven series, pushing last season's winners to the brink of elimination in Houston in a game marked by a controversial denial of what might have been an Astros homer and yet another monster homer from Boston's Jackie Bradley Jr.

Boston seized the early initiative in the see-saw battle with two runs in the top of the first inning. In the bottom of the frame, Houston's Jose Altuve belted what looked to be a game-tying two-run homer to right field off Red Sox starting pitcher Rick Porcello. Outfielder Mookie Betts leapt at the wall but officials ruled that fans in the stands reached out and interfered with the play — a ruling that was upheld on review. Astros manager AJ Hinch clearly thought it was a dubious call, but insisted it wasn't the key to Houston's defeat.

"It's convenient to think of it that way, but there was a lot of game left," Hinch said. "There was a lot of action in that game. I'm not going to go there. It would have been nice to tie the game there, but it's not the difference." Betts thought the call was spot-on, and he'd have made the catch if not for interference from the fan. "He got it right," Betts said. "I thought it was going in my glove for sure." The Red Sox trailed 4-5 after a string of lead changes heading into the sixth when Bradley struck again for Boston, lasering a two-out, first-pitch changeup from Houston pitcher Josh James

into the right field seats for a two-run homer that put Boston up 6-5.

The Red Sox wouldn't trail again, adding runs in the seventh and eighth before the Astros notched their sixth in the bottom of the eighth. Houston threatened in the ninth, but Red Sox left fielder Andrew Benintendi made a diving catch with the bases loaded for the final out. Game five is in Houston, where the Astros send ace Justin Verlander to the mound in a bid to keep their season alive. The winner of the series will face either the Los Angeles Dodgers or Milwaukee Brewers in Major League Baseball's championship showcase.

'Huge' Dodgers victory

The Dodgers, beaten in seven games by the Astros in last year's World Series, were one win away from a return trip after a 5-2 victory over the Brewers in Los Angeles on Wednesday. Dodgers ace Clayton Kershaw, who endured the shortest post-season outing of his career Los Angeles' game one loss at Milwaukee last week, bounced back with seven stellar innings. He gave up one run on three hits, striking out nine and walking two and said heading back to Milwaukee with a 3-2 lead in the National League Championship Series was "huge".

"It's a tough place to play," he said of the Brewers' roofed stadium. "It's a great team. And it's been a battle every single game we've played them so far, and we don't expect anything different when we go back." Kershaw was in trouble in the third,



when the Brewers scored their only run, but with the bases loaded he struck out Jesus Aguilar in an eight pitch at bat to end the frame and retired the next 12 batters he faced. "Anytime you can work yourself out of situations like that that's going to make or break the game," Kershaw said. The Dodgers, who led the National League with 235

homers, drove in all but one of their runs with singles. After getting their first hit in the fourth inning, the Dodgers put up their first run in the fifth, when Chris Taylor got things rolling with a leadoff single, reached second on a throwing error and stole third. He scored on a base hit by Austin Barnes past a drawn-in outfield. — AFP

Afghan war veterans prepare for battle at Invictus Games

KABUL: Discarding their prosthetic legs and wheelchairs, Afghan war veterans disfigured by Taleban bombs and bullets begin pumping iron in preparation for their next battle: the Invictus Games. The eight-member Afghan team meets at a military gym in Kabul to train for the international sports championship for wounded, disabled and sick military personnel and veterans. The event — the brainchild of Prince Harry who will attend the fourth edition in Sydney starting Saturday — brings together 500 competitors from 18 countries.

"In Afghanistan they call you a hero so long as you have a rifle on your shoulder. As soon as you are wounded, they take you to the military hospital and say 'goodbye'," said Sohail Naseri, whose legs were blown off by a landmine in the southern province of Helmand in 2012. In that moment, the 31-year-old said, he became an "old man". Naseri and his team mates will compete in

three of the 11 medal sports on offer — sitting volleyball, powerlifting and indoor rowing.

At a recent training session, double amputee Abdul Hanan Fehrdus lay on a bench as he pressed more than 55 kilograms to build strength for the powerlifting event. A soldier held down his leg stumps to prevent him falling on the floor. "Each of us dreams of bringing back a medal from Sydney," Fehrdus said. "I do not want a bronze or silver medal, but a gold medal for my country."

Daily struggle

Fehrdus said he wallowed in despair for months after losing his legs during a mine clearance operation in the northern province of Kunduz in 2012. Sport helped him to recover. As well as winning medals in Sydney, Fehrdus hopes to meet Harry, who is in Australia as part of a Pacific trip with his expectant wife Meghan. Fehrdus "greatly respects" the British royal for serving two tours of duty in Afghanistan during his decade in the British army.

"I have prepared an Afghan flag that I will give him as a gift," he said. Tens of thousands of Afghan soldiers have been killed or maimed since the bloody conflict began in 2001 with the US-led invasion that toppled the Taleban regime. Despite the camaraderie from training for the Invictus Games, life is a daily struggle for the veterans as they try to support their families — and retain their dignity. —AFP

Former USA Gymnastics president arrested for alleged tampering

LOS ANGELES: President Steve Penny, who resigned from his post last year, was arrested Wednesday in connection with the Larry Nassar molestation scandal, US media reported. The arrest came after Penny was indicted three weeks ago by a grand jury on felony charges of allegedly tampering with evidence in the sexual assault investigation of former gymnastics doctor Nassar, the Huntsville Item newspaper reported. Penny was arrested by a police task force in Gatlinburg, Tennessee and is awaiting extradition to Texas, prosecutors said in a press release Wednesday night.

According to the indictment, Penny is alleged to have tampered with evidence during the investigation of Nassar by ordering the removal of documents from the Karolyi Ranch in Walker County, Texas that were related to the activities of Nassar at the ranch. The indictment alleges the removal of the documents was done to destroy or hide the documents and impair the investigation. "During the in-

vestigation by the Texas Rangers and the Walker County Sheriff's Office, several sources reported that Penny ordered the removal of the documents from the ranch after learning that an investigation was underway," the Item quoted Walker County district attorney David Weeks saying.

The documents in question were from the Karolyi Ranch, the base for the gold-medal winning US Olympic teams. It is also the location where several athletes say Nassar molested them. In February, Nassar was sentenced to 40 to 175 years in prison after he pled guilty to molesting 10 girls. Penny could be facing between two to 10 years in jail on a third degree felony charge. "Deputy US Marshals and task force officers from the Southern District of Texas and the Eastern District Tennessee worked tirelessly to locate Penny," US Marshal for the Eastern District of Tennessee David Jolley said in a news release. "Good police work ensured that Penny was swiftly and safely apprehended. —AFP

‘A league of our own’: T20 tournament adds glamour to Afghanistan cricket

‘It’s a very proud moment for the entire nation’

SHARJAH: Afghanistan defied decades of conflict to join cricket’s elite club of Test nations, but now they have added a dash of glamour with their inaugural Twenty20 league in the United Arab Emirates. Ten years after India’s IPL changed the face of cricket with music, fireworks and cheerleaders, the Afghanistan Premier League has joined the growing list of T20 tournaments worldwide.

The pyrotechnics weren’t long coming, as 20-year-old Hazratullah Zazai’s extraordinary six sixes in one over, part of a record-equaling 12-ball half-century, immediately drew attention from around the globe. “It’s a very proud moment for the entire nation to have a league of our own which gives our players chance to showcase their talent and rub the shoulders with some foreign stars,” Afghanistan Cricket Board chief executive Shafiq Stanikzai told AFP.

Despite its turbulent history, with most players learning cricket in refugee camps in Pakistan, Afghanistan rose to become one of only 12 Test nations earlier this year. Stanikzai knows the dangers of Afghan cricket more than most: his playing career was flourishing until it was cut short by a Taliban bullet in his right shoulder. In September last year, a suicide attack outside Kabul’s main cricket stadium left three people dead, while eight were killed and several injured in an attack at a cricket match in Jalalabad.

Such conditions made it impossible to hold

the APL in Afghanistan, but Stanikzai said: “I am sure this league, like in other countries, will further lift standards of our players and our overall cricket.” He added: “There were challenges aplenty, they still exist but we have overcome those, received tremendous support from our government, the people of Afghanistan and from the International Cricket Council.”

‘Unity and love’

West Indies big-hitter Chris Gayle and India’s Yuvraj Singh are among the headliners, along with New Zealand’s Brendon McCullum and Shahid Afridi of Pakistan. But the APL also provides a stage for Afghanistan’s own stars including Rashid Khan, teenage spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman and all-rounder Mohammad Nabi, who all featured in this year’s IPL. Rashid, 20, is the world’s top-ranked bowler for T20 internationals, and this year he became the fastest player to reach 100 ODI wickets, in 44 games. “Now is the time for the youngsters from Afghanistan to come forward and show their ability, like players have done in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Australia,” said Rashid.

Rashid took 10 wickets at last month’s Asia Cup in UAE, making him the joint most successful bowler as Afghanistan upset Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and tied a match with India, the tournament’s eventual winners. The performances suggest that Afghanistan could prove a handful



SHARJAH: This picture taken on October 13, 2018 shows Paktia Panthers' batsman Mohammad Yamin Ahmadzai bowling during the Afghanistan Premier League T20 cricket match between the Balkh Legends and the Paktia Panthers at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium. —AFP

at next year’s one-day World Cup in England and Wales, after they made their debut in the competition in 2015. “We don’t believe in fragmenta-

tion,” said Stanikzai. “We want to send a message of unity and love and cricket has been a tool through which we send this message.” — AFP

Pakistan’s Kaneria admits fixing guilt at last: Report

LONDON: Pakistan’s Danish Kaneria has finally admitted his role in a fixing scandal that led to the imprisonment of former Essex team-mate Mervyn Westfield after six years of denials, Britain’s Daily Mail reported late Wednesday.

Kaneria, who was given a life ban by English cricket chiefs that effectively applied worldwide, said in an interview for an Al Jazeera television documentary quoted by the Mail: “My name is Danish Kaneria and I admit that I was guilty of the two charges brought against me by the England and Wales Cricket Board in 2012.” Leg-spinner Kaneria, who insisted he was repentant as he called for his life ban to be overturned, added: “I want to apologise to Mervyn Westfield, my Essex team-mates, my Essex cricket club, my Essex cricket fans. I say sorry to Pakistan.”

Westfield spent two months at Belmarsh prison in south-east London after pleading guilty to accepting £6,000 (\$7,862) from an illegal bookmaker, Anu Bhatt, to concede 12 runs in his first over of an English county 40-over game against Durham in 2009. He conceded only 10, but still took the money. Kaneria was the “middle-man” in the scam, having introduced Westfield to Bhatt, but avoided criminal charges when English legal authorities decided they lacked the evidence for a con-

viction. Now 37, Kaneria remains Pakistan’s leading spinner with 261 Test wickets.

‘Forgiveness’

He last played for Pakistan in the Trent Bridge Test of 2010, and has not appeared in any first-class game since March 2012, with all major boards upholding the ECB ban under International Cricket Council guidance. “I want to ask people’s forgiveness,” said Kaneria. “Cricket has given me so much in my life and I want to give something back.” If the ECB and ICC and other bodies would give me a second chance I can help to educate young people in cricket, teach them that if you do wrong you are finished like me.”

Kaneria said the fear of embarrassing his father, who died in 2013 and had been suffering from cancer, explained part of the reason behind his repeated denials of wrongdoing. “His health was getting worse and worse,” he recalled. “I didn’t have the courage to face him and tell him that I was wrong. He was a very, very proud guy. Very, very proud of me and what I did, representing Pakistan, representing my country. “I want to apologize to my father, who has always been a role model for me.”

Meanwhile Westfield told the Mail he accepted Kaneria’s apology, saying: “This whole chapter of spot-fixing changed my life, but I have never blamed anyone for the terrible mistake I made. “However, opening up about my wrongdoing and telling the truth allowed me to move on,” added Westfield, now 30, who was banned from professional cricket for five years after being released from jail but has since played club and minor county matches. “I hope that Danish finds peace and closure by doing this, and I wish him all the best for the future.” — AFP

Masters champ Willett in early hunt in S Korea

JEJU: Former Masters champion Danny Willett got into the hunt early at the CJ Cup in South Korea yesterday. The Englishman has not won a tournament since his shock 2016 success at Augusta National, but was joint second with a three-under 69 in the first round of the US\$9.5 million US PGA tournament. Chez Reavie of the US was in front by one shot after a chilly and blustery day at the Club at Nine Bridges on the tourist island of Jeju, with South Korea’s Kim Si-Woo tied with Willett. Willett hit every fairway and missed just one green, taking 31 putts on his round. “It’s nice to get a score like that on a day where it’s easy to get on the wrong side of the par and kind of let things get to you,” said the 31-year-old. “In these conditions, it’s as good as you can ask for.” During his prolonged dry spell Willett has gone through several coaching and caddie changes. “It’d be nice to get a win but it’s also satisfying working as hard as you can and seeing the results, even just day to day,” he said.

Reavie said he focussed on avoiding errors, with his only blemish a dropped shot at the par-3 14th. “It’s definitely a day where you’re just trying not to make bogeys,” he said. “If you make a couple of birdies, great. But the more pars you can make, the better.” Kim made a double bogey at only the second hole, but recovered with six birdies over the rest of his round, with just one more bogey. Defending champion Justin Thomas — who beat Marc Leishman in a playoff last year — was tied for 33rd and five shots off the lead after a 73.

And US PGA Tour Player of the Year Brooks Koepka — whose wayward tee shot at the Ryder Cup last month left a spectator blinded in one eye — was among eight players on 71. “I hit some good shots but missed a couple of putts early,” said Koepka. “It was a difficult day. Anything under par is a good score out there. I am pleased with it.” — AFP

Sports

DeRozan leads Spurs past Wolves, Pelicans rout Rockets in opener

DALLAS: DeMar DeRozan scored a game-high 28 points in his San Antonio debut, and four of his teammates scored in double figures as the host Spurs held off the Minnesota Timberwolves 112-108 Wednesday in one of 11 of the night's season openers. DeRozan, acquired in the offseason trade that sent Kawhi Leonard to Toronto, scored the final four points of the game after Minnesota rallied for a 108-108 tie on Jimmy Butler's 3-pointer in the final minute.

LaMarcus Aldridge added 21 points and a game-high 19 rebounds for the Spurs, who also received 18 points from Rudy Gay. Butler, who was away from the team for much of the preseason after requesting a trade, was in the starting lineup and scored 23 points and grabbed seven rebounds in 31 minutes. Jeff Teague led the Timberwolves with 27 points, and Andrew Wiggins added 20.

Pelicans 131, Rockets 112

Anthony Davis had 32 points and 16 rebounds, and Elfrid Payton had a triple-double as retooled New Orleans routed host Houston. Payton, one of two key offseason acquisitions, had 10 points, 10 assists and 10 rebounds, and the other key pick-up, forward Julius Randle, had 25 points off the bench. Nikola Mirotic added 30 points, including 6 of 8 3-pointers, and 10 rebounds. E'Twaun Moore scored 21 points and Jrue Holiday had 10. Eric Gordon came off the bench to lead the Houston with 21 points, and PJ Tucker and Chris Paul had 19 points each. James Harden (18 points, 10 assists) fell a rebound shy of a triple-double. Carmelo Anthony finished with nine points off the bench in his Houston debut.

Raptors 116, Cavaliers 104

Kawhi Leonard scored 24 points and grabbed 12 rebounds in his Toronto debut in defeating visiting Cleveland. Kyle Lowry had 27 points and eight assists for the Raptors. Fred VanVleet added 14 points, Pascal Siakam had 13 points and Danny Green chipped in with 11. Jonas Valanciunas grabbed 12 rebounds. Leonard and Green were acquired by Toronto from the Spurs in a July trade. Kevin Love scored 21 points and added seven rebounds for the Cavaliers, and Cedi Osman had 17 points and 10 rebounds. George Hill and Jordan Clarkson each added 15 points, and Rodney Hood scored 12.

Bucks 113, Hornets 112

Giannis Antetokounmpo came within two assists of a triple-double as Milwaukee, in Mike Budenholzer's first game as coach, held on to defeat host Charlotte,

with James Borrego debuting as its coach. Antetokounmpo, who finished with 25 points, 18 rebounds and eight assists, hit two free throws with 23.7 seconds remaining to give the Bucks the lead for good at 113-112. The Bucks then held on as Charlotte's Kemba Walker missed a short jumper and Nicolas Batum missed a 3-point attempt at the buzzer. The Bucks led by as many as 20 on several occasions in the first half but had to come from behind in the final minute after Walker, who scored 41 points, rallied the Hornets. He hit two free throws with 36.3 seconds left for a 112-111 Charlotte lead.

Knicks 126, Hawks 107

Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 16 of his game-high 31 points during host New York's 49-point second quarter in an easy win over Atlanta. Hardaway led a whopping seven players in double figures for the Knicks. Enes Kanter (16 points, 11 rebounds) and Noah Vonleh (12 points, 10 rebounds) had double-doubles while Trey Burke, Mario Hezonja and Allonzo Trier had 15 points each. Rookie first-round pick Kevin Knox added 10 points on 4-for-16 shooting in his NBA debut. Taurean Prince led the Hawks with 21 points, Kent Bazemore and rookie Trae Young added 14 points apiece and 41-year-old Vince Carter, the oldest player in the NBA, chipped in 12 points. Jeremy Lin, the one-time Knicks phenom, scored eight points in his return to Madison Square Garden.

Pistons 103, Nets 100

Andre Drummond totaled 24 points, 20 rebounds and came up with a significant defensive play in the final seconds as Detroit held off visiting Brooklyn to make a winner of new coach Dwane Casey. Drummond produced his 52nd career 20-20 game, but it was his defense that gave the Pistons a win in Casey's debut with the team. With 15 seconds to play, the Pistons held a 101-100 lead and the Nets had a chance to go ahead, but Drummond forced a turnover. After Drummond's defensive stand, Reggie Jackson hit two free throws with 6.2 seconds left. The Nets' Joe Harris missed a well-contested 3-pointer from the top of the key, and Blake Griffin secured the rebound. Griffin led the Pistons with 26 points while adding eight rebounds and six assists, while Brooklyn's Caris LeVert led all scorers with 27.

Pacers 111, Grizzlies 83

Indiana held Memphis to 18 points in the first 17 minutes of its season, running off to a big lead and coasting to victory in Indianapolis. Bojan Bogdanovic hit his first six shots, including a pair of 3-pointers, en route to a team-high 19 points, and Victor



HOUSTON: Julius Randle #30 of the New Orleans Pelicans shoots the ball against the Houston Rockets during a game on October 17, 2018 at Toyota Center. —AFP

Oladipo added 16 as the Pacers blew out a Grizzlies team they had struggled to sweep in the two-game season series last year. Despite missing nine of his 11 shots, Marc Gasol led Memphis with 13 points.

Magic 104, Heat 101

Aaron Gordon had 26 points and 16 rebounds, leading host Orlando past Miami. With the Heat trailing by one point and just 2.3 seconds left, Miami's Josh Richardson stepped out of bounds while trying to make a baseline drive, allowing Orlando to hold on for the win. Gordon made 9 of 18 shots from the floor, including 4 of 5 from 3-point range. Magic backup center Mohamed Bamba, the sixth player selected in the 2018 NBA Draft, had 13 points, seven rebounds and two blocks in his league debut.

Jazz 123, Kings 117

Donovan Mitchell scored 24 points while Joe Ingles added 22 points on 9-of-12 shooting, lifting Utah to a victory at Sacramento. Rudy Gobert added 19 points, 15 rebounds and three blocks for the Jazz. Derrick Favors chipped in 18 points and nine rebounds. Utah overcame a 16-point first-half deficit behind 39 bench points — 13 apiece for Alec Burks, Dante Exum and Jae Crowder — and 48.1 percent shooting from beyond the 3-point arc. Willie Cauley-Stein scored 23 points to lead the Kings. De'Aaron Fox added 21

points, Buddy Hield chipped in 19, and Nemanja Bjelica had 18.

Suns 121, Mavericks 100

Devin Booker poured in 19 of his game-high 35 points during the crucial fourth quarter, including 14 in a row, as host Phoenix staved off Dallas. The new-look Suns trailed just once in the game, 2-0. Phoenix's Deandre Ayton started his NBA career with a double-double, notching 18 points, on 8-of-11 shooting, and 10 rebounds while adding six assists and a steal. Free agent signee Trevor Ariza scored 21 points and drained five 3-pointers as the Suns hit 19 of 34 from beyond the arc. Dallas, just 10 of 33 from behind the arc, was led by reserve forward Dwight Powell's 16 points. His eight fourth-quarter points finally sparked the Mavs, who trailed 99-94 with five minutes to play before getting outscored 22-6.

Nuggets 107, Clippers 98

Nikola Jokic scored 21 points, including a tiebreaking put-back with 1:24 left, and Denver rallied to win at Los Angeles. Gary Harris had 20 points, and Will Barton scored 19 for the Nuggets, who scored eight straight points in the final 90 seconds to pull away for the victory. Tobias Harris led the Clippers with 19 points and 10 rebounds, Boban Marjanovic scored 18 points, and Danilo Gallinari finished with 16 points before fouling out. —Reuters

Sports

Hamilton poised to join Schumacher, Juan Fangio as five-time champion

A hot favorite to win again and wrap up the title fight

AUSTIN: Lewis Hamilton stands on the verge of history this week as he needs to out-score Sebastian Vettel by eight points at the United States Grand Prix to become only the third five-time Formula One world champion. If he does, the 33-year-old Briton will join Juan Manuel Fangio, champion in 1951, 1954, 1955, 1956 and 1957 and Michael Schumacher, the title-winner in 1994 and 1995 who delivered five more for Ferrari from 2000 to 2004, in an exclusive hall of sporting fame.

Having won five of the previous six American races held at Austin's Circuit of the Americas, in Texas, Hamilton is a hot favorite to win again and wrap up the title fight, but he is distancing himself from that narrative. Instead, despite luxuriating in a 67-point lead after a streak of six wins in seven outings, including the last four in succession, the Mercedes racer has done his utmost to warn against any sign of complacency.

"That part is easy for me because I'm very, very strict on not being complacent with our position and still there are 100 points available," he said. "I know we still have to continue doing the job we're doing now right until the last flag. That's the goal — knowing from past experience that so much can happen. "I'll focus on amendments I'd like them to focus on making for next year's car, but also how we can also continue to extract from this car because there's still areas we can improve." Having tasted title defeats in the past, notably in his maiden F1 season in 2007

and when former Mercedes team-mate Nico Rosberg beat him in 2016, Hamilton can draw on bitter experience to drive himself toward his objectives. "It's one thing dreaming it and one thing executing it," he said. "We knew we would have a tough battle this year — you saw the ups and downs at the beginning of the season.

'Class act'

"It was such an unknown. I always do plan on coming back stronger in the second half of the season and the preparations I went through in my break were spot-on — and allowed me to perform better." Hamilton can afford to be conservative in his racing and still take the title if Vettel and Ferrari are unable to beat him or win the race. But if he wins, the German must finish second to keep his hopes alive, albeit only mathematically. Third behind a victorious Hamilton would not be enough.

Aware that it was Kimi Raikkonen, in a Ferrari, who took the 2007 title when Hamilton lost momentum in the final races, and that the only other winner in Austin has been Vettel, with Red Bull in 2013, Hamilton himself knows he cannot relax. "There's still 100 points available and anything can happen," he said, ignoring the siren call of his easy enjoyment of America, where he feels so much at home as he showed while fulfilling media duties in New York.

That focus and tenacity are among the qualities that his Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff



SUZUKA: Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton gets inside his car during a practice session for the Formula One Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka. — AFP

highlighted when he described him a "class act" and a driver who is "more complete than ever before". Wolff also pointed out that Hamilton's level of performance was challenging the entire team to perform at higher levels. He added that this title scrap is "far from over" and that past

results in Austin will "have no impact" this weekend. "Everyone knows that we cannot take anything for granted, so we will be as diligent as ever, keep our heads down and work hard to get a good result in Texas," said Wolff, adding that Ferrari will push until the final corner. — AFP

'Third-choice' Cipriani overlooked by England

TWICKENHAM: Danny Cipriani was labeled England's "third-choice fly-half" by coach Eddie Jones as he explained why he had left the in-form playmaker out of his squad for the November internationals at Twickenham. Cipriani has impressed for Gloucester this season, and was named Premiership player of the month for September.

But that was not enough to persuade Jones to include him in a 36-man squad announced yesterday for next month's home Tests against South Africa, New Zealand, 2019 World Cup hosts Japan and Australia. Despite being England's starting No 10 in their most recent game against South Africa in June and producing an excellent opening to the season at his new club, Jones left him out of an initial training squad and the Australian stuck with his decision yesterday.

'Tough on Danny'

Instead George Ford and Owen Farrell, who can also play at inside centre, are England's preferred fly-halves. Farrell has also been named as a co-captain alongside regular

skipper Dylan Hartley. "We've got two good 10s there," Jones told a Twickenham news conference. "It's tough on Danny. He's our third-choice at the moment but George and Owen are our first-two choices." "I've had discussions with him (Cipriani). He's worked on some areas...but there are areas he (still) needs to work on," added Jones without elaborating on what those areas were.

As for splitting the captaincy, former Australia and Japan coach Jones said: "I think to me it almost became a no-brainer. "Having watched Dylan captain the side for so many tests and then watching Owen in South Africa, the combination of those two together is just a great fit. "Whatever team I've coached where we've had success you've always had two at the top and traditionally they've been called a captain and a vice-captain, but I see the role as being co-captains. "Dylan will handle certain things on the field, Owen will handle certain things, the things that come natural to him, and then off the field we've got a great combination because Dylan's a bit older, Owen's younger."

'Hold hands'

Jones also said the role of the media in English rugby union had influenced his decision to split the captaincy between Hartley and Farrell. "In England the job of the captain is probably the biggest job in the world in terms of rugby so they can share that responsibility which will help the players in their own preparation," he explained. — AFP

Collapse of Wembley sale 'a blow for grassroots game'

LONDON: The collapse of the proposed deal to sell Wembley stadium has been described as a "huge disappointment" and a missed opportunity by two of the biggest sponsors of grassroots facilities. Fulham owner Shahid Khan had offered the English Football Association £600 million (\$787 million) for the national stadium, as well as letting it keep the Club Wembley hospitality business, worth around £300 million. But the American businessman withdrew his controversial offer on Wednesday.

FA chairman Greg Clarke and chief executive Martin Glenn were both strongly in favour of the deal and wanted to use the money to fix England's dilapidated changing rooms, waterlogged pitches and stretched 3G facilities. They hoped Khan's £600 million could be the catalyst for a total investment in community facilities over the next 20 years of £3.3 billion. But in separate statements, Glenn admitted the proposed sale had been "more divisive than anticipated", while Khan said it had become clear "there is no de-

finitive mandate to sell Wembley". The UK's largest sports charity, the Football Foundation, would have been the vehicle the FA used to pick, manage and fund the projects, as it currently does with the funding it receives from the FA, Premier League and government. "News that Mr Khan has decided to withdraw his offer to buy Wembley should come as a huge disappointment to community footballers everywhere," it said in a statement.

"Football participation in this country is huge. Unfortunately, those who play the game, simply for the love of doing so and for the health benefits, are having to put up with a stock of community football facilities that is in a shameful state. "This would have been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make considerable inroads into probably the most pressing issue facing football in this country."

Nick Bitel, the chairman of Sport England, the government agency that funds grassroots sport, also expressed his disappointment. "We agree with the view that the Wembley Stadium offer was a huge opportunity to boost funding into the development and maintenance of artificial and grass pitches up and down the country," he said. "Now that this deal is off the table, we hope the football family will now consider other ways the much-needed additional funds for grassroots facilities can be generated." Former FA chief executive Mark Palios described the collapse of the sale as a "massive concern" for the grassroots game. — AFP

Sevilla takes aim at stuttering Barcelona in top-of-table clash

Barca are in the midst of their worst league run since 2016

BARCELONA: Sevilla have taken La Liga by storm this season by rising to the top of the table while the usual suspects have floundered and the Andalusians can underline their title ambitions on Saturday when they visit champions Barcelona. Barca are in the midst of their worst league run since 2016, having lost one and drawn three of their last four outings although they remain undefeated at home in any competition in over two years.

Sevilla have not won a league match at the Nou Camp since 2002 but this time they head to Barcelona in the unfamiliar position of being league leaders after winning their last four La Liga outings. During that winning run, they have scored 14 goals and also thrashed Real Madrid 3-0.

Shrewd move

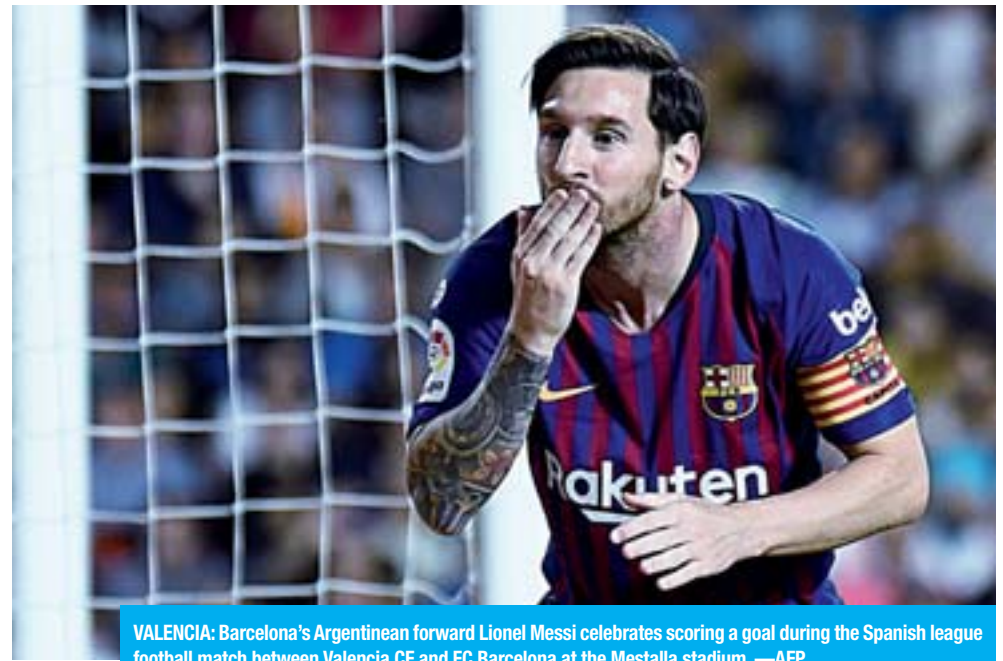
After going through three coaches last season and scraping a European place by clinching seventh, the club hedged their bets on talented Spanish tactician Pablo Machin, who had turned Girona from second division strugglers into an established top flight side. Machin has harnessed a highly attacking side built on the creativity of Argentine veteran Ever Banega and Spaniard Pablo Sarabia, while up front Wissam Ben Yedder and Andre Silva have scored a combined 12 league goals.

The addition of Portuguese forward Andre Silva, on loan from AC Milan, has proved particularly shrewd. Silva was a flop in Italy, scoring two Serie A goals after a 38-million-euro (\$44 million) move from Porto, but he has prospered in Spain. After netting a hat-trick on his league debut against Rayo Vallecano, he lies second in the list of La Liga top scorers this season with seven goals.

Sevilla have only a one-point lead over Barca and midfielder Aleix Vidal is under no illusions about the challenge that awaits his side. "We're going to a very difficult ground where 90 minutes can seem like a very long time if you are not fully concentrated," Vidal told Sevilla's official radio station. "They have players who can kill a game off very quickly even if they are not performing very well in a game or are having a difficult moment in the season."

With strikers Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez both resting in Catalonia during the international break and midfielder Sergi Roberto set to return, Barca will be confident of turning around their recent mediocre form. The Catalans are short staffed in defence, however, with Samuel Umtiti and Thomas Vermaelen both out injured.

Triple European champions Real Madrid are having an even tougher time than Barca, having failed to score in their last four games in all competitions, their longest stretch



VALENCIA: Barcelona's Argentinean forward Lionel Messi celebrates scoring a goal during the Spanish league football match between Valencia CF and FC Barcelona at the Mestalla stadium. —AFP

without scoring since 1985. Even though Real are two points behind Sevilla in fourth, coach Julen Lopetegui is under pressure to

pick up a victory at home to Levante on Saturday. Third-placed Atletico Madrid visit Villarreal. —Reuters

Bayern seek win to stay in touch with leaders

BERLIN: Bayern Munich's trip to VfL Wolfsburg this weekend could represent one of the last chances for under-fire coach Niko Kovac to turn things around for the German champions, who have failed to win any of their previous three Bundesliga matches. A low-key appointment who took over at the start of the campaign, Kovac has so far failed to make an impact, his team currently on a run of four straight games without a win in all competitions, including the Champions League.

The Bavarians, who have won the last six league titles, sit in sixth place on 13 points, four adrift of leaders Borussia Dortmund. They also travel to AEK Athens for a Champions League group game next week. A German Cup winner with Eintracht Frankfurt last season, Kovac has struggled to get the best out of his squad, with club president Uli Hoenes showing concern over their current form when he watched training from his office window on Wednesday.

Kovac has had some good news, though, with Leon Goretzka, Jerome Boateng and Rafinha all back in training following injuries and available for Saturday's match. "I am fit again and I am an option for the coach on Saturday," Brazilian fullback

Rafinha said. His club needs him desperately to plug a porous backline that has let in more than a goal per game, an unusually bad record for the Munich club. But Kovac, under mounting pressure with each failure to win, has received vocal support from colleagues at several Bundesliga clubs, including Wolfsburg.

Now or never

"A couple of weeks ago Bayern were in a class of their own and Kovac was seen as a coach who can walk on water," Wolfsburg sporting director Joerg Schmidtke said. "Three weeks later, Kovac is suddenly not in a position to give his team a plan and Bayern will shut down? That's just not right." However, Schmidtke's team is in just as much need for points to climb up the table and the timing of their meeting against a struggling Bayern side could not be any better.

"When Bayern have a phase like the one, people say 'it is now or never when it comes to beating them,'" Wolfsburg forward Daniel Ginczek said. "Let us not forget they have brutal quality and arguably the best squad in the league. But we will analyse them and exploit their weaknesses. At home, we have earned points against big teams this season so why not against Bayern?" Dortmund, top on 17 points, hope to make it four wins in a row when they travel to bottom side VfB Stuttgart. By far the most exciting team to watch this season, Dortmund have scored 23 goals in seven matches, almost double Bayern's tally, to stake an early claim for this season's title. —Reuters

Sprint king Bolt rejects Malta football offer

SYDNEY: Sprint superstar Usain Bolt has turned down a contract from Maltese champions Valletta and will remain in Australia to pursue his dream of becoming a professional footballer, his agent said yesterday. The eight-time Olympic champion has been on trial with A-League club the Central Coast Mariners since arriving Down Under in August.

He scored two goals in a pre-season friendly last Friday but is yet to be offered a deal, with cashed-up Valletta dangling a two-year trial-free contract to entice him away earlier this week. But Bolt's agent Ricky Simms said he had opted against a move to the Maltese Premier League team, which is backed by a group of investors from the Sanban Group in the United Arab Emirates.

"There is a lot of interest in Usain playing football," he told ESPN. "We regularly receive similar approaches. I can confirm Usain does not wish to pursue this opportunity in Malta." Valletta chief executive Ghasston Slimen told the broadcaster: "We wish Usain Bolt all the best with his football career. The Valletta FC offer is always on the table."

Australia's domestic A-League season starts this weekend, with the Mariners in action on Sunday away to Brisbane Roar. With no con-

tract, Bolt is not eligible for selection. Club chief executive Shaun Mielekamp said this week the Jamaican "will continue his indefinite training period ... until any further notice".

Reports suggest the Mariners are waiting for governing body Football Federation Australia to decide whether it will contribute to a potential Aus\$3 million (US\$2.1 million) offer to the 100m world record holder. Sydney's Daily Telegraph yesterday reported Bolt and Mielekamp sat down for a coffee in the wake of the Malta offer for clarity on his future.

It said the 32-year-old, who regards Australia as a second home, might consider accepting less money if it means locking in a contract. Coach Mike Mulvey was reluctant yesterday to talk about Bolt, saying he was not involved in contract negotiations. "I'm really not interested in it (contract speculation) to tell you the truth," he told reporters. "He's been great among the guys and I was very happy for him last week with the two goals he scored, but we move on."

Mariners captain Matt Simon dismissed suggestions the chronicles of Bolt were distracting the squad ahead of their A-League opener. "He's been here for a couple of months now, so everywhere we go with Usain, everyone's talking about him," Simon said. "We've just been down to business, concentrating on the season and putting into practice what we've been doing at training for the last 12 weeks." Bolt, who retired from athletics last year, has previously tried out with clubs in Germany, South Africa and Norway to no avail. —AFP

Sports

Higuain delighted with Milan despite trading with Ronaldo

'I immediately felt great love from Milan'

MILAN: AC Milan striker Gonzalo Higuain said yesterday he was not bitter despite being "kicked out" by Juventus after superstar Cristiano Ronaldo's arrival last summer. Juventus signed Higuain from Napoli for 90 million euros (\$103 million) in 2016, but after the surprise arrival of Ronaldo from Real Madrid for 100 million euros (\$115m) this summer, the Italian giants could not afford to keep the Argentine.

Higuain — loaned to AC Milan with a 36-million-euro option to buy — said he knew something was afoot when he was left on the bench for the Italian Cup final against AC Milan in May. "That day, I had the feeling inside me that maybe something had broken down. And then they signed Ronaldo," Higuain said in an interview with Gazzetta dello Sport. "The decision to leave was not mine. I gave everything for Juventus. I won several titles, after which Cristiano arrived. "The club wanted to make a leap in quality and they told me that I could not stay and that they were trying to find a solution. The best solution was Milan." But Higuain said that he felt no thoughts of revenge against his old club where he won two Serie A and Italian Cup trophies.

"No, not at all. I only feel affection because they treated me very well," said the 30-year-old. "My teammates and the fans treated me really well, but I never asked to leave. Basically, as everyone says, they kicked me out. "I immediately felt great love from Milan and they convinced me." Higuain — who will take part in his first derby against city rivals Inter Milan on Sunday — has scored four goals for Milan to bring his tally to 115 since his arrival in Serie A in 2013 from Real Madrid.

"Milan have given me something more after a World Cup which wasn't great," he said. "I've found what I was looking for." Higuain joined Napoli in 2013 after six years with Real Madrid where he won three La Liga titles. But he blamed Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis for leaving the club on bad terms. "(Ezequiel) Lavezzi left on bad terms, (Edinson) Cavani the same. With (coach Maurizio) Sarri on the bench he was already contacting another

coach. "Everyone has had problems with him and people insult others. I have nothing negative to say about the Napoli fans, those were three beautiful years. "They loved me and now they hate me. One day I'll say what I think, but right now I can't."

China blacklists former

The former Chinese owner of AC Milan has been added to China's blacklist of untrustworthy individuals over millions of dollars in unpaid debt, according to a local court, which ordered that his passport be confiscated. Li Yonghong emerged from obscurity to purchase one of Europe's most high-profile and decorated football clubs from former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi in 2017. He was one of dozens of wealthy Chinese investing in or simply buying up some of the sport's biggest clubs after President Xi Jinping declared he wanted to turn China into a football superpower. But Li's control of AC Milan was plagued from the start and this summer a creditor took over the club.

The order from the Jingmen City Intermediate People's Court in central China this autumn, made public in October, is the latest indication of Li's declining fortunes. Li was on the hook for 60 million yuan (\$8.7 million) in unpaid debt to a Hubei province investment company, and a 12 million yuan (\$1.7 million) penalty, according to the court. But the court found no assets to seize and repay the creditor as Li had no bank deposits or cars registered in his name.

Instead, Li's name was added to China's national blacklist of untrustworthy individuals, which restricts people from travel by high-speed train and airplane, staying in pricey hotels, or getting a credit card. As a Hong Kong resident, Li's passport was ordered confiscated and he was prohibited from entering or exiting China, though his current whereabouts are unknown. The \$740 million deal for AC Milan faced payment problems, with Li's bid secured only by a last minute, high-interest loan from a US hedge fund. —AFP



MILAN: AC Milan's Turkish midfielder Hakan Calhanoglu gestures during the Italian Serie A football match between AC Milan and Chievo Verona on October 7, 2018 at the Giuseppe Meazza Stadium. —AFP

Rubin Kazan handed one-year UEFA ban for over-spending

PARIS: Russian side Rubin Kazan have been suspended from European competition for one season after breaking UEFA's financial fair play (FFP) regulations, European football's ruling body said yesterday. "The club is

excluded from participating in the next UEFA club competition for which it would otherwise qualify in the next two seasons," UEFA said. The ban will come into effect if Rubin qualify for either the Champions League or Europa League in 2019/20 or 2020/21. Currently fifth in the Russian Premier League, Rubin did not qualify for Europe this season. UEFA's financial fair play rules stipulate that a club cannot spend more than their generated revenue. French league giants Paris Saint-Germain are in the midst of a UEFA FFP probe after spending more than 400m euros in the 2017 summer transfer market to buy Neymar and Kylian Mbappe. —AFP

Spurs' Eriksen fit for West Ham clash

LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur playmaker Christian Eriksen has returned to the squad for tomorrow's Premier League trip to lowly West Ham United after recovering from a stomach injury, manager Mauricio Pochettino said yesterday. The Denmark playmaker has not featured for the club since a 2-1 victory at Brighton & Hove Albion on Sept 22, leading his national team manager Age Hareide to claim the 26-year-old might have a chronic abdominal condition.

"Christian is ready again to compete and to play. We will decide on Saturday if he will play from the beginning or from

the bench and I have nothing to say about the comments from the Denmark coach," Pochettino told a news conference. Tottenham's Belgium international Mousa Dembele has also started training after shaking off a thigh problem while England midfielder Dele Alli, who has been suffering with a hamstring problem, is expected to be back next week.

Pochettino welcomed the return of his key players ahead of an important run of fixtures including games against Dutch side PSV Eindhoven in the Champions League and Premier League champions Manchester City later this month. "It will be a tough month of competition for us. There are a lot of games ahead and it's so important to have nearly all the squad fit to compete and play and to give options to rotate and share the games," Pochettino added.

Tottenham have lost to Inter Milan and Barcelona in the Champions League

but are on a three-match winning run in the Premier League to sit fifth with 18 points from eight matches. Pochettino hailed the club's performances despite a number of England internationals in his squad enduring a gruelling World Cup campaign in Russia earlier this year where they helped the national team to reach the semi-finals.

"I've to remind everyone this is our best start after eight games. The perception changed when we lost to Inter Milan and Barcelona in the Champions League but we have one more point (in the Premier League) than last season," Pochettino said. "I am not happy with that because we are fifth in the table and the ambition is to be on the top but, at the same time, we are realistic and with all the circumstances we suffered in the summer with the World Cup and everything. "But we keep fighting and we are very close to the top of the table. —Reuters



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

SPANISH LEAGUE PRIMERA

Celta de Vigo v Deportivo Alaves 22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

Eintracht Frankfurt v Fortuna Dusseldorf 21:30
beIN SPORTS

FRENCH LEAGUE

Olympique Lyonnais v Nimes Olympique 21:45
beIN SPORTS HD 6

Sport Times

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2018



HOUSTON: James Harden #13 of the Houston Rockets shoots the ball against the New Orleans Pelicans during a game on October 17, 2018 at Toyota Center. — AFP

Pelicans pummel Rockets in opener

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