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Kuwait's students go back to school amid traffic chaos

Reopening of schools adds to Kuwait traffic woes

KUWAIT: Students in Kuwait began a new academic year this week. Ministry of Education announced yesterday that 200 kindergartens, located in six educational areas are ready to receive 43,413 students today. The Ministry of Education has issued a decision to extend the registration period for kindergartens from Sunday until September 20 in all educational areas. On the other hand, 490 schools have received 221,083 students with 97,291 students in elementary schools and 123,792 students in the middle schools.

Start of the new academic year is usually distinguished with congestions on the roads - a situation that also warrants cooperation on part of the motorists. Major roads in the country get besieged by traffic each morning and afternoon. As schools reopen, the roads close to schools are expected to witness the highest congestions as families compete against time as they drop their children at schools, then head to work, and then go back to schools to pick up their children.

Kuwait is home to over 1,925,168 vehicles, of which more than 1,552,738 are privately-owned. Traffic chaos has become so inseparably entwined with the school year that most people have come to accept it as an inevitable part of living in Kuwait. Congestion on our roads have been attributed by various authorities to poor road infrastructure, ongoing constructions, too many vehicles, lack of efficient public transport among others. — Agencies



KUWAIT: Children walk towards their school as Kuwait's students return to class yesterday. (See Page 5)

News in brief

Facebook 'terror' definition

GENEVA: Facebook's definition of what constitutes "terrorism" is "overly broad" and risks leading to censorship and the arbitrary denial of access to its services, a UN rights expert warned yesterday. The UN Special Rapporteur on promoting and protecting human rights while countering terrorism has written to Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg to express concern about the company's efforts to block "terrorists" from using its platform, according to a statement. "The use of overly broad and imprecise definitions as the basis for regulating access to and the use of Facebook's platform may lead to discriminatory implementation, over-censoring and arbitrary denial of access to and use of Facebook's services," Fionnuala Ni Aolain warned. — AFP



DAKAHLIA: Photo shows the new discovery site which is believed to be one of the oldest known villages on the Nile Delta. — AFP

Oldest Nile Delta villages

CAIRO: One of the oldest villages in the Nile Delta has been discovered after archaeologists unearthed artefacts dating to the fifth millennium BC. Egypt's antiquities ministry has said. Remains of the village were uncovered by a French-Egyptian team at Tel Samara, in northeastern Egypt, the ministry said Sunday. Similar structures dating to the period between 4,200 BC and 2,900 BC "have never been found in that region," said Ayman Ashmawy, the ministry's antiquities chief. The only similar discovery has been at the village of Sais, in the Gharbia governorate north of Cairo, Ashmawy added. Excavations of Tel Samara, in the Dakahlia governorate northeast of the capital, uncovered a number of silos containing numerous animal bones and vegetable residue. — AFP

Clashes rage in Libya

TRIPOLI: Clashes raged yesterday on the outskirts of Libya's capital Tripoli trapping residents indoors and hampering rescue efforts, as the UN called for talks after more than a week of deadly violence. Fighting since August 27 between rival militias in the southern suburbs has killed at least 47 people and wounded 129 others, most of them civilians, according to an updated toll put out by the health ministry Sunday night. Following a failed ceasefire on Friday, the United Nations mission to Libya (UNSMIL) invited the "various Libyan parties" to today's talks for an "urgent dialogue on the current security situation in Tripoli". — AFP

Deceased cadet's father complains

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The father of one of the cadets who died during training at the military academy yesterday filed a complaint at the National Assembly Human Rights Committee demanding a probe, a member of the committee said. MP Adel Al-Damkhi said that the committee will summon top officials including the minister and the chief of staff to a meeting to review the circumstances of the death of the cadets.

But he said that the panel's investigation will focus on the humanitarian conditions surrounding the case and similar previous cases as a fully-fledged investigation is being carried out by a government committee. Two cadets have died

during training allegedly under harsh training conditions that included making the cadets train under the scorching heat of the sun for hours. The incident also resulted in several injuries including one in critical condition. MPs have called for a stringent investigation into the incident and similar previous cases while the Defense Ministry has suspended 11 senior officers until the outcome of the investigation.

In another development, Damkhi said that around 26 MPs have reached a provisional agreement on a draft law calling for a general amnesty for a number of opposition MPs and activists who were handed jail sentences for storming the National Assembly building during a protest in late 2011. Opposition MPs have been pressing to pass the law as soon as possible to allow two lawmakers Jamaan Al-Harbash and Waleed Al-Tabtabai to retain their seats in the Assembly. The two in addition to several former MPs and activists are outside of Kuwait waiting for the amnesty legislation to be approved or if the Amir scraps the sentences.

Opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri meanwhile, sent a series of questions to the Interior and Foreign ministers about an alleged plot on the life of Assembly Speaker Marzuouq Al-Ghanem. Muwaizri said that on August 26, Ghanem told reporters in the Assembly about a meeting that took place at an apartment in London by unnamed Kuwaitis that discussed a plot against the Speaker. The lawmaker added that three days later, a Kuwaiti electronic news website called Derwaza claimed that the London meeting discussed a plot against the life of the Speaker.

Muwaizri asked the Interior Minister if the ministry was approached by Ghanem with regards to the alleged plot or if the ministry gathered information about the sensitive issue. He demanded details about the allegations and asked if the Ministry has informed the Foreign Ministry about the case. Muwaizri said if the Ministry did not take any move regarding the allegations he wanted to know why since the issue is very serious.

India builds the world's biggest statue

SARDAR SAROVAR DAM, India: The world's biggest statue is rising in a remote corner of India to honor an independence hero but it could quickly be outdone by a monument to a Hindu warrior king in the sea off Mumbai. In a burst of nationalist fervor, around one billion dollars is being spent on the two giant effigies, each more than twice as tall as the Statue of Liberty. A 182-metre-high tribute to independence icon Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in Gujarat state will be the first to dwarf the Spring Temple Buddha in China, currently the world's biggest statue at 128 meters in height.

Pick-axes are also swinging for a 212-metre-high likeness of 17th-century king Chhatrapati Shivaji, resplendent on a horse and brandishing a sword, which should dominate the Mumbai shoreline from 2021. An army of 2,500 workers - including several hundred Chinese laborers - is toiling around the clock to put 5,000 squares of bronze cladding on the figure of Patel so it can be ready for inauguration on October 31 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The 29.9-billion-rupee (\$430-million) "Statue of Unity" overlooking the isolated Sardar Sarovar Dam is a pet project of Modi. He has predicted it will attract "hordes" of tourists, as the Statue of Liberty does in New York. Visitors will be able to access a viewing gallery 153 meters up - about chest height on the huge standing figure. But they will have to travel 250 kilometers from the state's main city of Allahabad to get there.

Continued on Page 24



SARDAR SAROVAR DAM: Photo shows the under-construction 'Statue Of Unity' - a monument dedicated to Indian independence leader Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, overlooking the Sardar Sarovar Dam near Vadodara in India's western Gujarat state. — AFP

Raging fire rips through prized Brazil museum

RIO DE JANEIRO: A massive fire yesterday ripped through Rio de Janeiro's treasured National Museum, one of Brazil's oldest, in what the nation's president said was a "tragic" loss of knowledge and heritage. The majestic edifice stood engulfed in flames as plumes of smoke shot into the night sky, while firefighters battled to control the blaze that erupted around 2230 GMT. Five hours later they had managed to smother much of the inferno that had torn through hundreds of rooms, but were still working to extinguish it completely, according to an AFP photographer at the scene.

The museum, located in the city's north near the Maracana football stadium, was closed to the public when the fire sparked from a yet unknown cause. The fire "spread very quickly; there is a lot of inflammable material," a spokesperson for Rio's fire department said, adding that there were no reports of victims so far. The natural history and anthropology museum was founded in 1818 by King Joao VI and is considered a jewel of Brazilian culture, with more than 20 million valuable pieces to its name.

"This is a tragic day for Brazil," President Michel Temer said in a statement. "Two hundred years of work and research and knowledge are lost." "The loss of the collection of the National Museum is incalculable," he said. — AFP (See Page 19)

UAE announces first astronauts to go to space

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates has selected its first two astronauts to go on a mission to the International Space Station. Dubai's ruler said yesterday. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum named the new astronauts as Hazza Al-Mansouri, 34, and 37-year-old

Sultan Al-Neyadi. Writing on Twitter, he said the duo "raise the bar of ambitions for future Emirati generations". Sheikh Mohammed, the UAE's vice president and prime minister, last year vowed to send four Emirati astronauts to the space station within five years.

The UAE has its sights set on space with a program worth 20 billion dirhams (\$5.4 billion), according to Sheikh Mohammed. The oil-rich Gulf nation has already announced plans to become the first Arab country to send an unmanned probe to orbit Mars by 2021, naming it "Hope". The astronaut program would make the UAE one of only a handful of states in the Middle East to have sent a person into space, as it

looks to make good on a pledge to become a global leader in space exploration.

The first Arab in outer space was Saudi Arabia's Sultan bin Salman Al-Saud, who flew on a US shuttle mission in 1985. Two years later, Syrian air force pilot Muhammed Faris spent a week aboard the ex-Soviet Union's Mir space station. Mansouri and Neyadi, who were among more than 4,000 Emiratis to apply for the program, were chosen after a rigorous six-stage vetting procedure. In the long-term, the UAE says it is planning to build a "Science City" to replicate life on Mars and aims to create the first human settlement on the red planet by 2117. — AFP

Sheikha Al-Zain resigns as youth ministry undersecretary

Minister stresses keenness on supporting youth

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammed Al-Jabri announced yesterday accepting the resignation of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah. Minister Jabri thanked Sheikha Al-Zain for her contributions in service of young citizens and helping them achieve their goals. Sheikha Al-Zain had officially announced her resignation earlier yesterday, saying that it was time after five years of service at the ministry to hand over the duties to her colleagues "to continue our march towards future development."

Separately, Minister Jabri said yesterday that Kuwait spares no effort to extend a helping hand to the youth in order to enhance their social role to serve Kuwait in all fields. Jabri said on the sidelines of his meeting with delegations of the Executive Committee of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students representing the Kuwaiti students sector at home and abroad that the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah have always emphasized the need to support the youth and enhance their role in society in various spheres so that Kuwait can become a financial and economic hub in the region. He added that the aim of these meetings is to become acquainted with the students' suggestions and opinions regarding the strategy of the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs in addition to activities related to supporting youth projects at all levels. He also praised the role of the Executive Committee of the National Union of Kuwaiti students in supporting the student sector as being the most important sector for the Kuwaiti youth which Kuwait counts on. On the sidelines of the meeting, the Executive Committee of the National Union reviewed its proposals, which were represented in three main axes: all related to strengthening the Kuwaiti student movement and highlighting its importance and national positions. — KUNA

to strengthening the Kuwaiti student movement and highlighting its importance and national positions. — KUNA



Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah

Amir condoles Nigerian, Somali presidents

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable of condolences to President Mohammed Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in which he expressed his sincere condolences over the terrorist attack that targeted a military base northeast of Nigeria in which scores of soldiers and civilians were killed and wounded. His Highness the Amir expressed Kuwait's strong

condemnation of this heinous terrorist act, which is objected by all humanitarian laws and values, wishing mercy for the killed and speedy recovery for the wounded. His Highness the Amir also addressed a cable of condolences to Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed on the demise of citizens in the suicide bombing that targeted a government office in the capital Mogadishu. His Highness the Amir expressed Kuwait's strong condemnation of this blatant and criminal act, renounced by all humanitarian doctrines and values, wishing mercy for the victims and quick recovery for the injured. His Highness the Deputy Amir and 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 similar cables to the Nigerian and Somali presidents. — KUNA

Cabinet holds its weekly meeting



KUWAIT: The Cabinet held its weekly meeting at Seif Palace yesterday under the chairmanship of His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. After the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Interior Anas Al-Saleh announced the official delegation accompanying His Highness the Amir in a visit to Washington US, which includes top state officials.

The Cabinet expressed its confidence that the visit will contribute to enhancing strategic relations and cooperation between the two friendly countries in various fields. The Cabinet discussed the death of two students and the injury of three other student officers at Ali Al-Sabah Military Academy recently and the measures taken to investigate the circumstances and causes of this painful incident to take appropriate actions in order to remedy the shortcomings and avoid them.

In this regard, the Cabinet expressed condolences to the victims' families and stressed the importance of the completion of the investigation, in order to reach all the facts and the reasons behind the incident. Al-Saleh reviewed the results of the Secretary-General of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Dr Abdul-Latif Al-Zayani's visit to the country recently, which discussed the strategic vision of the General Secretary of the GCC and all that would create conditions for prosperity and growth of GCC countries.

On the occasion of the new academic year 2018-19, the Cabinet listened to an explanation presented by the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Hamed Al-Azmi on the details of the preparations made by the Ministry. The Cabinet also reviewed recommendations by the Legal Affairs Committee concerning a draft decree approving a MoU on the establishment of a mechanism for bilateral cooperation between the Government of Kuwait and the Government of China.

The Cabinet revised a draft decree approving a MoU on civil service and administrative development between the Government of Kuwait and Bahrain. On the other hand, the Cabinet praised the achievements of the Kuwaiti athletes who participated in the 18th Asian Games held in Jakarta, Indonesia, which concluded on Sunday, where Kuwait won six medals (3 gold 1 silver 2 bronze).

The Cabinet also discussed the political current developments in the Arab and international levels. The Cabinet concluded its meeting with a denunciation of the terrorist bombing in the Somali capital Mogadishu, which resulted in a number of deaths and wounded, and condemned the knife attack at the central train station in Amsterdam, which resulted in the number of wounded, stressing the position of Kuwait's consistent and basic anti-violence and terrorism. — KUNA

ISPCAN awards Kuwait for support to children's rights

PARIS: Kuwait was recognized on Sunday by the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse And Neglect (ISPCAN) with an award for its efforts to support children's rights. In an event in the Czech capital, Prague, ISPCAN XXII International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect honored a Kuwaiti team led by Ministry of Health (MoH) Undersecretary Dr Mustafa Redha, head of MoH's Child Protection Office Dr Mona Al-Khawari, and Director of Investigation Department at the Ministry of Information Manal Al-Baghdadi.

The Kuwaiti team also included Assistant Director of forensic department at the General Department of Criminal Evidence at the Ministry of Interior (MoI), Dr Noura Al-Omair, Head of MoI's Child Protection Department in the Department of Juvenile Protection, Colonel Soud Al-Amer, Dr Wafaa Al-Arada, from the Amiri Diwan, and Dr Khaled Kalendar, from MoH.

Khawari said that the Kuwaiti team won this award in recognition of its tremendous efforts in the development of measures and procedures to child

protection. She pointed out the establishment of multi-disciplinary teams for the protection of children in various hospitals in Kuwait and the way to report any abuse directed at the child through a local hotline.

Khawari added that during the past four years there have been many cases that were registered, namely in 2015 when the hotline received about 100 cases, up to 300 cases in 2016, and 500 cases in 2017. In a different statement, Al-Baghdadi said that Kuwait is a member of the International Convention for the Protection of the Child, citing Kuwait Law No. 21 of 2015 on child rights protection, that grants them rights such as education, health care, housing, culture, and protection from unethical aggression. She added that the law protects normal children and children with special needs, through applying the law through the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, and MoH.

ISPCAN congress 2018 brings together leading experts and policy-makers to advance knowledge, present the most recent research findings, promote and enhance collaborations around the world and most importantly to increase public awareness of all forms of violence against children, developing activities to prevent such violence, and promoting the rights of children in all regions of the world. ISPCAN's mission is to prevent cruelty to children in every nation, in every form, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, street children, child fatalities, child prostitution, children of war, emotional abuse, and child labor. — KUNA

KJA participates in Arab Media Forum in Oman

KUWAIT: Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) participated in the Arab Media Forum that was organized recently by Oman Journalists Association (OJA) in cooperation with the training committee of the Arab Journalists Union (AJU). The event took place recently in the Dhafar province in Salalah, Oman. The forum was opened by State Minister Mohammad Al-Bousaeedi, Dhafar Governor, Civil Service Minister Sheikh Khalid Al-Marhoun, Information Ministry Undersecretary Ali Al-Jabri and other Arab officials.

The opening started with pictures showing the devastation caused by the hurricane 'Mokono' that hit Salalah city this year, the extent of challenges authorities there faced, and how they dealt with such emergencies to minimize losses. A training course was



Group photo with Minister Mohammad Al-Bousaeedi.

organized by OJA in cooperation with AJU for several journalists from various Arab countries over two days under the slogan of 'the media, crises management and social responsibility'.

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Outdoor work ban ends

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The ban on working outdoors during afternoon hours is over, Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Manpower Abdullah Al-Mutoutah said. The annual ban runs from June 1st to August 31st, during that period workers

are not allowed to work in open areas every day from 11 am to 4 pm in order to protect them from harsh weather conditions. The authority carried out inspection during the ban period to make sure that the decision is adhered to, Mutoutah said.

The number of violating locations during the ban period was 357 sites while the number of violating laborers was 368, he added. The number of sites that were re-inspected and found to be in compliance with the law was 354, while there were still violations.



KUWAIT: Outdoor laborers are seen working in open areas after the afternoon work ban has ended.



The trainees with Undersecretary Ali Al-Jabri.

Local

No looming dissolution; rumors drive MPs to file grillings: Sources

Plan to integrate rehabilitated prisoners into private labor market

By A Saleh and Agencies

KUWAIT: Rumors about an impending decision to dissolve the National Assembly and call for early elections are false, government sources said, adding that the spread of such inaccurate information has made some MPs declare their intentions to grill ministers with hopes of making some political gains ahead of the supposed elections.

His Highness the Amir has the sole authority to dissolve the assembly as long as there is a reason to warrant such as decision, or following a recommendation from the cabinet that details where it stands from the assembly. The cabinet has so far expressed willingness to cooperate with the assembly despite the grilling motions filed against His Highness the Prime Minister and other ministers, said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, the sources proclaimed that His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah is prepared to debate his grilling motion during the first session of the new term which starts in October, adding that the government believes the grilling addresses 'repeated issues' and offers nothing new. "The government regrets that the main aim behind the grilling seems to be putting the premier in a bad position in a bid to oust him, instead of seeking reform," the sources argued.

Ministers who could face grilling motions in the upcoming term include Commerce Minister Khaled Al-Roudhan, Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf, Social Affairs Minister Hind Al-Sabeeh, Housing Minister Jenan Bushehri, Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri, Oil Minister Bakheet Al-Rashidi, and State Minister for National Assembly Affairs Adel Al-Kharafi, according to the sources. While a cabinet reshuffle might eventually happen, the option of the cabinet's resignation is not on the table, they added.

Commenting on a draft law that was proposed to pardon and release lawmakers convicted in the National Assembly's storming case, the source said that the cabinet does not plan to approve such a proposal, believing that it is unconstitutional, noting at

the same time that His Highness the Amir has a constitutional authority to release a special pardon in this case.

Prisoners' rehabilitation

Secretary General of the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) Fawzi Al-Majdali said there are plans to establish a training institute run by the government to rehabilitate prisoners in cooperation with Interior and Awqaf ministries and Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, in order to meet the needs of the market place in the private sector and provide it with Kuwait employees, Al-Jarida reported yesterday. This step comes within MGRP's efforts to rehabilitate prisoner citizens and integrate them in the marketplace once they graduate from the planned institution, Majdali explained.

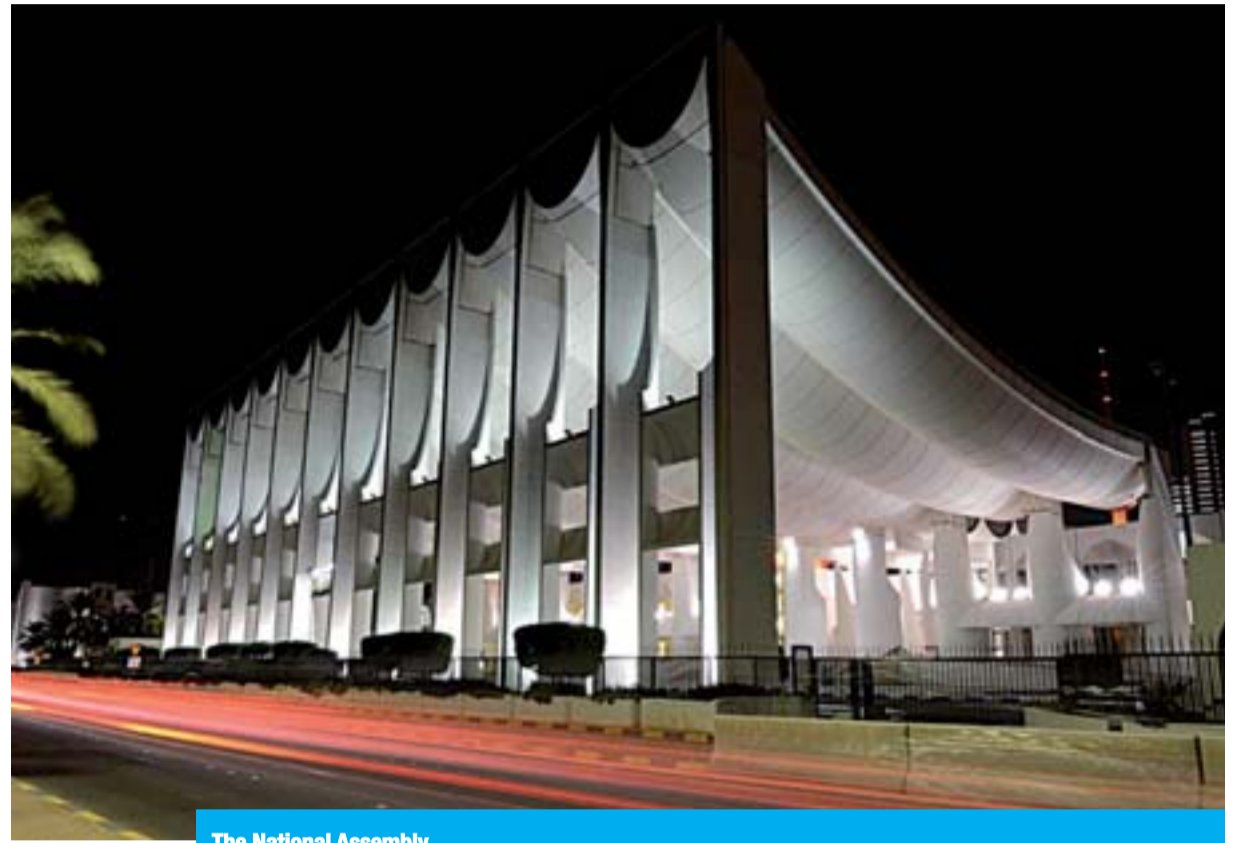
About fake laborers, Majdali said that the Interior Ministry has been the most cooperative state department in this issue, praising their efforts in helping discover citizens who receive financial support illegally and protect public funds. The ministry gave MGRP access to the border outlets' system in order to follow the movement of citizens who are registered

Special conditions for visa absence permission

in the private sector, he explained. The ministry also helps discover cases such as registering the names of citizens in fake companies for the sole purpose of collecting the labor support allowance, he added.

Absence permission

Interior Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Nationality, Passports and Travel Documents Maj Gen Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah gave instructions to limit the issuance of absence permission only for study, medication and humanitarian conditions according to certain conditions and standards, Al-Anbaa reported yesterday. The absence permission is given to residents in Kuwait who have to leave the country for extended periods of time, in order to avoid having their visas canceled. Sheikh Faisal also gave instructions to find solutions for Syrian residency violators who had entered Kuwait with visit visas. Those with salaries of KD 450 or more will be allowed to



The National Assembly

apply for family visas for their wives and kids, a source said, adding that there is a study to also give family visas for the father, mother, brother and sister in such cases.

Ice cream in kindergartens

The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition called local frozen dairy products' companies to comply with Gulf Cooperation Council standards before allowing ice cream into kindergartens. Director of Public Services at the Education Ministry Fahad Al-Hayan said there is a proposal to include ice cream in the food program of kindergartens for the year 2019-2020, at one day per week during September, April and May. He asked the authority for its opinion to complete the procedures.

Meanwhile, Director General of the authority Dr Nawal Al-Hamad said as the products' labels were

reviewed and compared with regional recommendations, it showed that all local companies that produce frozen products are not committed to applying the GCC standards which stipulates that the product's nutrition facts (total calories, fat, sugar, protein, etc), its weight and the percentage be placed on the label.

Storage areas

Director General of Kuwait Municipality Eng Mohammad Al-Manfouhi said 25 employees will be referred to the public prosecution for forging approval papers for unlicensed storage areas that were discovered in recent crackdowns. The problem lies in the fact that there are no rules to regulate storage in open area, Manfouhi said, adding that it is a major and highly sensitive issue. On another issue, the bidding for the management of fish, meat and vegetables market in Jahra reached around KD 30 million.

No injuries in Kabd chalets' fire

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: Fire broke out in Kabd area chalets containing furniture and electric equipment. Firemen from the Kabd, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and backup fire stations responded and put out the fire. No injuries were reported in the incident, as an investigation was opened to determine what caused the fire.



KUWAIT: A fire engine is seen at the site of a fire reported in Kabd yesterday.

Municipality campaigns

Hawally municipality removed 191 encroachments on state property, handed over 194 warnings for encroachment, and removed 880 violating ads from streets and open yards during their recent campaigns.

Police may press charges of attempted suicide, public indecency, drunkenness and public disturbance against a man who reportedly climbed to the top of a school's fence, got his clothes off and attempted to jump in a bid to kill himself. Police received a call from a private school in Khaitan, telling them that a naked man climbed to the top of the school's fence and was threat-

ening to commit suicide. Police were able to get the citizen down and arrested him. The man was in a bad condition, so he was taken to hospital and given a sedative to calm him down.

Drug abuse

A citizen was rushed to Mubarak Hospital under police's guard after he was found unconscious inside a mall's toilet, and doctors confirmed that his condition was due to drug abuse. An empty bag containing traces of drugs was found inside the toilet.



Flames are seen inside one of the chalets.



A firefighter extinguishes the flames.



A municipality worker looks on as a bulldozer removes an unlicensed car parking shade during a recent campaign in Hawally.

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A griffon vulture spotted in Sabah Al-Ahmad Nature Reserve. —Photo by Omar Al-Sayyed Omar (KUNA)

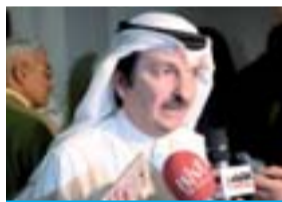
Scientific Center encourages youth to develop their abilities

KUWAIT: Director-General of Kuwait Scientific Center (KSC) Rana Al-Naibari stressed that KSC works hard to encourage youth to discover and develop their skills and teach them meaning of responsibility and professional commitment at an early age through their summer volunteer program. This came in a speech Naibari delivered during a graduation ceremony on Sunday of 80 volunteers from its 18th summer program, which was held under the auspices of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Shafiq Al-Sayed Omar. She noted that the program, launched in 2001, allows Kuwaiti youth aged 15 to 18 to learn from experienced professionals working at the center, as well as acquiring new skills. The program also provides an opportunity for young volunteers to work in a team spirit and contribute to the success of managing this pioneering scientific, cultural and tourism edifice in Kuwait and the region.

Naibari said that the program starts every year from June to August, but next year it will be launched in May. The course will be available to students born in 2002, 2003 and 2004 and require full-time volunteering. The summer program is a valuable opportunity to transfer the culture of the center to the young people so they could inspire visitors on science, environment, wildlife and marine life, she added. She affirmed that volunteer-

ing is a step towards achieving several goals, all in the interest of youth, stressing that volunteering is a fundamental pillar for achieving long-term sustainability in society and progress.

Shafiq Al-Sayed Omar, Assistant Undersecretary for Youth Projects Affairs at the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, said on behalf of the minister that having 80 volunteer graduates every year is something to be proud of. Director-General of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), Dr Adnan Shihab-Eldin said in a press statement that the scientific center is a pioneer in volunteering and succeeded through joint activities with the public, especially youth. The center is the first of its kind in the Middle East, focuses on spreading knowledge, and offers visitors the opportunity to explore these areas through many interactive facilities and activities that are held throughout the year, he added. —KUNA



Assistant Undersecretary for Youth Projects Affairs at the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs Shafiq Al-Sayed Omar.



KUWAIT: A group photo of the volunteers at the Kuwait Scientific Center. —KUNA photos



Director-General of the Kuwait Scientific Center Rana Al-Naibari.



Director-General of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) Dr Adnan Shihab-Eldin.

Gulf Bank celebrates 'Bring Your Kids to Work Day'

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank celebrated 'Bring Your Kids to Work Day' on Thursday, August 30, 2018, at the bank's head offices. The initiative, which supports career exploration and development, offers children the rare opportunity to spend a day in the workplace of their parents and featured a program of interactive activities as well as fun and festivities.

The office was filled with excitement as employees presented children with a simplified and child-friendly brief on various aspects of working at a bank. The number of

children at the event exceeded expectations illustrating the importance of the initiative in creating a spirit of belonging. Starting off the day, staff volunteers gave the kids a tour of the main departments including Consumer Banking, Products and Segments, Marketing, and Corporate Banking. Each department prepped a fun and engaging activity for the children, which varied from contests to questions and discussion, to teach them new and exciting things about a career in banking. The children were then entertained with 'movie time' before receiving a gift bag that contained an activity book and colors so that they could practice their artistic skills.

Salma Al-Hajjaj, General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, commented: "Bring Your Kids to Work Day" gives children a glimpse into the working world and a better understanding of where their parents

work, what they do, as well as meeting their colleagues and children. The fun and educational initiative is equally enjoyed by parents who get to take time out of their busy work schedules to make lasting memories with their children."

"At Gulf Bank, we understand that our employees are our greatest asset and we place a big focus on creating a great place to work for all the families in our organization. I would like to thank everyone in the Gulf Bank family for their great work, commitment and dedication which contributes to our success and for making the event exciting and fun for everyone involved," she added. Gulf Bank is committed to providing a healthy, motivating, and vibrant work environment and is continually introducing new initiatives in recognition of its employees' hard work, dedication and loyalty.



Local

State Audit Bureau hosts meetings of INTOSAI capacity building, donor steering committees

Bureau, Office of the Auditor General of South Africa sign agreement

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The State Audit Bureau (SAB) hosted the annual meeting of the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions' (INTOSAI) Capacity Building Committee (CBC), and a meeting for INTOSAI's Donor Steering Committee (IDSC) yesterday at Regency Hotel.

During his speech, SAB Chairman Adel Al-Saraawi said: "The agenda of our meeting covers a wide range of important clauses in terms of capacity-building of the supreme audit institutions and donor cooperation, and we must work together to achieve the purpose of this meeting by providing training, technical assistance, and other development activities."

"Our supreme audit institutions have a great responsibility to eliminate all forms of corruption, enhance governance and transparency, and increase communication and cooperation with all concerned parties with the follow-up of public funds and how to use them by means and methods that achieve the required sustainable development plans and objectives," he added.

"Last year, Saraawi offered to host the 2018 meeting in Kuwait," Thembekile Makwetu, Auditor General -

South Africa, said. "It is encouraging that the meeting is held in an area where many senior oversight bodies focus on strengthening their capabilities and values to their country and citizens."

"The Capacity Building Committee in the second year of the INTOSAI Strategic Plan for a six-year period ending in 2022," Makwetu added. "The purpose of this annual meeting is to build capacity in INTOSAI and to assess the progress made by the Capacity Building Committee in addressing its commitments and to address the greater challenges set out in the INTOSAI Strategic Plan." He noted that tomorrow, they will present the working groups of the committee with detailed progress reports on its activities over the past 12 years.

Joint cooperation

Meanwhile, SAB signed a cooperation agreement with the Office of the Auditor General of the Republic of South Africa aimed at developing joint cooperation between the two countries. The agreement seeks to enhance and develop the professional skills of employees through training initiatives, expert visits, exchange of technical information between the two sides and the identification of research results.

The agreement comes in the framework of seek-



Great responsibility to eliminate corruption



KUWAIT: State Audit Bureau Chairman Adel Al-Saraawi (right), Thembekile Makwetu, Auditor General - South Africa (center), and Magnus Lindell, Vice Chair - Sweden, attend the meeting yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

ing to open up to the experiences of the SAIs and in line with the objectives of its strategic plan (2016-2020) which emphasizes the development of institu-

tional capacities. A large number of prominent international bodies, associations and authorities attended the meetings.

Schools open; traffic jams return across Kuwait



KUWAIT: More than 43,000 kindergarten students return to their classes today, joining over 221,000 elementary and middle school students who returned back to school earlier this week, while high schools are set to welcome students back on Sunday. After a period of calm during the summer, traffic jams returned this week; a common sign for the beginning of the new school year in Kuwait. — Kuwait Times photos



Myanmar jails Reuters reporters for 7 years

British PM's Brexit blueprint lambasted by Boris Johnson

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BAGHDAD: A picture taken yesterday shows a general view of the Iraqi parliament during a meeting in the capital. — AFP

Rivals jostle for power at Iraq parliament

Country's next leaders will face the mammoth task of rebuilding

BAGHDAD: Iraqi lawmakers convened yesterday with Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi and a populist cleric together seeking to form a government and sideline pro-Iran rivals with a deal to create the biggest bloc in parliament. The country's next leaders will face the mammoth task of rebuilding a country ravaged by the war against jihadists as well as tackling public anger over corruption, unemployment and decrepit public services.

Late on Sunday 16 political groups including those of Abadi and firebrand preacher Moqtada Sadr — whose alliance with communists won the most seats in the May 12 polls — announced an accord to create the largest force in parliament. But they face a challenge from rivals who also claim to have the upper hand. Abadi defended his record before lawmakers, saying he had come to power in 2014 at a time when "IS occupied large areas while the security forces were in a state of near-total collapse".

One of Abadi's aides told AFP before parliament met in Baghdad's fortified Green Zone that his coalition with Sadr and other groups included 177 lawmakers representing more than half of the 329 seats in the legislature. That could potentially allow Abadi to remain in his post despite coming third in the election with 42 seats. Sadr's joint list won 54 seats.

A former militia leader who led two uprisings against the US-led invasion of Iraq, the cleric has called for his country to be more independent of both Iran and the

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A state of near-total collapse

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United States. But his alliance with Abadi is being challenged by former prime minister Nuri Al-Maliki, who has teamed up with a group of former anti-IS paramilitary fighters close to Iran. Maliki claimed his bloc had signatures of support from 153 lawmakers which he argued put it in a stronger position than his rivals because they only had signatures from the group leaders.

Maliki's bloc said it had poached 21 lawmakers from Abadi's Victory Alliance which, if confirmed, could tip the scales, especially since Kurdish parties are still negotiating with both sides. Those who have switched sides include Falih Alfayyadh, who last week was sacked by the prime minister as head of the powerful Hashed Al-Shaabi paramilitary force. Abadi yesterday named himself chief of the Hashed Al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilisation), which played a major role in fighting the Islamic State jihadist group (IS).

Array of challenges

Yesterday lawmakers were sworn in before the session was adjourned. They will reconvene today when parliament is expected to elect a speaker — traditionally a member of Iraq's Sunni Muslim community — as well two deputy speakers. After that, lawmakers will have 30 days to elect a new president, a largely symbolic position that traditionally goes to a member of the Kurdish minority.

The new president will then have 15 days to task the biggest parliamentary bloc to form a new government, which will face an array of challenges including the lingering threat posed by jihadists. Abadi declared "victory" in December over the Islamic State group after a devastating three-year war against the Sunni extremists, who at their

height controlled nearly a third of the country. Despite being driven from Iraq's towns and cities, the jihadists continue to stage attacks from their hideouts in remote desert areas. Suspected IS members killed seven people yesterday in an attack in a village west of Kirkuk, a multi-ethnic city north of Baghdad, a security official said. The raid came less than a day after a man was shot dead outside a mosque north of the capital, in what a police officer said was a jihadist attack.

The incoming government also faces a wave of social unrest particularly in southern Iraq, which has been shaken by weeks of protests demanding better public services in a country beset by energy and water shortages. The meeting of parliament was delayed by allegations of electoral fraud which prompted the supreme court to order a manual recount that last month confirmed the victory of Sadr's alliance.

The polls saw a record low turnout of 44.5 percent, with long-time political figures pushed out by voters seeking change in a country mired in conflict and corruption. Iraq's political system is designed to ensure that no one person or party can dominate, in order to avoid the return of a dictatorship following the ouster of Saddam Hussein in 2003. — AFP

Hundreds escape prison near Libya's Tripoli: Police

TRIPOLI: Some 400 detainees escaped after a riot on Sunday at a prison in the southern suburbs of the Libyan capital Tripoli, theatre of a week of deadly battles, police said. "The detainees were able to force open the doors and leave" as fighting between rival militias raged near the prison of Ain Zara, police said in a statement, without specifying what crimes the escapees had committed.

Guards were unable to prevent the prisoners escaping as they feared for their own lives, the statement said. A police official contacted by AFP was unable to provide further details. Most detainees at the prison have been convicted of common crimes or were supporters of former dictator Moamer Kadhafi, found guilty of killings

during the uprising that toppled his regime in 2011. According to a health ministry toll, at least 39 people have been killed and some 100 injured since clashes, including rocket fire, broke out among rival militias Monday in suburbs south of Tripoli.

Rocket strike on camp

And on Sunday rockets hit a camp for displaced people in Tripoli, leaving at least two dead and five injured from the same family, according to emergency services and witnesses. The camp is home to hundreds of displaced people from the Libyan city of Taourga who were forced into mass exile due to their support for Kadhafi.

"Most of the families have left the camp fearing more rockets," Khaled Omrane, a camp resident, told AFP. According to emergency services, at least 23 rockets fell on the camp on Friday and Saturday causing fresh casualties. The Government of National Unity (GNA) which is recognized by the international community on Sunday said it was declaring a state of emergency in the Libyan capital and its environs. The Libyan capital has been at the centre of a battle for influence between armed groups since Kadhafi's fall and killing. — AFP

Palestinians in Lebanon fear cuts will slash school access

BEIRUT: It's back to school for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, but funding cuts to the UN agency supporting them means students may only be in class until the end of month. One by one, students in the dilapidated UN-run Haifa school in a suburb of the Lebanese capital stand up to receive their textbooks for the fresh academic year.

Books on physics, mathematics, geography, chemistry—some new, but most used and worn—are handed to the solemn eighth-graders sitting at chipped wooden desks. With no air conditioning in the classrooms, the late-morning heat is stifling. Palestinian flags hang from the ceiling and most of the walls are covered in doodles and Arabic graffiti: "Neymar," in tribute to the popular Brazilian footballer, "You are the darling of my heart," and "Palestine".

Across the region, more than half a million Palestinian students may lose access to their education after the United States said it would

stop backing the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA). Washington was UNRWA's top contributor for years, providing more than \$350 million a year to the agency that assists more than five million Palestinian refugees around the region. On Friday, the US announced it would pull all funding to the "irredeemably flawed operation". To keep its essential operations running until the end of the year, UNRWA says it needs \$217 million—otherwise health centers and schools may be forced to close. In Lebanon alone, 66 UNRWA-run schools could shut by the end of September, depriving some 38,000 Palestinian students of an education.

'Where will our kids go?'

That worry hangs in the air as parents gather with their children for the first day of classes at the Haifa school. "It's a plot against the future of our children," says Ramadan Ibrahim, who hails from the Palestinian camp of Yarmuk in Syria's capital. He fled Syria's war six years ago with his wife and children, coming to settle in Beirut, and Yarmuk has since been flattened by fighting between Syria's regime, rebels, and jihadists.

Ibrahim's eldest son is in Germany, and the next two are working odd jobs to provide for the family. Only his youngest, 14-year-old Abdel Rahman, is in school. "It would be good to have at least one educated person in the family," says their 53-year-old father, who is balding but sports a scratchy beard. "We're

trying to keep Abdel Rahman going, through his brothers' jobs," says Ibrahim. "Where will our kids go? To work in coffee shops? I see boys of seven or eight who are working in cafes because their parents cannot send them to school," he tells AFP.

An estimated 174,000 Palestinians live in Lebanon, according to a census by national authorities last year, although the UN estimates there are tens of thousands more. They are barred from nearly 20 jobs, including many that require higher education like lawyer, doctor, and engineer. With no way out, generations have been stuck living in the dozen squalid, densely populated and poorly serviced refugee camps across the country.

No alternative

The future looks dire for them—and for UNRWA, says the agency's country chief Claudio Cordone. "We have 27 clinics that serve more than 160,000 people. We have 61,000 refugees living below the poverty line," says Cordone. "There isn't an alternative to this provision of services to these people."

English teacher Maisun Issa admits the situation is tough. "The ceiling collapsed in one class. There's damage in other parts of the school that need to be fixed," says the 52-year-old. Her family is originally from the ethnically mixed Israeli city of Haifa but she was born in Lebanon and has taught English in UNRWA schools since 2003. — AFP

International

Merkel urges Germans to stand up to hate amid anti-migrant tension

Eastern city of Chemnitz rocked by xenophobic protests

CHEMNITZ: Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday urged Germans to stand up against the far right's message of hate and division, after the eastern city of Chemnitz was rocked by xenophobic protests. Scenes of far-right protesters chasing down foreign-looking people in violent demonstrations last week against the fatal stabbing of a man, allegedly by an Iraqi, shocked Germany.

Amid the highly charged atmosphere in Chemnitz, a failed asylum applicant was sentenced to eight and a half years in jail for another fatal stabbing—in another case also seized on by the far right's anti-immigrant campaign. Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert said it was understandable that such crimes would provoke sadness and concern among the population.

But the marches by "violence-prone right-wing extremists and neo-Nazis have nothing in the least to do with sadness for a person or with concern for a city's cohesion", he said. "These people who march and are prone to violence—some have also shamelessly shown their closeness to Nazism—they stand neither for Chemnitz nor for Saxony overall, neither are they 'the people'," said Seibert, referring to a popular "We are the people" chant used by far-right protesters.

"We must make that clear to them," be it through political or legal means, he said. "Every citizen can also raise his or her voice to clearly show them their attitude against hate, against the attempt to divide this country." But the criticism of the right-wing extremist protesters was immediately rejected by far-right party AfD. "An entire state and its people are vilified here in general because there is a distinct and understandable resentment about the circumstances," Joerg Meuthen, AfD co-chief said at a street festival in Bavaria.

'Get off our sofas'

After a weekend of rival protests in Chemnitz that saw far-

right demonstrators vastly outnumber counter-protesters by 8,000 to 3,000, calls have grown for the silent majority to mobilize. On Sunday, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas urged Germans to "get off our sofas and open our mouths" against xenophobia. Later yesterday, several left-leaning and anti-fascist punk bands, are due to perform in a free concert under the motto "there are more of us", with several thousands expected to join in the protest against racist violence.

A "window demo" call has also gone out on social media for those who cannot make it to Chemnitz to hang a colorful poster on the window or balcony to show their support for the anti-racist cause. The unrest has once again put the spotlight on Merkel's liberal refugee policy that led to the arrival of more than one million asylum seekers since 2015.

Resentment against the newcomers runs particularly deep in Saxony state, where Chemnitz is located, and the AfD has won strong support in the region with its anti-migrant campaign. Surveys suggest it is poised to become Saxony's second biggest party in next year's regional elections. In western Germany, the AfD has also been organising protests in the city of Kandel, where a teenage girl was stabbed to death by a failed asylum applicant claiming to be from Afghanistan.

'Intolerable'

Yesterday, the juvenile court in the western town of Landau sentenced the accused, identified only as Abdul D, to a jail term over the killing. Abdul D had admitted to the court to stabbing the girl at a drugstore in the town of Kandel on December 27. Prosecutors believe he acted out of jealousy after the girl broke up with him.

Besides his nationality, doubts have been raised about his



CHEMNITZ: A man shows an anti-nazi sign on a banner ahead of a free concert with several German bands to say "No to the far right which has staged nationalist demonstrations after a fatal stabbing allegedly by two foreigners." — AFP

age, which he said was 15 at the time of the crime. An expert had estimated his age as between 17 and a half and 20 but, given the uncertainty, the proceedings were held behind closed doors and under juvenile penal rules.

Abdul D arrived in Germany in April 2016 and his request for asylum was rejected in February 2017 although he was not immediately deported. At the peak of the AfD-led protests

over the killing, thousands marched in Kandel, but the rallies have since lost momentum. On Saturday, a demonstration in the town attracted 350 people, local police said. Rhineland-Palatinate state premier Malu Dreyer accused the far-right of exploiting the teenager's death for political gains, saying this was "intolerable". "It is the hope of all of us that once the trial is over, peace will return to Kandel," she said. — AFP

Has Germany's migrant influx fuelled crime?

BERLIN: Germany's emboldened far right has seized on a number of high-profile crimes allegedly committed by migrants to excoriate Chancellor Angela Merkel's liberal border policy. Most recently, right-wing extremists have rallied over a knife attack last month in the eastern city of Chemnitz in which a German man was killed and an Iraqi asylum seeker is the prime suspect. Police statistics indicate that crime in Germany has seen a steady decline in recent years. However, violent acts committed by foreign nationals have risen since the height of the refugee influx in 2015.

Official figures

Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, a vocal critic of Merkel's decision to let in more than one million asylum seekers over the last three years, issued a report in May showing that the number of crimes committed against persons or property in Germany fell to "the lowest level since 1992". In 2017, police recorded 5,761,984 criminal acts, marking a 5.1-percent drop on the previous year.

Link between migrant influx and criminality?

In 2014, the year before the "migrant crisis", there were 6,082,064 crimes registered in Germany—more than in 2017. However, the ratio of foreigners among criminal suspects has climbed, from 28.7 percent in 2014 to 40.4 percent in 2016 before declining again in 2017 to 35 percent, the study presented by Seehofer in May showed. The following month, US President Donald Trump falsely asserted that immigration is driving up crime in Germany. "Big mistake made all over Europe in allowing millions of people in who have so strongly and violently changed their culture!" he tweeted. A report completed by the BKA federal police force for daily Die Welt published at the weekend showed that crimes committed by foreigners (the large majority of them asylum seekers) fell last year by 2.7 percent on the previous year.

The most violent crimes

However, the most violent crimes including homicides show an increase among foreign offenders, according to the Welt report. The number of German citizens killed by foreign assailants in the last three years rose steadily to 83 (out of a total of 731), from 62 and 52 the previous two years. In one such lightning-rod case, a German court Monday jailed a failed asylum seeker claiming to be from Afghanistan for stabbing his 15-year-old ex-girlfriend to death.

Although there were doubts about his age—he claimed he was also 15 at the time of the attack—he was tried as a minor and sentenced to eight and a half years in jail. Such crimes have been widely publicized on social media by the far right, which has held a series of rallies marked by xenophobic slogans and violence in Chemnitz in recent days. — AFP



ATHENS: Protesters take part in a demonstration by refugee aid NGOs and refugee solidarity groups on Syntagma Square. — AFP

Sweden: The migrant oasis under strain

STOCKHOLM: The Nordic nation of Sweden, which stretches into the Arctic Circle and is home to reindeer-raising indigenous people, is a generous welfare state but under strain from a refugee influx. Ahead of legislative elections on September 9, here is some background about the Scandinavian country.

Population boosted by immigration

One of the largest and most secular countries in Europe, Sweden has a population of 10 million, with around 80 percent living in cities. It had an open refugee policy even before the migration crisis hit the continent in 2015, and 18.5 percent of its 2017 population was foreign-born. The European Union member registered more than 394,500 asylum applications between 2012 and 2017, a record per capita for Europe, with the peak of 162,000 in 2015.

More than 60 percent of claims processed during this period were accepted — although they were not necessarily applications submitted during that time, because of delays in the system. The influx is putting a heavy burden on Sweden's famed cradle-to-grave welfare system and testing social integration. Under pressure, the country in 2015 reestablished border controls and toughened its immigration policies.

Social pioneer, competitive

Social Democrats have dominated Swedish politics since the 1930s, building one of the world's most advanced welfare models funded by high taxes. But it also has a strong competition-based economy, home to global groups including Electrolux, Ikea, Saab, Volvo, Skype and Spotify. Sweden was ranked seventh on the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index in 2017-2018. It is a pioneer in gender equality — with generous maternity and paternity leave — environmental protection and organic farming. The country is also increasingly moving towards becoming a cash-free society.

UNRWA chief defends refugee criteria for Palestinians

JERUSALEM: Millions of Palestinian refugees "cannot simply be wished away", the head of a UN support agency said yesterday, hitting back at a US aid cutoff and allegations its work only perpetuates their plight. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) provides services to about 5 million Palestinian refugees across Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank and Gaza. Most are descendants of some 700,000 Palestinians who were driven out of their homes or fled fighting in the 1948 war that led to Israel's creation.

The growing refugee count was cited by Washington, UNRWA's biggest donor, in its decision last week to withhold funding, and has potential ramifications for the Palestinians' pursuit of a right of return to land now in Israel. Successive Israeli governments have ruled out such an influx, fearing the country would lose its Jewish majority.

"I express deep regret and disappointment at the nature of the US decision," UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krahenbuhl said in an open letter to Palestinian refugees and the agency's staff in which he pledged its operations would continue. Appearing to echo Israel's view that descendants of the 1948 refugees should not share that status, State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert criticized UNRWA on Friday over its "endlessly and exponentially expanding community of entitled beneficiaries".

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described UNRWA on Sunday as "the refugee perpetuation agency" whose money "should be taken and be used to really help rehabilitate the refugees, whose real number is a sliver of that reported by UNRWA". But Krahenbuhl said "the pro-



STOCKHOLM: People are pictured next to an election poster of Ebba Busch Thor, leader of the Christian Democrats Party. — AFP

PM assassination mystery

The 1986 assassination of charismatic prime minister Olof Palme while he was walking home from a Stockholm cinema remains unsolved despite thousands of leads. The murder sent shockwaves through the normally peaceful country. Memories of Palme's shooting were revived in 2003 when foreign minister Anna Lindh was stabbed to death by a mentally unstable man in a Stockholm department store.

'Nordic noir'

Sweden's position near the Arctic Circle means not only long summer days but also long winter nights, a climate that lends mood to a tradition of dark crime novels. Its "Nordic noir" genre includes Stieg Larsson's best-selling "Millennium Trilogy" and Henning Mankell's Wallander series, both adapted to global hit TV shows and movies.



AL-FARA REFUGEE CAMP: A Palestinian man looks out from the gate of Fara Basic Boys School in Al-Fara refugee camp north of West Bank. — AFP

tracted nature of the Palestine refugee crisis" was not unique. He said the children and grandchildren of long-displaced refugees in Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Congo and elsewhere are also recognised as refugees and assisted by the United Nations.

Schools open

"No matter how often attempts are made to minimize or delegitimize the individual and collective experiences of Palestine refugees, the undeniable fact remains that they have rights under international law and represent a community of 5.4 million men, women and children who cannot simply be wished away," he said.

The United States paid \$60 million to UNRWA in January, withholding another \$65 million, from a promised \$365 million for the year. Krahenbuhl said Gulf states had injected funds but UNRWA still needed more than \$200 million. In Lebanon yesterday, UNRWA opened its school year as scheduled. Studies in UNRWA-run schools in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip got under way on Wednesday. — Reuters

Pacific summit opens amid concerns over refugee children

YAREN: Pacific leaders opened their annual diplomatic summit in Nauru yesterday, but the ceremony was overshadowed by allegations that children of asylum-seekers on the tiny Pacific island have been traumatised by systemic abuse. Nauru President Baron Waqa formally welcomed delegates to the 18-nation Pacific Islands Forum, saying the summit was a chance to demand the world take urgent action on global warming.

However, when the Nauruan leader faced a rare grilling from the media, questions centred on the plight of those detained on the remote island under an agreement with Australia. A report released yesterday said the mental health of asylum-seekers was buckling under the strain of indefinite detention, adding that "those who have seen this suffering say it is worse than anything they have seen, including in war zones."

"People are broken," said the report, co-authored by the Refugee Council of Australia and the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre. "Children as young as seven and 12 are experiencing repeated incidents of suicide attempts, dousing themselves in petrol, and becoming catatonic." The report estimates there are 900 asylum-seekers on Nauru, including more than 100 children.

They are in Nauru as part of Canberra's tough immigration policy, which sees asylum-seekers who try to reach Australia by boat detained and processed in remote camps on Nauru and Papua New Guinea. Psychiatrist Louise Newman said many children on Nauru — the report estimates at least 30 — were suffering from "traumatic withdrawal syndrome" because they could see no end to their plight. — AFP

International

British PM's Brexit blueprint lambasted by Boris Johnson

'Gone into battle with the white flag fluttering over our leading tank'

LONDON: British Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit blueprint came under heavy attack yesterday, with pro-Brexit figurehead Boris Johnson calling it a surrender that hands "victory" to EU. Johnson, who resigned as foreign secretary in July over May's proposed future relationship between London and Brussels, launched a fierce broadside at the PM to kick off parliament's return to business after its summer break.

Meanwhile 20 MPs in May's centre-right Conservative Party publically pledged to reject her so-called Chequers plan, which would keep Britain close to the EU on trade. The unrest comes as parliament returns on Tuesday, with just weeks to go before the mid-October deadline set by London and Brussels to strike a withdrawal agreement. May's sea of troubles swelled after the EU's Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier strongly opposed her blueprint, saying it could lead to the downfall of European integration.

Writing in The Daily Telegraph newspaper, Johnson — the bookmakers' favorite to take over from May — said Britain has "gone into battle with the white flag fluttering over our leading tank". "The inevitable outcome is a victory for the EU, with the UK lying flat on the canvas with 12 stars circling symbolically over our semi-conscious head," he said. Johnson claimed the real "scandal" was "not that we have failed, but that we have not even tried" on Brexit.

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We have not even tried

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'Serious plan'

Responding to Johnson's attack, May's official spokesman said: "Boris Johnson resigned over Chequers. There's no new ideas in this article to respond to. "What

we need at this time is serious leadership with a serious plan and that's exactly what the country has with this prime minister and this Brexit plan." The plan envisages Britain leaving the single market but staying in a free trade area for goods and agri-foods through a customs deal and common rulebook with the EU.

Johnson and his fellow hardline Brexiteers think the Chequers plan, named after the PM's country residence, keeps Britain too closely aligned to the bloc. Twenty Conservative MPs made a joint public commitment Monday to block May's proposal, joining the StandUp4Brexit campaign. They said Chequers would hamper Britain's ability to strike its own free trade deals, cut Northern Ireland off from the rest of the UK and keep the European judiciary ruling over Britain.

May's Conservative minority government has a working majority of nine votes in parliament's 650-seat lower House of Commons, thanks to the backing of Northern Ireland's nine Democratic Unionist Party MPs. However, the Commons chamber is broadly split into four camps. Some MPs ultimately want Britain to remain in the EU; some want a complete break with Brussels; some back Chequers; while others want a different type of Brexit.

Barnier, May standing firm

Former Brexit secretary David Davis, who like Johnson quit over Chequers, backed May to stay in her post. "It is absolutely possible to dump Chequers without changing leader," he told The Times newspaper. Barnier opened the door to a brief extension of talks to nail down a deal, say-



LONDON: In this file photo taken on June 13, 2018 Britain's Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson leaves 10 Downing Street in central London. — AFP

ing negotiations must be completed "by mid-November". But, speaking to German newspaper the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, he reiterated his hostility to Chequers. "I strongly oppose the British proposal," he said. "We have a coherent market for goods, services, capital and people — our own ecosystem that has grown over decades. You can not

play with it by picking pieces." May insisted Sunday that she would not be railroaded by Brussels as the talks come to the crunch. "I will not be pushed into accepting compromises on the Chequers proposals that are not in our national interest," she wrote in The Sunday Telegraph newspaper. Britain is due to leave the EU at the end of March. — AFP

British Chagos Islands 'integral' to Mauritius' top UN court told

THE HAGUE: Mauritius told the UN's top court yesterday that the British-ruled Chagos Islands were "integral" to its territory and that the Indian Ocean island chain was handed to London "under duress". Hearings opened yesterday before the International Court of Justice in The Hague where judges are hearing arguments over the future status of the remote archipelago — home to a strategic joint British-US military base leased from Britain on territory claimed by Mauritius.

"More than 50 years after independence... the process of decolonization of Mauritius remains incomplete," former Mauritian president Anerood Jugnauth said. This was "as a result of the unlawful detachment of an integral part of our territory on the eve of our independence," he told the judges. In a diplomatic blow to Britain, the UN General Assembly in June last year adopted a resolution presented by Mauritius and backed by African countries asking the ICJ to offer a legal opinion on the island chain's fate.

The Chagos archipelago was detached from Mauritius for inclusion in the newly created British Indian Ocean Territory in 1965 shortly before Port Louis' independence from Britain. The African Union and 22 countries — including Germany and South Africa and several Asian and Latin American nations — will make statements during the four-day hearing.

'Immense pressure'

They all voted last year whether ask the ICJ to rule on the matter. The US and Australia will also speak and are expected to support Britain while South Africa and the AU are expected to back Mauritius. After the hearings, the ICJ will hand down a non-binding "advisory opinion", but the judges' ruling may take several months or even years. An opinion in favor of Mauritius may strengthen Port Louis' hand in future negotiations or could lay the foundation for an eventual formal claim before the ICJ, which also rules in disputes between countries. Britain used decolonization talks as leverage and paid £3 million for the Chagos islands. Jugnauth said Mauritian officials were given "no room for any choice" during the 1965 independence talks. During meetings in London, then British Prime Minister Harold Wilson aimed to "frighten" Mauritian officials into handing over Chagos in return for independence, Jugnauth said. "It is against that backdrop of immense pressure and in the circumstances amounting to duress, that less than five hours later, four of the five Mauritian representatives yielded to the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago," he said.

Strategic base

As the Cold War with the former Soviet Union intensified, the US established a military base on Diego Garcia, the largest of the islands. The Indian Ocean base plays a key strategic role in US military operations. In the 1970s, it offered proximity to Asia during the fall of Saigon and the Khmer Rouge takeover in Cambodia, and as the Soviet navy extended its influence in the region. In recent years it has served as a staging ground for US bombing campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. Britain in the early 1970s also evicted the archipelago's residents — some 2,000 in total — to Mauritius and the Seychelles to make way for the base. Mauritius' top lawyer in the case Philippe Sands on Monday played an emotional video of Chagossian Marie Elyse, as she tearfully described her desire to return to the "island of my birth." "The desire to return, and the inability to do so, offer tangible evidence that the decolonization of Mauritius is yet to be completed," Sands said. Last year's vote before the UN whether to refer the matter to the ICJ was also seen as a test for Britain's ability to rally support from fellow Europeans at the world body, after its shock vote to leave the European Union. — AFP

Russian TV launches new Putin show as his ratings fall

MOSCOW: Russian Kremlin-controlled television has launched a new weekly show dedicated to President Vladimir Putin in an apparent attempt to stem a major fall in his approval ratings. The first episode, which aired Sunday on the Rossiya 1 channel, showed the long-serving leader picking mushrooms in Siberia and in meetings with miners and schoolchildren.

The president already dominates state news bulletins but Rossiya 1's hour-long show "Moscow, Kremlin, Putin" provides a new format to showcase his activities. The previously unannounced show comes as Putin faces a record fall in his approval ratings as a result of a deeply unpopular pension reform that saw thousands of Russians take to the streets in protest.

"This is the project of (state TV company) VGTRK, not the Kremlin's," Putin's

spokesman Dmitry Peskov said yesterday. "It is important for us that information about the president and his work schedule is shown correctly and without distortion," he said. Peskov added that Putin himself does not plan to take part in the program.

But Peskov did take part in the first episode, interviewed by pro-Kremlin presenter Vladimir Solovye, and praised Putin's personal and professional achievements. "Putin not only likes children, he likes people in general. He's a very human person," the spokesman told viewers. Much of the program hailed Putin's stance on the controversial pension reform, Russia's top news story for weeks.

Last week Putin proposed measures to soften the reform in a rare televised address suggesting raising the state pension for women by five years instead of eight-but he stuck to the overall government plan. Peskov told the program Putin took the decision to address the nation "momentarily" and "literally the next day we recorded it".

"He worked on it himself, correcting things until the last minute." A government official on the show told viewers that Putin had "taken responsibility for future generations". On Sunday thousands of people across Russia protested the reform despite



A picture taken on August 26, 2018, shows Russian President Vladimir Putin sitting on a mountain ridge during a short vacation in the remote Tuva region in southern Siberia. — AFP

Putin's announcement of several concessions. Putin, who had vowed not to raise the pension age, saw public trust in his presidency fall to 64 percent last month from 80 percent in May, according to

VTsIOM state pollster. The last time his approval ratings were this low was in January 2014, just months before his popularity skyrocketed following the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine. — AFP

Boko Haram army base attack death toll hits 48

KANO: Forty-eight soldiers were killed in a Boko Haram attack in remote northeast Nigeria, military sources said yesterday, in the latest strike that raises questions about the group's apparent resurgence and troops' ability to fight back. Scores of jihadist fighters in trucks stormed the base on Thursday in Zari village in northern Borno state and briefly seized it after a fierce battle.

Boko Haram, which has been waging a deadly insurgency in northeast Nigeria since 2009, has intensified attacks on "hard" military targets in recent months, undermining repeated claims by the military that they have the upper hand. Troops have even protested that they are stretched to breaking point by constant security duties and the attacks that analysts tracking the conflict say have become more sophisticated and planned.

At least 30 Nigerian soldiers were initially said to have been killed in Thursday's raid, which was claimed by a Boko Haram faction backed by the Islamic State group. "The casualty toll now stands at 48 with the recovery of 17 more bodies of soldiers in surrounding bushes in Zari by search and rescue teams," a military source who did not want to be named told AFP.

"Search operations are still ongoing and more bodies are likely to be recovered." Another military source confirmed the new death toll. "So far (the) bodies of 48 troops have been recovered. Yesterday rescue teams found 17 bodies of fallen soldiers," he said, adding that they included two officers and 46 soldiers. "When the troops were overwhelmed by the ter-



GWAGWALADA: In this file photo taken on April 17, 2018 a member of the Nigerian Military Police sits on an armored vehicle during the African Land Forces Summit (ALFS) military demonstration held at General Ao Azazi barracks. — AFP

rorists they withdrew in different directions."

Uprising in activity

The militants were said to have taken weapons and military equipment before they were pushed out of the base by troops with aerial support. The sources said the extremists were pursued and bombarded by a fighter jet. "The terrorists also suffered heavy casualty from the bombardment," one of the military officers said.

Zari is located 30 kilometers from the town of Damasak, on the border with Niger, which has seen an upsurge in Boko Haram activity. The jihadists are thought to have attacked the base from the nearby Garunda village, where 17 troops were killed and 14 injured in an attack on another military base last month, the sources said. In a statement late Friday the Nigerian military confirmed troops fought Boko Haram "insurgents... on (a) rampage to loot the community

and extort money from villagers". But no death toll was given.

The intensified armed campaign in recent weeks, primarily against military targets, has claimed the lives of dozens of troops, providing the government with a headache as it looks to trumpet its security achievements before elections next year. On July 14, militants overran a military base in Jilli village in neighboring Yobe state. Dozens of troops were said to have been killed, wounded or missing.

The army at the time conceded the base was attacked but again said troops remobilized and succeeded in repelling the attackers. In a short statement last Wednesday, IS-affiliated Boko Haram jihadists claimed to have killed "several" Nigerian troops in separate mortar strikes on a military base in the town of Arge in the Lake Chad area. AFP could not independently verify the claim. The Boko Haram insurgency, which is in its ninth year, has left 20,000 people dead and displaced 2.6 million. — AFP

Spanish PM proposes referendum on Catalonia

MADRID: Spain's Prime Minister proposed holding a referendum in Catalonia yesterday on greater autonomy for the wealthy region but ruled out allowing a vote on independence as demanded by Catalan leaders. Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez—who since coming to power in June has attempted to defuse tensions over Catalonia's independence drive by holding talks with the region's separatist president Quim Torra—told radio Cadena Ser that dialogue should lead to "a vote... on the reinforcement of Catalonia's autonomy".

"It is a referendum for autonomy, not for self-determination," he added, without giving a timeline for the proposed vote. But Torra, who was being interviewed at the same time by Catalan public television, said "Catalonia's right to self-determination could not be swept under the carpet". "The independence process is irreversible," he told the station.

Catalonia, which has its own distinct language, was granted autonomy under Spain's 1978 constitution adopted three years after the death of longtime dictator Francisco Franco. In 2006, a statute granting even greater powers to the northwestern region, boosting its financial clout, was approved by the Spanish and Catalan parliaments. And in a referendum at the time, over 73 percent of voters in Catalonia approved it. But in 2010 Spain's Constitutional Court struck down several articles of the charter, among them attempts to place the distinctive Catalan language above Spanish in the region and a clause describing the region as a "nation".

The ruling sparked a rise in support for independence in Catalonia, which is home to some 7.5 million people and accounts for about one fifth of the Spanish economy. "Catalonia currently has a statute which it did not vote for, so there is a political problem," Sanchez said. Sanchez's minority government, which relies on the support of Catalan separatist parties to pass legislation, has distanced itself from the hardline approach adopted by its conservative predecessor against Catalonia's separatist drive, which sparked a major political crisis. — AFP

International

Myanmar jails Reuters reporters for seven years in landmark secrets case

Restaurant meeting was a set-up to entrap the journalists

YANGON: A Myanmar judge yesterday found two Reuters journalists guilty of breaching a law on state secrets and jailed them for seven years, in a landmark case seen as a test of progress towards democracy in the Southeast Asian country. Yangon northern district judge Ye Lwin said Wa Lone, 32, and Kyaw Soe Oo, 28, breached the colonial-era Official Secrets Act when they collected and obtained confidential documents.

"The defendants ... have breached Official Secrets Act section 3.1.c, and are sentenced to seven years," the judge said, adding that the time served since they were detained on Dec 12 would be taken into account. The defense can appeal the decision to a regional court and then the Supreme Court. The verdict comes amid mounting pressure on the government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi over a security crackdown sparked by attacks by Rohingya Muslim insurgents on security forces in Rakhine State in west Myanmar in August 2017.

More than 700,000 stateless Rohingya Muslims have fled into Bangladesh since then, according to UN agencies. The two reporters, who were investigating the killing by the security forces of Rohingya villagers at the time of their arrest, had pleaded not guilty. Press freedom advocates, the United Nations, the European Union and countries including the United States, Canada and Australia had called for the journalists' acquittal.

"Today is a sad day for Myanmar, Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, and the press every-

where," Reuters editor in chief Stephen J Adler said in a statement. "We will not wait while Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo suffer this injustice and will evaluate how to proceed in the coming days, including whether to seek relief in an international forum." The reporters had told the court two police officials handed them papers at a restaurant in the city of Yangon moments before other officers arrested them.

One police witness testified the restaurant meeting was a set-up to entrap the journalists to block or punish them for their reporting of a mass killing of Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine. More than 80 people, including senior diplomats, were packed into the court yesterday. Judge Ye Lwin read a summary of witness testimony for about an hour before delivering his verdict, which had been postponed by a week because he was sick. The court determined that "confidential documents" found on the two would have been useful "to enemies of the state and terrorist organisations". Documents in their possession and on their phones were "not public information", he said.

'No fear'

Kyaw Soe Oo's wife, Chit Su Win, burst into tears after the verdict, and family members had to support her as she left the court. Wa Lone, in handcuffs and flanked by police, told a cluster of friends and reporters after the verdict not to worry. "We know we did nothing wrong. I have no fear. I believe in justice, democra-

cy and freedom," he said.

Kyaw Soe Oo also said the reporters had committed no crime and that they would maintain their fight for press freedom. "What I want to say to the government is: you can put us in jail, but do not close the eyes and ears of the people," he said. Some of the reporters' supporters shouted "let them speak" and jostled with police as they were driven back to prison. Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo both have young daughters and have not

seen their families outside of prison visits and court hearings for nearly nine months. Kyaw Soe Oo has a three-year-old daughter and Wa Lone's wife, Pan Ei Mon, gave birth to their first child last month. Government spokesman Zaw Htay didn't respond to requests for comment about the verdict. He has mostly declined to comment throughout the proceedings, saying the courts were independent and the case would be conducted according to the law.—Reuters



YANGON: Reuters journalist Wa Lone (C) arrives in court in Yangon on September 3, 2018 to face verdict after months of trial since he was detained on December 12, 2017. — AFP

“Today is a sad day for Myanmar”

Pakistan girds with Pompeo as US halts military funding

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's new foreign minister said he will "have exchanges" with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo over Washington's cancellation of a \$300 million disbursement for the Pakistani military when he visits Islamabad tomorrow. Adopting a tougher line with an ally that US President Donald Trump considers unreliable, the United States halted the disbursement of Coalition Support Funds due to Islamabad's perceived failure to take decisive action against Afghan Taliban militants operating from Pakistani soil.

The United States has now withheld \$800 million from the CSF so far this year. The latest move comes just as the less-than-one-month-old government of Prime Minister Imran Khan faces a looming balance of payments crisis that could force it to seek a fresh bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), or other lenders.

"On the 5th, the American (secretary of state) Pompeo will be arriving, and we will have a chance to sit down with him. There will be exchanges," Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi told reporters late on Sunday night. "We will take our mutual respect for each other into consideration and move forward," he added. Qureshi argued that the US was not justified in cutting

the \$300 million because it was intended to reimburse Pakistan's military for money spent fighting the Taliban and other militants threatening US troops in Afghanistan.

'We did it for our betterment'

"It is not aid. It is not assistance, which was suspended. This is the money, which we have spent. This is our money. We have spent it," Qureshi said. "We did it for our betterment, which they had to reimburse." Officially allies in fighting terrorism, Pakistan and the United States have a complicated relationship, bound by Washington's dependence on Pakistan to guarantee a supply route for US troops in Afghanistan.

US officials have repeatedly accused Pakistan of playing a double game, by covertly providing safe havens for Afghan Taliban insurgents and fighters from the Haqqani group, who are waging a 17-year-old war against Afghanistan's US-backed government. Pakistan consistently denies providing safe havens for the militants. In an editorial yesterday, Pakistan's English-language Dawn newspaper railed against the Trump administration's decision to halt the disbursement of funds. "The US has delivered an object lesson in how not to conduct diplomacy," Pakistan's English-language Dawn newspaper said in an editorial yesterday. It went on to speculate whether Pompeo would "try and bully the Pakistani leadership during his visit or if he will be deployed in a more traditional 'good cop' diplomatic role."

Pompeo will be accompanied by top US military officer, General Joseph Dunford, for talks with the Pakistani leadership. Relations between the new Pakistani government and Washington got off to a



WASHINGTON DC: In this file photo taken on August 23, 2018, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announces Steve Biegun (L) as special representative to North Korea at the State Department. — AFP

rocky start last month when Qureshi publicly disputed that Pompeo had brought up the thorny issue of terrorist havens in a phone call with Prime Minister Khan.

The Pakistani side later downplayed the issue after Washington shared a transcript of the call, Pakistani media reported. The Trump administration a year ago resolved to take tougher line with Pakistan than previous US administrations. In his first tweet of 2018, Trump slammed Pakistan, saying the country has rewarded past US aid with "nothing but lies & deceit." Washington announced plans in January to suspend up to roughly \$2 billion in US security assistance to Pakistan. — Reuters

Two Malaysian women caned under Islamic law

KUALA TERENGGANU: Two Malaysian women were caned yesterday for having lesbian sex in violation of strict Islamic laws, sparking outrage from activists at the "inhuman and degrading" punishment. The women, dressed in white dresses and Muslim headscarves, were each given six strokes as they sat on stools in a sharia court, with one of them breaking down in tears.

Campaigners said it was the first time women in Malaysia have been caned for violating a sharia regulation which forbids same-sex relations. They said the case highlights the worsening climate for gay people in the Muslim-majority country. The country operates a dual-track legal system. Islamic courts can handle religious and family matters for Muslim citizens, as well as cases such as adultery.

The women, aged 22 and 32, were arrested in April by Islamic enforcement officers after they were found in a car in a public square in the northern state of Terengganu, one of the country's most conservative areas. The pair, whose identities have not been revealed, pleaded guilty last month to breaking Islamic laws and were sentenced to be whipped and fined 3,300 ringgit (\$800).

They were caned at the Sharia High Court in the state capital Kuala Terengganu. A judge read out their sentence just before 10:00 am (0300 GMT) and then officials meted out the punishment using thin canes in front of a packed courtroom, according to a journalist in the court. The younger woman sobbed but the elder one showed no reaction.

'Grave rights violation'

The punishment sparked a barrage of criticism, with Malaysian rights group Women's Aid Organisation saying it was "outraged and appalled by this grave violation of human rights. "Sexual acts between two consenting adults should not be criminalised, let alone punished with whipping." Amnesty International said it was a "dreadful reminder of the depth of discrimination LGBT people face in the country and a sign that the new government condones the use of inhuman and degrading punishments, much like its predecessor".

Court official Wan Abdul Malik Wan Sidek defended the punishment, saying it was not as tough as caning carried out for numerous crimes under Malaysia's civil law. Caning under Islamic law is carried out with a relatively thin cane on subjects who are fully clothed, and is more about humiliation than causing pain. A reformist alliance took power in Malaysia at historic May elections, fuelling hopes that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people might face less discrimination in a country where authorities have routinely targeted them in the past.

But instead, campaigners say the environment for homosexuals appears to have deteriorated markedly in the multi-ethnic country. About 60 percent of the 32 million inhabitants are Muslim. The Islamic affairs minister has spoken out against homosexuals and ordered pictures of LGBT activists to be removed from a public exhibition, while a transgender woman was brutally attacked in the southern state of Negeri Sembilan.

Thilaga Sulathireh, from transgender rights group Justice for Sisters, said the caning would only "increase the impunity of perpetrators to carry out acts of violence" aimed at gay people. Lesbian sex is illegal for Muslims in Malaysia under Islamic laws, but not for the country's substantial minorities of ethnic Chinese and Indians. Sodomy is a crime for all ethnic groups under a law dating back to British colonial rule, although the statute is rarely enforced. — AFP

Typhoon Jebi on course to hit Japan

TOKYO: A typhoon that forecasters warned could be the strongest to hit Japan in 25 years barreled directly towards the western part of the country yesterday, sparking warnings of violent winds and prompting rail operators to scrap services. Typhoon Jebi is expected to make landfall around midday today near areas still recovering from deadly record rains last month.

If it maintains its current strength of 216 kilometers per hour, Jebi would be the first "very strong" typhoon to make landfall on Japan since 1993, according to the country's weather bureau. The agency's chief forecaster Ryuta Kurora issued a televised warning for possible landslides, flooding and violent winds, as well as high tides, lightning and tornadoes. "It is possible that (Jebi) will make landfall while maintaining its extreme strength," said Kurora.

Currently churning over Pacific waters east of Okinawa island on the country's southwestern tip, Jebi was expected to sweep above a region surrounding the commercial hubs of Osaka and Kyoto before heading out to the Sea of Japan. Regional businesses reacted quickly, with a major railway firm and Universal Studios Japan in Osaka already scrapping services for Tuesday.

Jebi has a similar trajectory to Typhoon Cimaron, which made landfall on August 23. This storm disrupted transport links, but injuries and damages were limited. Japan is now in typhoon season, and is regularly struck by major storm systems during the summer and autumn. Jebi is the latest weather front to batter Japan, which has also been sweating through a record and deadly heatwave. — AFP



KERALA: This photo taken on August 20, 2018 shows Indian fishermen arranging their nets at Mappila beach in Kannur, in the Indian state of Kerala. — AFP

Kerala battles 'rat fever' outbreak after floods

NEW: The southern Indian state of Kerala is battling an outbreak of a bacterial disease that authorities suspect has killed dozens of people since mid-August after the worst flooding in a century. A health ministry spokesman said as of Sunday there had been nearly 200 confirmed cases of what is locally called rat fever - the waterborne disease leptospirosis transmitted via the urine of infected animals, with symptoms including muscle pain and fever.

The surge in cases comes after torrential rain beginning on Aug. 8 flooded almost the entire state, killing hundreds of people, destroying thousands of homes and causing at least 200 billion rupees (\$2.81 billion) worth of damage. The health ministry began distributing preventive medicine last month and warned about the outbreak of leptospirosis and other waterborne diseases such as typhoid and cholera, Health Minister KK Shailaja told reporters.

Local media reported three leptospirosis deaths yesterday. "The victims had unfortunately not taken preventive medicine," the minister said. Overall, nine deaths from the disease have been confirmed, but the number may rise to over 40 pending full medical reports, the ministry spokesman said.

Fast infection

Leptospirosis rarely spreads from person to person and can be treated with common antibiotics. "In the past week, we have seen about 30 deaths in Kozhikode and Wayanad," said Mohammed Javeed, internal medicine specialist at a private hospital in Kerala, referring to two of the worst flood-affected districts on the state's southwest coast. Javeed said the state has leptospirosis cases every monsoon season as paddy fields fill with water, increasing the chance of infection for farmers, especially through wounds such as cuts. Of particular concern, however, is that some of the victims this year did not have usual symptoms such as mild jaundice, blood in urine or bleeding spots on the skin, he said. "This time it is a fast, progressive infection," Javeed told Reuters. "The recent deaths indicate clearly the threat of an epidemic." Medical professionals are continuing to dispense preventive medicine in the form of tablets which need to be taken once a week for a month, Javeed said. — Reuters

Analysis

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US firefighters battle suicidal thoughts after the blaze

Matt Shobert opens his eyes and wishes he was dead, a recurrent thought that started four years ago when the former firefighter first contemplated taking his own life. He is not the only one: some of his comrades suffer in silence, and some end up committing suicide. Fighting forest fires such as those that have ravaged the western regions of the United States this summer means days that are both exhausting and interminable, while the death and destruction weigh heavily on the minds of those tasked with stemming the flames.

"You've got firefighters working 12 to 36 hours straight on the fire line, so they are physically exhausted, they are emotionally exhausted because we've been killing firemen in these fires, firemen have been dying," said fire chief Tony Bommarito in Yorba Linda, 40 miles (65 kilometers) south of Los Angeles.

California, one of the worst-hit states, has seen five firefighters die battling the flames so far this year. Across the whole country, that number rises to 64, according to official figures. That figure does not include the 45 who killed themselves in 2018, according to Jeff Dill, whose Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance (FBHA) group helps those battling depression or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, otherwise known as PTSD. "We are not superheroes. Everybody has a limit," said Bommarito, 48. "We are expected to act brave, strong, courageous to help, don't ask for help," said Dill, a retired firefighter whom Matt Shobert called when his thoughts turned to leaping off a bridge in San Diego.

Left with nothing

Shobert, 56, was overseeing a clean-up in the middle of nowhere: the brush was dry and combustible, perfect tinder for a forest fire. In a freak accident, the blade of commercial-grade mower hit a rock and fired it like a missile into his jaw: the operator of the machine was half a football field away and failed to notice what had happened. Shobert was knocked out cold, and was covered in blood when he woke up. He was not sure how he was going to make it 500 yards to his pick-up truck to call for help.

"I basically had this very traumatic injury and I had to save my own life," he said. "After spending about 30 years in the fire service, dealing with death and destruction and carnage, and I think all those things came together." It took him a long time to recover from his injury. When he returned to work he was not the same man, oscillating between bursts of anger and sadness. "I realized at that point I had to retire from the fire service and that was all I knew for the past 30 years because it was my life, it was my hobby, it was everything I did. And in a split second it was taken away," he said.

"I contemplated suicide. And for whatever reason I decided to just call a friend of mine... rather than jump off the bridge in San Diego," he said. Shobert was diagnosed with PTSD and since then has undergone therapy and taken medication, but the road is long and hard. "I still wake up in the morning and sometimes wish I was dead," he said. "I'm still fairly miserable, but at least now I have a tool box." Dill became interested in the mental health issues that his "brothers and sisters" were facing when a group from his fire station came back from helping out in New Orleans in 2005, after the devastating Hurricane Katrina.

He felt the therapy they were offered was not enough, so he started studying and began the transition from firefighter to counselor. He has tallied 1,200 suicides over the past 20 years, including 93 in 2017. But Dill thinks that only represents around 40 percent of the actual number of suicides, because his research depends on families and friends coming forward with the information for his list.

'A dark place'

Experts say that the decision to commit suicide is often the result of an accumulation of factors. That is what happened with Mike Bilek. It was his past in the military, then as a firefighter, all mixed in with unspecified personal issues, that led him to think about killing himself. "At one point, I was getting into such a dark place that I started having those thoughts of suicide," he said.

"I never got to the point where I was going to act out on it," he said. "But the fact that those thoughts were even creeping into my head really scared the daylight out of me." Bilek sought help and now treats his condition with a combination of therapy, medication and meditation, which he needed more than ever when a back injury forced him to retire at 39 and start a new life.

There is more talk these days in fire stations about mental health issues, with support groups, but there is still resistance. Dill said he recently talked with seven firefighters diagnosed with PTSD who were "fired from the job because they were told, 'Well you can't do the job no more,'" he said. In his mission to spread the word, Dill bought a caravan so he can travel the country and talk to firefighters about their mental health. And as he left the fire station in Yorba Linda, he received a text message on his cell phone: another suicide. —AFP

Cartoon for the Soul



How Myanmar punished two young reporters for uncovering atrocities

Time and again, Myanmar's government appeared at risk of blowing its prosecution of two young journalists who had exposed a massacre of 10 Muslim men and implicated security forces in the killings. On April 20, a prosecution witness revealed in pre-trial hearings that police planted military documents on Reuters reporters Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo in order to frame them for violating the country's Official Secrets Act. That admission drew gasps from the courtroom.

A police officer told the court that he burned notes he made at the time of the reporters' arrest, but didn't explain why. Several prosecution witnesses contradicted the police account of where the arrests took place. A police major conceded the "secret" information allegedly found on the reporters wasn't actually a secret. And outside the courtroom, military officials even admitted that the killings had indeed taken place.

'Pre-planned and staged'

These bombshells bolstered central assertions of the defense: The arrests were a "pre-planned and staged" effort to silence the truthful reporting of Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo. In the end, the holes in the case were not enough to stop the government from punishing the two reporters for revealing an ugly chapter in the history of Myanmar's young democracy. On Monday, after 39 court appearances and 265 days of imprisonment, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were found guilty of breaching the Official Secrets Act and sentenced to seven years in prison. Yangon northern district judge Ye Lwin ruled that the two reporters had breached the secrets act when they collected and obtained confidential documents. Delivering his verdict in the small courtroom, he said it had been found that "confidential documents" discovered on the two would have been useful "to enemies of the state and terrorist organizations."

After the verdict was delivered, Wa Lone told a cluster of friends and reporters not to worry. "We know we did nothing wrong," he said, addressing reporters outside the courtroom. "I have no fear. I believe in justice, democracy and freedom."

The prosecution of Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo has become a landmark press freedom case in Myanmar and a test of the nation's transition to democratic governance since decades of rule by a military junta ended in 2011. The military, though, still controls key government ministries and is guaranteed 25 percent of parliamentary seats, giving it much power in the fledgling democracy. During the court hearings, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and leaders from several Western countries had called for the reporters' release. After the verdict, Scot Marciel, the US ambassador to Myanmar, said the ruling was "deeply troubling" for everybody who had struggled for media freedom in the country. "I'm sad for Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo and their families, but also for Myanmar," he said.

A major step backward

Reuters Editor-in-Chief Stephen J Adler said the two reporters had been convicted "without any evidence of wrongdoing and in the face of compelling evidence of a police set-up." The verdict, he said, was "a major step backward in Myanmar's transition to democracy." Myanmar government spokesman Zaw Htay did not respond to requests for comment about the verdict. A week before the ruling, United Nations investigators said in a report that Myanmar's military had carried out mass killings and gang rapes of Muslim Rohingya with "genocidal intent," and that the commander-in-chief and five generals should be punished. The report also accused the government of

Aung San Suu Kyi of contributing to "the commission of atrocity crimes" by failing to shield minorities from crimes against humanity and war crimes. Myanmar has rejected the findings. Suu Kyi, the country's de facto leader who spent some 15 years under house arrest during the junta era, has made few public statements about the case. In a rare comment in June, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate told Japanese broadcaster NHK that the reporters weren't arrested for covering the violence in western Myanmar.

"They were arrested because they broke the Official Secrets Act," she said. The act dates back to 1923, when Myanmar - then known as Burma - was under British rule. The charge against the reporters carried a maximum sentence of 14 years. Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were found guilty under Section 3.1 (c) of the act, which covers obtaining secret official documentation that "might be or is intended to be, directly or indirectly, useful to an enemy."

At the time of their arrest in December, Wa Lone, now 32, and Kyaw Soe Oo, now 28, were working on a Reuters investigation into the killing of 10 Rohingya Muslim villagers during an army crackdown in Rakhine State in the west of the country. The violence has sent more than 700,000 Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh, where they now live in vast refugee camps. The United States has accused the government of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya, a Muslim minority who are widely reviled in this majority-Buddhist country. Myanmar says its operations in Rakhine were a legitimate response to attacks on security forces by Rohingya insurgents.

Reuters published its investigation into the massacre on Feb 8. An account of the killing of eight men and two high school students in September in the village of Inn Din, the report prompted international demands for a credible probe into the wider bloodshed in Rakhine. The story and its accompanying photographs provided the first independent confirmation of what took place at Inn Din. Two of the photos obtained by the reporters show the men kneeling, in one with their hands behind their necks and in a second with their hands tied behind their backs. A third picture shows their bodies, some apparently with bullet wounds, others with gashes, in a blood-stained, shallow grave.

Sleep deprived

The prosecution of the reporters put Aung San Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, in the glare of an uncomfortable global spotlight. Hailed as a champion of democracy for standing up to the junta, Suu Kyi was released from house arrest in 2010. Her party won a general election in 2015 and formed Myanmar's first civilian government in more than half a century in early 2016. Her cabinet includes three generals, however; in a speech last month, she called these military men "all rather sweet."

Earlier this year, veteran US politician Bill Richardson said Suu Kyi was "furious" with him when he raised the case of the Reuters journalists with her. Richardson, a former Clinton administration cabinet member, resigned in January from an international panel set up by Myanmar to advise on the Rohingya crisis, saying the body was conducting a "whitewash" and accusing Suu Kyi of lacking "moral leadership." Suu Kyi's office said at the time that Richardson was "pursuing his own agenda" and had been asked to step down.

Very excessive

As leader of the opposition, Suu Kyi had criticized the junta's treatment of journalists. In 2014, she reportedly described as "very excessive" a prison sentence of 10 years with hard labor handed down to four local journalists and their boss. They were found guilty of trespass-



YANGON: This combo photo shows journalists Kyaw Soe Oo (left) and Wa Lone being escorted by police after their sentencing by a court to jail in Yangon yesterday. —AFP



YANGON: Chit Su Win, (2nd-right) wife of jailed Myanmar journalist Kyaw Soe Oo grieves with family members while her daughter Mar Mar Latt (left) looks on outside the court yesterday. —AFP

ing and violating the Official Secrets Act, the same law used to prosecute the Reuters reporters. "While there are claims of democratic reform, this is questionable when the rights of journalists are being controlled," the local Irrawaddy newspaper quoted her as telling reporters in July 2014. A government spokesman did not answer calls by Reuters seeking comment on Suu Kyi's statement.

Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were arrested on the evening of Dec. 12. During hours of testimony in July, they described that night and the interrogations that followed. They told the court that their heads were covered with black hoods when they were transported to a police interrogation site. They testified they were deprived of sleep for three days during their grillings. At one point, Kyaw Soe Oo said, he was punished and made to kneel on the floor for at least three hours. A police witness denied that the reporters were deprived of sleep and that Kyaw Soe Oo was forced to kneel.

Describing the night of their arrest, Wa Lone said he and Kyaw Soe Oo were detained almost immediately after being handed some documents at a restaurant by a police lance corporal he had been trying to interview for the massacre story. The policeman had invited Wa Lone to meet and Kyaw Soe Oo accompanied him, Wa Lone testified. When the two reporters exited the restaurant, they were grabbed by men in plain clothes, handcuffed

and shoved into separate vehicles, they both testified. As they were driven to a police station, Wa Lone recalled in court, a man who appeared to be in charge called a senior officer and told him: "We've got them, sir."

The interrogation centered on the journalists' reporting and their discovery of the massacre, not on the allegedly secret state documents, Wa Lone told the court. One officer, he said, offered "possible negotiations" if the massacre story wasn't published. Wa Lone said he rejected the overture. At one point, Wa Lone testified, the police chastised him for reporting on the Rohingya. "You are both Buddhists. Why are you writing about 'kalars' at a time like this? They aren't citizens," Wa Lone recalled being told. 'Kalar' is a slur widely used in Myanmar to describe Muslims, especially Rohingya and people of South Asian origin.

It was two weeks from the time of their arrest before Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were allowed contact with their families and lawyers. In late December, they were sent to Yangon's Insein Prison, a colonial-era building that became an emblem of the former military junta's repressive rule. For decades, dissidents were held alongside murderers, thieves and drug dealers. Suu Kyi spent a brief period there. "I found out my cell was built in 1865. It was used for the prisoners before they were killed," Wa Lone told a colleague before one court hearing, amused to have discovered he was living on a Victorian-era death row. —Reuters

Business

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2018

12 GCC markets fall on profit-taking after strong Q2 2018 earnings**13** China's Xi offers \$60bn Africa aid, says 'no strings attached'**14** Turkey's central bank promises action as inflation soars to 18%

LONDON/TOKYO: Surveys of purchasing managers released yesterday showed mounting pressure on factories across Europe and Asia, with later data expected to show the United States is in the same grip. — Reuters

EU, Asia factories take a hit from trade war

Survey says US-China trade conflict could derail global growth

LONDON/TOKYO: Manufacturing activity took a hit from weak orders in August, surveys showed, as sign firms are feeling the pinch from an intensifying trade war between the United States and China that could derail global growth.

Surveys of purchasing managers released yesterday showed mounting pressure on factories across Europe and Asia, with later data expected to show the United States is in the same grip. However, growth remained relatively robust and was unlikely to deter major central banks from moving towards tighter monetary policy. "While we remain alert to the risk of a further loss of momentum from factors such as more protectionism and liquidity shocks, we still think that the most likely scenario is a modest slowdown after the exceptional performance of 2017," said Ben May at Oxford Economics.

Global stock markets fell for a third straight day yesterday, hurt by worries over further escalation of global trade tensions and the deepening sell-off across emerging market currencies. US President Donald Trump's relentless "America First" trade push has hurt confidence in many countries as investors fret about the hit to supply chains. The fear is the escalating tariff conflict will freeze business investment and trade in a blow to global growth.

Trump has said he is ready to implement new tariffs as soon as a public comment period on the plan ends on

Thursday, which would be a major escalation after Washington already applied tariffs on \$50 billion of exports from China. While US growth remains solid for now thanks to huge tax cuts, some analysts say it has now



China's PMI declines in August

peaked. A Reuters poll last month forecast growth in the world's biggest economy will slow steadily in coming quarters, with analysts expecting Trump's trade war to inflict damage. Another poll showed a similarly cautious outlook for euro zone growth over the remainder of this year and in 2019.

Yesterday's surveys showed eurozone manufacturing growth slowed to a near two-year low in August as opti-

mism dwindled while British manufacturers had their weakest month in over two years - a warning that a world economic slowdown, as well as the approach of Brexit, is weighing on the country's factories. "The main reason for the fall in the headline orders was a contraction in export orders, suggesting that the possibility of a 'no deal' exit from the EU in March and a moderation in global growth is starting to weigh more heavily on the sector," said Andrew Wishart at Capital Economics about the British reading.

In Germany, Europe's biggest economy, there are signs global trade tensions are having a more noticeable impact with industrial orders figures for July expected to show only a small rise, after falling by the most in nearly a year-and-a-half in June. FRAGILE ASIA China's vast manufacturing sector grew at the slowest pace in more than a year in August, with export orders shrinking for a fifth month. Export orders also shrank in Japan and South Korea, suggesting increasing protectionism and concerns of slower Chinese demand are weighing on Asia's export-reliant economies. Separate data showed Japanese corporate capital expenditure jumped in the second quarter by the most since 2006, though some analysts warn that global trade tensions may cloud the outlook.

"The tit-for-tat tariff retaliation hurts China's economy far more than that of the United States. And when you look at Asia's economic prospects, much depends on whether

China could avoid a sharp slowdown in growth," said Yoshiaki Shinke, chief economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute in Japan. China's Caixin/Markit Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell to 50.6 in August, matching economists' forecasts. While the index remained above the 50-point mark that separates growth from contraction for the 15th consecutive month, it was the weakest since June 2017. New export orders, an indicator of future activity, have contracted for the longest stretch since the first half of 2016, the Caixin PMI showed.

Trump, who has threatened to impose duties on virtually all of the more than \$500 billion of Chinese goods exported to the United States each year, told Reuters in an interview in August that resolving the trade war with China would "take time" and that he had "no time frame" for ending it. Growth in India's manufacturing sector unexpectedly slowed in August, suggesting a slight loss of momentum for the country's economy that expanded at its fastest pace in more than two years in April-June.

In South Korea, another key manufacturing destination, factory activity contracted for a sixth consecutive month in August as export orders shrank for the first time in three months. While Japan's manufacturing activity expanded in August at a slightly faster pace than the previous month, export orders fell in a fresh sign of the damage from intensifying global trade frictions. — Reuters

Oman expects oil prices to stay between \$70-\$80

DUBAI: Oman's Oil Minister Mohammed bin Hamad Al-Rumhi said yesterday he expects oil prices to remain between \$70 to \$80 a barrel this year, Omani news website WAF reported on Twitter.

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates are the only three countries that have the capacity to increase oil production, he said at an oil conference in Oman. OPEC and its allies pledged on June 22-23 to return to 100 percent compliance with their agreement to reduce their combined output by 1.8 million bpd. The pact was first implemented in January 2017. —Reuters



MUSCAT: Omani Minister of Oil and Gas, Mohammed bin Hamad Al-Rumhi (right), Bahrain's Oil Minister, Mohammed bin Khalifa Al-Khalifa (second left), Raoul Restuccci, Managing Director Petroleum Development Oman (center) look at a project display at the World Heavy Oil Congress and Exhibition in the Omani capital Muscat yesterday. — AFP

Iranian rial hits record low at 128,000 to dollar

TEHRAN: The Iranian rial hit a record low against the US dollar on the unofficial market yesterday amid a deterioration in the economic situation and the reimposition of sanctions by the United States.

The dollar was being offered for as much as 128,000 rials, according to foreign exchange website Bonbast.com, which tracks the unofficial market. The currency has been volatile for months because of a weak economy, financial difficulties at local banks and heavy demand for dollars among Iranians who fear the pullout of Washington from a landmark 2015 nuclear deal and renewed US sanctions could shrink Iran's exports of oil and other goods.

A set of US sanctions targeting Iran's oil industry is due to take effect in November. Last week, Iran's parliament sacked the minister of economic affairs and finance, the latest in a continuing shakeup of top economic personnel. In early August Iranian lawmakers voted out the

minister of labor and in July President Hassan Rouhani replaced the head of the central bank.

Protests linked to the tough economic situation in Iran erupted last December, spreading to more than 80 cities and towns and resulting in 25 deaths. Sporadic protests, led by truck drivers, farmers and merchants in Tehran's bazaar, have continued since then and have occasionally resulted in violent confrontations with security forces. Meanwhile, Japan's major oil wholesalers are preparing to suspend crude oil imports from Iran in October, amid fears Washington will sanction countries importing Iranian crude, local media reported.

US President Donald Trump in May pulled out of a 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and last month began reimposing sanctions that block other countries from trading with Iran. A second phase of sanctions targeting Iran's crucial oil industry and banking sector will be reinstated on November 5.

Japan has been seeking a waiver that would allow it to continue importing Iranian oil, but it appears unlikely to win one, Jiji Press agency and other local media reported in recent days.

As a result, Japanese oil companies are preparing to halt imports of Iranian crude and researching ways to increase imports from elsewhere to make up the shortfall, the reports said. —Agencies

Business

China's Xi offers \$60 bn Africa aid, says 'no strings attached'

Beijing draws flak over its debt-heavy projects abroad

BEIJING: President Xi Jinping told African leaders yesterday that China's investments on the continent have "no political strings attached", pledging \$60 billion in new development financing, even as Beijing is increasingly criticized over its debt-heavy projects abroad.

Xi offered the funding at the start of a two-day China-Africa summit that focused on his cherished Belt and Road initiative. The money-to be spent over the next three years-comes on top of \$60 billion Beijing offered in 2015. The massive scheme is aimed at improving Chinese access to foreign markets and resources, and boosting Beijing's influence abroad.

It has already seen China loan billions of dollars to countries in Asia and Africa for roads, railways, ports and other major infrastructure projects. But critics warn that the Chinese leader's pet project is burying some countries under massive debt.

"China's investment in Africa comes with no political strings attached," Xi told a high-level dialogue with African leaders and business representatives ahead of the summit.

"China's cooperation with Africa is clearly targeted at the major bottlenecks to development. Resources for our coopera-

tion are not to be spent on any vanity projects, but in places where they count the most." But Xi admitted there was a need to look at the commercial viability of projects and make sure preparations are made to lower investment risks and make cooperation "more sustainable".

Belt and Road, Xi said, "is not a scheme to form an exclusive club or bloc against others. Rather it is about greater openness, sharing and mutual benefit."

Later, at the start of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Xi announced \$60 billion in funds for eight initiatives over the next three years, in areas ranging from industrial promotion, infrastructure construction and scholarships for young Africans.

He added that Africa's least developed, heavily indebted and poor countries will be exempt from debt they have incurred in the form of interest-free Chinese loans due to mature by the end of 2018. A study by the Center for Global Development, a US think-tank, found "serious concerns" about the sustainability of sovereign debt in eight Asian, European and African countries receiving Belt and Road funds.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa defended China's involvement

on the continent, saying FOCAC "refutes the view that a new colonialism is taking hold in Africa as our detractors would have us believe." During a visit to China last month, Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamed warned against "a new version of colonialism," as he cancelled a series of Chinese-backed infrastructure projects worth \$22 billion.

Ahead of FOCAC, Rwandan President Paul Kagame, currently the chair of the African Union, also dismissed the concerns, telling the official Xinhua news agency talk of "debt traps" were attempts to discourage African-Chinese interactions.

'Fractured world'

At the last three-yearly gathering in Johannesburg in 2015, Xi announced \$60 billion of assistance and loans for Africa. Nations across Africa are hoping that China's enthusiasm for infrastructure investment will help promote industrialization on the continent. Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari will oversee the signing of a telecommunication infrastructure deal backed by a \$328-million loan facility from China's Exim bank during his visit, his office said.

Xi said Belt and Road complies with international norms, and China "welcomes



BEIJING: China's President Xi Jinping arrives at the opening ceremony of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

the participation of other capable and willing countries for mutually beneficial third-party cooperation".

China has provided aid to Africa since the Cold War, but Beijing's presence in the region has grown exponentially with its

emergence as a global trading power. Chinese state-owned companies have aggressively pursued large investments in Africa, whose vast resources have helped fuel China's transformation into an economic powerhouse. —AFP

Argentina's president announces new austerity measures

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's president Mauricio Macri announced austerity measures yesterday, including the elimination of government ministries and stiff taxes on exports to reduce budget deficits and stabilize the economy. The center-right president admitted in a speech to the nation that Argentina was facing "an emergency."



Argentina's President Mauricio Macri

"We must confront a fundamental problem: to not spend more than we have, to make efforts to balance the state's accounts," he said in the televised address. Argentina is one of the world's biggest exporters of corn and soy oil. Addressing rich agricultural exporters who will face export taxes, he said: "We know it's a bad tax, but I ask you to understand that it's an emergency." In a bid to reassure Argentines increasingly concerned over austerity, he said he would allocate more aid to the country's poor, suffering from the effects of high inflation. "We will overcome the crisis by taking care of the most needy," promising "increased allocations, food programs and price caps on some commodities."

Several ministries will be eliminated, which will result in a decrease in budget and staff. Economy Minister Nicolas Dujovne recognized in a press conference later that "mistakes had been made" in managing the economy and announced measures to cut the budget deficit to 1.3 percent of GDP in 2019. Dujovne was speaking before flying to Washington for a meeting with the International Monetary Fund today to finalize a deal to speed up disbursement of a \$50 billion loan agreed in June. — AFP

World stocks on edge over trade worries

LONDON: Global stock markets diverged yesterday, with a weak pound lifting London's benchmark FTSE 100 index and offsetting trade war concerns dragging down equities elsewhere.

In the eurozone, Frankfurt stocks dipped 0.2 percent and Paris flatlined, as US President Donald Trump eyed fresh tariffs on a swathe of Chinese goods-while NAFTA talks with Canada appeared to hit a wall.

"European equity markets are mixed... as traders remain cautious about global trading relationships," said CMC Markets UK analyst David Madden. "President Trump appears to be taking a tough line with Canada and the EU, and there is speculation he will ramp up tariffs on Chinese imports."

In a tweet over the weekend, Trump threatened to exclude Canada from a new North American Free Trade Agreement after negotiations to rewrite the 1994 pact ended without agreement.

Trump had already roiled markets last week by saying he wanted to impose tariffs on \$200 billion of Chinese imports as soon as public consultation ends on Thursday, adding to the \$50 billion already targeted. That rekindled fears of an all-out trade war between the world's top two economies.

Asian stock markets opened the week on a negative note, with Tokyo closing down 0.7 percent, Hong Kong losing 0.6 percent and

Shanghai shaving 0.2 percent.

Brexit division hits pound

London equities meanwhile jumped 0.9 percent yesterday on the back of the sliding pound, which traditionally boosts the share prices of multinationals. Sterling sank on growing political acrimony over British Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit blueprint, and after weak UK manufacturing survey data.

Pro-Brexit figurehead Boris Johnson labelled May's plan a surrender that hands "victory" to the European Union, ahead of the nation's exit from the bloc in March 2019.

The EU's Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier remains "strongly" opposed to her blueprint, saying it could lead to the downfall of European integration.

"The Brexit optimism of last week has been predictably fleeting, with Barnier ripping Theresa May's Chequers plans into shreds," noted IG analyst Joshua Mahony. Meanwhile 20 MPs in May's center-right Conservative Party publicly pledged to reject her so-called Chequers plan, which would keep Britain close to the EU on trade. Britain is set to leave the bloc on March 30, but the two sides want to strike the divorce agreement by the October 18-19 EU summit to give their parliaments enough time to endorse a deal. Elsewhere on currency markets, Turkey's lira halved earlier losses as the country's central bank said it would take the "necessary actions to support price stability".

The comment followed data showing inflation hit a 15-year high of 17.9 percent last month as a dive in the currency-it is down about 40 percent this year-filters through to consumers. However, the bank has refused to lift interest rates to combat the surging prices, putting pressure on the embattled Turkish economy. — AFP

Millennium appoints Khaled Mourad Hotel Manager of Cophorne Al-Jahra

KUWAIT: Millennium & Copthorne Hotels and resorts announced the appointment of Khaled Mourad as Hotel Manager of Cophorne Al-Jahra Hotel & Resort - Kuwait. Khaled commenced his career with Millennium & Copthorne in February 2013, as Finance Manager for the Cophorne Al-Jahra Hotel & Resort. He has been named "The Finance Manager of the year in Middle East for the year 2018 during the Hotelier Express Award". Mourad conveyed his excitement by saying: "Am excited to work with an active and professional team to continue the success of Cophorne Al-Jahra Hotel".



Khaled will be managing Cophorne Al-Jahra Hotel & Resort - Kuwait, which is located in northern Kuwait, with a range of services from an international shopping center, amusement park and many restaurants.

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Business

Turkey's central bank promises action as inflation soars to 18%

Albayrak promises 'full-fledged fight' to ensure price stability

ISTANBUL: Turkey's central bank signalled yesterday it would take action against "significant risks" to price stability, a rare move to calm financial markets after inflation surged to its highest in nearly a decade and a half. The comments, seen as presaging an interest rate increase at the bank's next meeting on Sept 13, underscore the volatile outlook for prices amid a currency crisis. The lira has lost 40 percent of its value against the dollar this year, driving up the cost of goods from potatoes to petrol and sparking alarm about the impact on the wider economy.

Inflation jumped 17.9 percent year-on-year in August, official data showed, outstripping market expectations and marking its highest level since late 2003.

"Recent developments regarding the inflation outlook indicate significant risks to price stability. The central bank will take the necessary actions to support price stability," the bank said shortly after the release of the inflation data.

"(The) monetary stance will be adjusted at the September monetary policy committee meeting in view of the latest developments." For investors, the main question has been whether the central bank will be able to sufficiently hike rates to tame inflation. It left rates on hold at its last meeting in July, confounding expectations and sending the lira sharply weaker.

Last raised rates in June, when it lifted its benchmark one-week repo rate by 1.25 percentage points, to 17.75 percent.

By signalling that it was ready to take action, the central bank may now have inadvertently set financial markets up for disappointment if it doesn't deliver a hefty increase, said Piotr Matys, an emerging markets forex strategist at Rabobank.

"A proper rate hike is required and by making a pledge

to raise interest rates, the central bank may have raised the bar for itself to exceed expectations on Sept. 13," Matys said. "The central bank basically has no room to disappoint."

'Full-fledged fight'

The lira briefly recovered some losses immediately after the central bank's announcement. By 1132 GMT it was 1 percent weaker on the day at 6.6100 to the dollar. President Tayyip Erdogan, a self-described "enemy of interest rates", wants to see lower borrowing costs to keep credit-fuelled growth on track. Economists, who fear the economy is set for a hard landing, want big rate hikes.

Finance Minister Berat Albayrak told Reuters in an interview on Sunday that the bank was independent of the government and would take all necessary steps to combat inflation. He also promised a "full-fledged fight" against inflation. The bank is likely to deliver an increase of 2 percentage points on Sept. 13, far short of the 7-10 percentage points that investors would like to see, said Jason Tuvey of Capital Economics in a note to clients. Such substantial increases are needed "to bring real interest rates back to positive territory and reassure the markets that policymakers are willing and able to tackle high inflation," he said.

Inflation jumped 2.3 percent from the previous month, the data from the Turkish Statistical Institute also showed, higher than the 2.23 percent forecast in a Reuters poll. Producer prices rose 6.6 percent month-on-month in August for an annual rise of 32.13 percent. A survey released yesterday showed that manufacturing activity contracted for the fifth straight month, as both output and new orders slowed on the back of the currency crisis. — Reuters



ANKARA: Turkey's inflation jumped 17.9 percent year-on-year in August, official data showed, outstripping market expectations and marking its highest level since late 2003.

Less than a month to win the car of your choice with NBK

KUWAIT: As part of the ongoing summer campaign, the National Bank of Kuwait encourages customers to increase their chances to win a car of their choice valued at up to KD 20,000 when using their NBK Cards.

Running until September 15, NBK's summer campaign enables customers to enter the draw to win a car of their choice when using their Credit Cards in Kuwait, whether for retail purchases, online payments or cash withdrawal. Each KD 1 spent locally using NBK Credit Cards avails for one change to win the prize, while each KD 1 spent internationally using NBK Credit or Debit Cards avails for three chances to win the prize.

"The summer campaign is the ideal opportunity to enjoy a brand-new car," said Hanadi Khazal, Chief Marketing Officer, Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait. "We are always committed at NBK to bring unprecedented offers and promotions to surprise customers and reward them. What makes our summer campaign even more special is the ability for our customers to choose their car and its specification, a reward that we believe they deserve".

Khazal added: "The campaign received positive feedback, and this would encourage NBK to launch new campaigns that are tailored to our customers' preferences." The winners will be announced during the draw that will be held on September 28, 2018. Each winner will receive an NBK gift Prepaid Card issued in the name of the Bank and pre-loaded with KD 20,000 to be spent on the car of the winner's choice. The gift card may be used at any vehicle dealership inside Kuwait to purchase a vehicle and car insurance.

By giving customers the opportunity to win the value of a vehicle of their own choosing, NBK reaffirms its long-standing commitment to customer satisfaction and continues a lasting relationship with customers based on loyalty and trust. Customers benefit from a range of banking products and services that suit their lifestyles. They can choose from Credit Cards tailored to their specific needs, take advantage of the NBK Rewards program and enjoy the promotions and prizes introduced all year-long. To avail to these benefits, customers can visit NBK.com, where they can navigate through the online card comparison tool.

Brexit progress fears drive drop in sterling

LONDON: The British pound was set yesterday for its biggest daily drop against the euro in more than three months as concerns grew about the progress of Brexit negotiations.

Sentiment was also further sapped by UK manufacturing data that underscored the weak state of the British economy. Traders bought sterling last week after the European Union's chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier appeared to strike a conciliatory note. That raised hopes a Brexit breakthrough was imminent as Britain and the EU try to agree what a post-Brexit trade deal would look like.

But developments on the British political front dashed those expectations after Prime Minister Theresa May's former foreign secretary Boris Johnson said her Brexit strategy meant disaster for Britain. "Markets clearly misunderstood Barnier's comments last week and even in the light of today's moves, investors are still underpricing the risk of a hard Brexit," said Ulrich Leuchtmann, a currency strategist at Commerzbank in Frankfurt. — Reuters

Lexus Design Award 2019 now open for entries



KUWAIT: Lexus International yesterday announced a call for entries for the distinguished Lexus Design Award 2019. Since its launch in 2013, the worldwide design competition has served as a platform for emerging designers and creators whose works can lead to a better future for all. The annual event attracts thousands of upcoming creative talent from around the world, who aspire to win the coveted award for innovative design excellence.

Making the world a better place through design has always been the program's purpose, and now, in its seventh year, the Lexus Design Award 2019 makes that objective clearer than ever under the directive of 'Design for a Better Tomorrow'.

Yugo Miyamoto, Chief Representative, Middle East and North Africa Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, said: "We are extremely

delighted to launch the seventh edition of the Lexus Design Award. This international competition aims at inspiring the next generation of creative talent to offer imaginative solutions using 'innovative' and 'captivating' designs that 'anticipate' the needs of people and society and address tomorrow's challenges today."

Miyamoto added: "This award includes a unique mentorship program, which gives each finalist an exclusive opportunity to partner with acclaimed professionals who share their valuable knowledge and experience. I would like to thank our customers in the region for continuously inspiring us to innovate and excel."

The next-generation of designers will need to consider how their creative ideas



incorporate three fundamental principles from the Lexus brand: 'Anticipate,' 'Innovate,' and 'Captivate,' as well as how their designs anticipate the needs of tomorrow's society. They will have to develop innovative designs that bring fresh, imaginative solutions. At the same time, their ideas and designs should be captivating and engaging to the audience and more importantly, of the esteemed judging panel.

The six finalists will be announced in early 2019, and the judges and mentors for the award will be disclosed in fall 2018. Past LDA judges and mentors include luminaries such as Sir David Adjaye, Snarkitecture, and Formafantasma.

The judges will select the six best ideas

to be developed into functional prototypes with a production budget of up to JPY 3 million (over AED 99,000) each and with the support of world-renowned mentors. The prototypes will be displayed at the prestigious Milan Design Week 2019 where they will compete for the Grand Prix.

To prepare the finalists for Milan, Lexus will also provide a once-in-a-lifetime mentorship that gives each finalist an exclusive opportunity to receive hands-on guidance from acclaimed professionals who share their invaluable knowledge and experience for creating the prototype and beyond. Entries to the Lexus Design Award 2019 competition will be accepted from August 9, 2018 through October 28, 2018.

AUB announces countdown to KD 250,000 grand prize draw

KUWAIT: One fortunate winner will soon enjoy Ahli United Bank's (AUB) top quarterly prize draw providing a KD 250,000 Life-time salary as the countdown begins to one of the Islamic bank's top rewarding savings prize draws. The draw will take place on the 26 September 2018, where one Al Hassad Islamic Savings Account holder will win a KD 250,000 life-time salary through monthly payments.

Customers may enter the draw to enjoy this attractive quarterly prize when opening their Al-Hassad Islamic Savings Accounts at least two weeks prior to the official draw date.

The Al-Hassad Islamic Savings Account is the premier program for bank prizes in Kuwait providing the highest amount of prizes in value, reaching KD 3.4 million per annum. In addition to the quarterly draw there are also 26 weekly prizes to be won. The Bank is reaching out to citi-

zens and residents of Kuwait to avail the benefits associated with the Al-Hassad Islamic Savings Account, an established and successful product. The bank's customers in Kuwait and Bahrain are eligible to participate in the draw in line with the program's terms and conditions.

Customers who are interested in winning and achieving more profits in line with sharia law, may open their Al-Hassad Islamic Savings Account with a minimum of KD 100. Opening the account does not require a salary transfer, and minors are also able to open their accounts through their parents or legal guardians.

Through these simple steps to opening an Al-Hassad Islamic Savings Account, AUB reaffirms its commitment to being the ideal Bank that works towards increasing its customers' savings, helping them achieve their dreams by delivering on Kuwait's first Islamic rewards program.

VIVA launches Samsung Galaxy Note9 with postpaid plan

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, announces the launch of the Samsung Galaxy Note9, with new postpaid voice plans at all VIVA's stores in Kuwait starting from KD 40.

Abdelrazaq Bader Al-Essa, Corporate Communications Director at VIVA commented: "At VIVA, our state-of-the-art infrastructure supports a range of telecom services. These services enable smartphone makers like Samsung to unleash the full potential of their world-class devices. Through exclusive partnerships, we are combining the best of both worlds and maximizing our customers' experience."

The new Galaxy Note9 boasts a 4,000mAh battery, the largest ever on a flagship Galaxy phone for long-lasting power and two internal storage options -128GB or 512GB with the ability to insert a microSD



card. Galaxy Note9's camera is Samsung's smartest yet, with advanced noise reduction technology, and a Dual Aperture lens, which adjusts to light just like the human eye. It employs scene optimizer for capturing stunning, lifelike images.

Now with Bluetooth Low-Energy (BLE) support, the new S Pen delivers an entirely new way to use the Note. With just a click, it's now possible to take selfies and group pictures, present slides, play music and videos, and more.

Al Mulla Exchange opens its 82nd outlet in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Al Mulla Exchange, the leading money remittance company in Kuwait expanded its presence in Abbasiya with a new branch in Block 4. This is the 10th branch in Abbasiya area, with the branch count totaling to 82 in Kuwait. The branch offers remittance services, currency exchange and also has KIOSK machines facilitating customers to transact on their own.

Speaking to the media Praveen Singh, Divisional General Manager Al Mulla Exchanges said "We are very pleased on the opening of the new branch. Abbasiya has always been our focus area keeping in mind the large Indian diaspora community. The mere fact that we have 10 branches in the area shows that we want to be very close to our clients. We are really excited on the growth oppor-



tunity in Abbasiya area and opening of this new branch reflects Al Mulla Exchange's commitment to providing highly personalized service to our customers." Al Mulla Exchange offers its customers free life insur-

ance and loyalty points on every transaction. They have also recently launched Kuwait's first remittance app enabling customers to remit directly from their mobile phones.

Technology & Science

Back to school for French kids, without their phones

Macron bans tablets, smart watches from French schools

PARIS: Texting under the table should be a thing of the past when French children return to class yesterday following a nationwide ban on mobile phones in schools. The ban, a campaign pledge of President Emmanuel Macron's, was brought in under a law passed in July which also banishes tablets and smart watches from French primary and junior high schools. High schools, taking students aged 15 to 18, will also be allowed to initiate partial or total bans as they reopen after the summer break, though they will not be obligatory. Proponents say the law, which has prompted vigorous debate, will reduce distraction in the classroom, combat bullying and encourage children to be more active during recess. Nearly 90 percent of French adolescents aged between 12 and 17 have a mobile phone, and supporters hope the ban will help limit the spread of violent and pornographic content among children.



A law for the 21st century



But critics have dismissed the ban as a public relations exercise and predicted it will be difficult to apply. The government has left schools to decide how to implement the new rules, recommending that they store students' phones in lockers during the day—but some schools don't have them. Research shows that in French schools that had already declared their own ban, many pupils admitted to breaking the rules and using their phones anyway.

Schools all over the world have struggled to adapt to the rise of pocket-sized devices as parents grow increasingly anxious about the amount of time their children spend glued to the screen. In 2015 New York Mayor Bill de Blasio lifted a ban on phones in his city's schools on security grounds, saying parents should be allowed to stay in touch with their children. Macron, a 40-year-old centrist, pledged widespread reforms when he was elected and education has been no exception.

Along with the mobile phone ban, he has halved class sizes in high-priority areas to 12 in a bid to narrow the massive gap in attainment between children from poor and wealthy families. The scheme, which covered children aged six to seven this year, will be expanded in this new school year to cover those aged seven to eight. At the other end of the age spectrum, a shake-up of the higher education system making university access more selective prompted a wave of student sit-ins this year. —AFP



PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron uses food for lunch at the canteen of a secondary school in Laval, western France, at the start of the school year in France. —AFP

PR stunt

Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer has hailed the legislation as "a law for the 21st century" that would improve discipline among France's 12 million schoolchildren. "Being open to technologies of the future doesn't mean we have to accept all their uses," he said in June when the bill was going through parliament.

Smart devices: A new tool for domestic abuse

LONDON: Domestic abusers are increasingly using internet-connected smart devices to spy on their partners and control them at home, women's charities said on Wednesday. Victim support charity Refuge said it had seen nearly 1,000 cases of abuse in Britain this year involving devices such as home hubs, smart TVs and fitness trackers. "Frontline staff at Refuge have recorded an alarming trend in the misuse of everyday technology by current or former partners to control, isolate, humiliate and dominate their victims," chief executive Sandra Horley said in a statement.

"We have seen technological abuse in cases of domestic violence, stalking, economic abuse, trafficking and modern slavery, and rape and sexual assault." Smart devices are connected to the internet and can usually be operated remotely by the account holder. They range from voice-activated home hubs through to connected cars, heating systems, fridges, door locks and CCTV.

Campaigners say many of these devices can be used to record and transmit data without the person under surveillance knowing. There are also concerns that abusers might change home settings such as light levels or door locks to confuse victims. "Abusers will use every means possible to control and abuse their partner - even using smart home devices to control, spy on and frighten the victim," said Katie Ghose, the chief executive of Women's Aid, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"We know that this form of abuse is often taken less seriously than abuse perpetrated in person, but it is commonly experienced as part of a wider pattern of domestic abuse and coercive control and must be taken seriously." Britain introduced laws in 2015 making "coercive or controlling behavior" a domestic violence offence carrying a penalty of up to five years in jail. It was intended to close a loophole in the law that had previously allowed abusive partners to exert control with behavior that stopped short of violence.

In May of this year, a man was convicted of stalking his estranged wife after using an iPad installed as part of a smart home system to listen in to his ex-partner's conversations, according to a report in The Times newspaper. Other women feared they were going "crazy" after a range of unexplained events at home - a digital lock that repeatedly changed its code, speakers that suddenly turned on - only to realize their partners had manipulated them remotely, according to the New York Times. —Reuters

Build-your-own broadband brings communities together

LONDON: Before Chris Conder's village in northern England built its own broadband network, Internet speeds were so bad that children who went away to study would refuse to come home for the holidays. Farmers had to travel to the nearest public library to apply for the agricultural subsidies they were entitled to, or to submit mandatory reports on their livestock to the government. Now it has some of the best broadband speeds in Britain after villagers took matters into their own hands - part of a growing trend for community-owned networks run independently of the main providers.

"We can do without water and electricity and gas, which a lot of us do ... You can be self-sufficient in the countryside, but you cannot generate broadband," Conder said. "It's the one utility you can't make yourself. We have found a way of joining our villages to the world." Conder now works with Broadband for the Rural North (BARN), which has the legal status of a social enterprise, meaning it is run for the benefit of the community. —Reuters

India adds 100 Smart Cities

LAVASA, India: When David Cooper and his wife were looking for somewhere to retire, they wanted a place by a river or a lake, away from Mumbai's congested streets, worsening pollution and vanishing green spaces. They did not have to go far: they bought a two-bedroom flat in a complex for senior citizens in Lavasa, a private city that was being built in the hills a four-hour drive away, and touted as India's first Smart City. But their retirement dream quickly took a turn for the worse as Lavasa's developer, after battling for environmental clearances and surviving a year-long shutdown, ran out of cash.

"When we moved in, it was absolutely pristine. The roads were like race tracks, there were no power outages, and we felt absolutely secure," said Cooper in a cafe in Lavasa. "Now, there is litter everywhere, buildings are half done, roads are potholed, and there are break-ins because few security staff are left. Our dream has turned into something else," he said. With rapid urbanization, governments across the world are making cities "smarter" by using data and digital technology in security, healthcare, energy, mobility, water and waste management for more efficiency, sustainability and liveability.

Nowhere is this more urgently needed

than in India, which is forecast to overtake China by 2022 as the world's most populous country, according to United Nations data. But Lavasa's abandoned buildings and cratered roads are a far cry from the blueprints for a city modeled after the colorful Italian seaside town of Portofino, with facilities for about 250,000 people to live, learn, work and play in. In its decline, Lavasa serves as a cautionary tale for India's \$7.5 billion plan to turn 100 urban centers into Smart Cities by 2020, with high-speed internet and modern transportation systems, analysts say.

The federal program does not address structural issues such as poor design, and ignores the needs of low-income and marginalized groups, according to planners and rights groups. "Without fixed targets and no clear-cut delivery or assessment plan, there is a lot of confusion over what makes a city 'smart'," said Saswat Bandyopadhyay, a professor at CEPT University in Ahmedabad, who teaches a course on smart cities. "A city can install 1,000 CCTV cameras or 100 solar-powered street lights and call itself smart. But that is not it," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Satellite cities

The UN forecasts the world's urban population to grow to 70 percent by 2050 from 55 percent now. India will add about 300 million people to its urban centers over the next 20 years, and requires investment of \$1.2 trillion to handle this transformation, according to consultancy McKinsey. "Planned urbanization is required rather than the ad-hoc, unplanned urbanization



MUMBAI: This photo shows the Marine Drive seafront in Mumbai. —AFP

that we have seen so far," said Shirish Sankhe, a McKinsey senior partner in India. "The Smart Cities Mission is good and necessary, but we need it in addition to other efforts to improve urban centers." As areas are upgraded in each city, they create "islands of excellence" that need to be scaled up extensively so everyone can benefit, he said. One solution is to build at least 25 new satellite cities for up to 1 million people each, near the country's biggest urban centres, Sankhe said. They would benefit from proximity to the large cities, as well as careful planning, he said.

But from ancient Constantinople to Myanmar's Naypyidaw, there are few examples of successful purpose-built cities. India's western state of Gujarat alone had planned 24 new smart cities

before the federal plan was launched in 2015. Few of these have materialized, however. Amaravati, India's first greenfield capital in decades, has been hailed as a model planned city.

But it is well behind schedule, and criticized for ignoring protests of displaced farmers, and the ecological impact of building on farmland close to the river. "Purpose-built cities are often just glorified gated communities. A city must grow organically, with a mix of people and purposes," said Raj Cherubal, chief executive officer of Chennai Smart City, which oversees the upgrade of the southern city. "Smart Cities are not just about technology; they're about a better quality of life. And a better quality of life should not be for just a small section of people," he said. —Reuters

Electric Mercedes opens German assault on Tesla

STOCKHOLM: Mercedes-Benz is set to unveil its much-anticipated electric SUV today, marking the start of a German onslaught against Tesla's dominance of the fast-growing market for premium battery cars. Daimler-owned Mercedes, BMW and Volkswagen's Audi and Porsche divisions are all gunning for the \$52 billion Californian upstart, with early publicity efforts emulating its tech-industry halo.

The market for upscale electric cars is Tesla's to lose, with sales of its entry-level Model 3 sedan expected to reach about 50,000 cars this year and almost double that in 2019. The Mercedes EQC - whose launch program in Stockholm features yoga in a direct appeal to the Millennials who have flocked to Tesla - is the first production model under the carmaker's electric EQ sub-brand. It will be closely followed by similarly hyped debuts for BMW and Audi.

"While Tesla currently has a strong hold on the luxury electric market, I don't think this will be the case after the arrival of the German premium offerings," said Wajih Hossenally, an automotive powertrain analyst with IHS Markit. "Tesla has virtually zero competition - but this will change from 2019 onwards."

Rival forecaster LMC Automotive agrees, predicting a steady decline in Tesla's share of an exploding electric-car market over the next decade, from today's 12.3 percent to 2.8 percent, even as its absolute sales continue to rise. The Germans' combined market share will surpass Tesla's to reach 11.8 percent in 2020 before increasing further to about 19 percent three years later, according to its projections.

The new Mercedes, due to reach its first

customers next year, will be priced close to the fuel-burning GLC to compete in the same bracket as Tesla's \$49,000 Model 3, helped by its hotter-selling SUV form. An affordable Model Y SUV is slated to join Tesla's high-end Model X crossover and Model S car, but not before 2020-21.

Tech buzz

The EQC softens its higher-riding proportions with sporty curves and a distinctive full-width rear light, while the interior resembles that of the Mercedes C-Class - a reminder of economies of scale that electric-only Tesla cannot match. Well aware that their earlier battery-car offerings have failed to get anything like Tesla's level of public attention, the German brands are doggedly courting Silicon Valley-style buzz for the coming product blitz.

Executives including Mercedes Chief Executive Dieter Zetsche have taken to appearing in jeans and sneakers, responding to a broader tech-industry incursion into areas such as autonomous driving and connected services. When it came to the EQC launch, Mercedes picked the city of Stockholm for its startup scene and green credentials, then began firing off teasers on Instagram as well as Twitter.

Like Tesla, Mercedes is announcing EQC orders in Norway even before its price. It has amassed more than 2,000 refundable deposits of 20,000 crowns (\$2,400) in Europe's biggest electric-car market, where Tesla sold 8,500 vehicles last year. The launch is the centerpiece of a three-day event that features DJ sets and yoga with a YouTube star - almost literally bending over backwards to telegraph 21st-century kudos.

Wow factor

Audi yesterday began production of its e-Tron SUV ahead of a Sept. 17 sales launch jamboree in San Francisco, just 40 miles from



SEOUL: This file photo shows a Tesla Model S electric car is seen at its dealership in Seoul, South Korea. —Reuters

Tesla's Fremont assembly plant. It also plans to begin taking reservations backed by refundable \$1,000 deposits. The e-Tron is due in showrooms early next year, followed in 2020 by two more electric Audis and the Porsche Taycan sports car from its Volkswagen Group stablemate.

Not to be outdone, BMW has hired a Lufthansa cargo jet to fly its electric Vision iNext - still just a concept car - from Munich to Beijing via New York and, of course, San Francisco. Events are planned in all four cities over five days. In another Tesla-inspired move, the three German carmakers are developing their own network of fast-chargers along major highways in a partnership with Ford. While some experts doubt the Germans can ever match the wow factor around Tesla and its founding boss Elon Musk, many also wonder whether they need to. "German manufacturers have highly desirable, fun-to-drive premium cars in their DNA," said Nicolai

Mueller, a McKinsey partner based in Cologne. "That's a very good starting point." Tesla used its powerful tech aura to persuade early adopters to pay a premium for an all-electric car from a relative unknown, with no quality track-record or physical dealerships for servicing and support.

But the German carmakers have a century of manufacturing behind them, with sterling brands, well developed global sales networks and an existing customer base in the millions. BMW's i3 mini and an earlier Audi e-Tron failed to shift large volumes, but the electric-car market has matured since. LMC sees China driving global sales growth above 50 percent annually as the German offensive gets underway in 2019-20. By then the Model S flagship will be eight years old. Musk, by tweeting then withdrawing plans to take Tesla private, has sharpened doubts about the company's ability to keep expanding and updating its lineup. —Reuters

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Health & Science

Chilean environmentalists fight to protect glaciers from mining dust

Glacier protection projects blocked by mining sector

SANTIAGO: Chile is home to four-fifths of South America's glaciers and has some of the largest ice fields in the world outside the polar regions, but they are coming under threat from mining industry dust. Climatologist Fabrice Lambert from Chile's Catholic University believes that the country's 24,114 glaciers are in danger from mining activity, although the direct cause and effect are hard to establish. "The dust generated by mining can settle on the glaciers, covering the white surface so the particles absorb solar energy that results in rapid glacial melting," Lambert said.

It's a problem because "some glaciers in Chile are close to mines," he says. Sara Larrain, director at the Sustainable Chile environmental NGO, says the country needs legislation like its neighbor Argentina to protect its glaciers, but says such proposals keep getting stonewalled by the powerful mining sector.

"Since 2005, there have been six or seven glacial protection projects presented to senators or deputies but every time they've been blocked by the mining sector," she said. Joaquin Villarino, president of Chile's Mining Council, says such laws aren't necessary.

"More than 70 percent of mining activity takes place in areas where there are no glaciers," he said. In any case, under current legislation "there is certain protection that prevents mining companies from damaging existing glaciers." For Lambert, there's a happy

medium to be struck somewhere. "They're not going to close the mines within the next five years, but we need to find a way to protect the glaciers without destroying the mining industry, which is essential to the country's economy." Chile's economy depends on mining. It's the world's biggest producer of copper with around 5.6 million tons, a third of global production.

No glacial protection

Environmental law specialist Pilar Moraga says that Chile urgently needs a legal framework to specifically protect the glaciers. In 2014 a bill was introduced in Congress to ban certain dangerous industrial activities near the glaciers. But the bill underwent several damaging modifications before it was finally ditched altogether by the government of right-wing President Sebastian Pinera in June. The government

says that existing rules aimed at protecting biodiversity and the country's national parks and reserves are ample enough.

But specialists complain that not all of Chile's glaciers are located in protected parks. "In Chile, 86.4 percent of glaciers are in protected zones, but in the center and the north of the country, where water scarcity worsens every day, there's no protection for glaciers," said Lambert. He added that "climatic projections" in those regions "predict a 30 percent decrease



SANTIAGO: Photo released by Fabrice Lambert of scientists working at the Cerro Bologna glacier in the metropolitan region of Santiago, Chile. —AFP

in rainfall over the next 50 years."

As glaciers are formed out of the compacting of accumulated snow, such a major reduction in rainfall would have a massive impact on the regeneration of glaciers that are reduced by meltwater during the summer.

Mining industry representatives deny they've put pressure on authorities and have praised the decision to block any further regulation. "The government has made a responsible decision that carries a political cost. It's a well thought-out decision," Villarino said. —AFP

Branching out greener charcoal takes root in E Kenya

MWINGI, Kenya: When local authorities in eastern Kenya slapped a ban on trading charcoal earlier this year in an effort to save the region's dwindling forests, charcoal producers worried their income would disappear. "It was a chilling announcement," said Peninah Kilungya, 42, a mother of five with the bright red traditional fabric of the Maasai people tied around her waist. "We always turn to charcoal production so that we can feed our children," she said.

Rain often fails in this semi-arid area, which makes farming risky. For some people, turning trees into charcoal is an option of last resort to make ends meet. But Kilungya and others may now have found a way to hold on to their charcoal-making income while also protecting trees, building a more sustainable future for themselves. They have turned to producing wood briquettes from tree branches, reducing the felling of trees while also making a product they hope could interest supermarkets and help lift hundreds of families out of poverty.

Producers of traditional charcoal can make about 1,800 shillings a week. A 90-kilogram bag of traditional charcoal chunks sells for just 450 shillings - and takes one or two trees to produce. The new briquettes, however, use far less wood - and produce more income. On a recent day, in the tiny village of Mitamisyi in Kitui County, Kilungya and other charcoal producers gathered under an acacia tree. They crushed pebbles of charcoal made from tree branches into fine dust with a locally-crafted briquette-making machine, then mixed the powder with fine red soil and water.

The sky-blue machine then spat out elongated and chunky charcoal briquettes that look a bit like burned sausages. More than 150 charcoal producers have adopted the technique in Kitui County alone. The briquette-making initiative is also ongoing in neighboring Tharaka Nithi and Embu counties. Joseph Mwikya, the chairman of Mitamisyi's charcoal producers association, said the charcoal used in the briquettes is made from sustainable wood - tree branches that grow back.

Branches can also be crushed easily, unlike tree trunks, and the bri-



KENYA: Members of the Mitamisyi Charcoal Producers Association sieve charcoal pebbles as part of their briquette-making process in the village of Mitamisyi, Kenya. —Reuters

quettes made with the wood sell for more - a minimum of 100 shillings per kilogram, he said. The regular shape of the product also allows them to be packaged in a way producers hope could appeal to big-city supermarkets. "All we need is a way of producing them in larger quantities so that we can start marketing them," said Jane Vengi, the chairwoman of the Kitui-based Mwaka Charcoal Producers Association, one of the country's top charcoal producers.

Scaling up production would require cutting of more branches - but that would still be preferable to more trees being felled, promoters of the project said. For now, the briquettes are being sold to local people, said Vengi. "These briquettes are now our new source (for) cooking energy and, hopefully, it is likely going to be our new source of income in the near future," she said. —Reuters

'Major transformation' ahead for Earth's ecosystems

TAMPA: The Earth's forests, deserts, landscapes and vital ecosystems risk a "major transformation" in the next century due to climate change, international scientists warned on Thursday. Some of these changes are already under way in the southwestern United States, where massive wildfires are destroying pine forests and transforming swaths of territory into shrubland. In the next 100-150 years, these changes will likely extend to savannas, deserts, and woodlands, upsetting ecosystems and imperiling plant and animal life, particularly in areas like Europe and the United States, researchers warned in the journal *Science*.

"If we allow climate change to go unchecked, the vegetation of this planet is going to look completely different than it does today, and that means a huge risk to the diversity of the planet," said co-author Jonathan Overpeck, dean of the School for Environment and Sustainability at the University of Michigan. The report is based on fossil and temperature records from a period that began 21,000 years ago, when the last Ice Age ended and the planet warmed seven to 13 degrees Fahrenheit.

But experts say their predictions are conservative, since this historical warming,



CALIFORNIA: In this file photo flames estimated by firefighters to be 60-80 meters in height, engulf a ridge as the River fire again threatens the town of Lakeport, California. —AFP

caused by natural variability, took place over a much longer period-from the Last Glacial Maximum 21,000 years ago until the early Holocene, about 10,000 years ago. But human-caused climate change is different. The burning of fossil fuels like oil and coal emits heat-trapping gases around the planet. The Earth is currently heating up at much quicker pace.

"We're talking about the same amount of change in 10-to-20 thousand years that's going to be crammed into a century or two," said Stephen Jackson, director of the US Geological Survey's Southwest Climate Adaptation Center. "Ecosystems are going to be scrambling to catch up."

Researchers described their work as the most comprehensive study to date, based on pollen and plant-fossil records from 594 sites worldwide, dating back to between 21,000 and 14,000 years ago. Every continent except Antarctica was included. The most significant changes were seen in the mid-to-high latitudes of North America, Europe and southern South America.

These were regions that had been most covered in glaciers, and which warmed up the most as the climate shifted. Researchers calculated that if little is done to contain current emissions, "the probability of large-scale vegetation change is greater than 60 percent." —AFP

Australia unveils starfish-killing robot

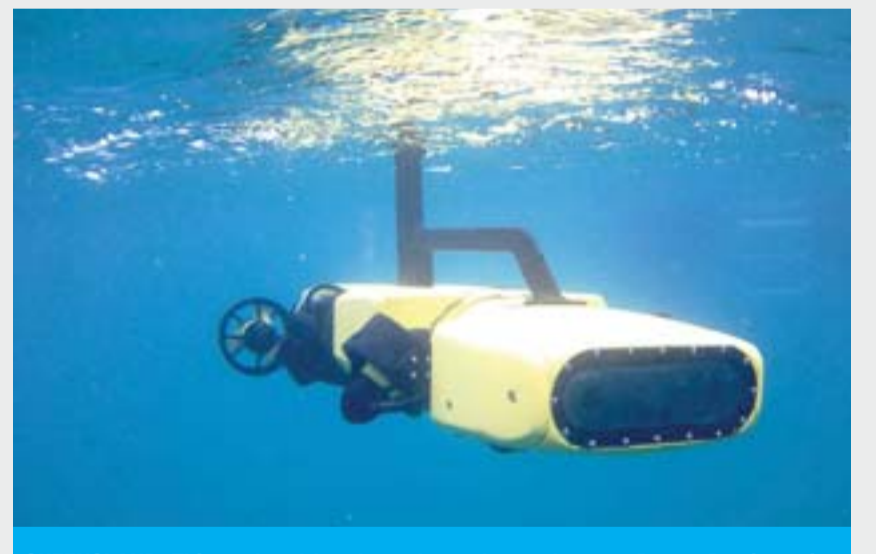
SYDNEY: A robot submarine able to hunt and kill the predatory crown-of-thorns starfish devastating the Great Barrier Reef was unveiled by Australian researchers on Friday. Scientists at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) said the robot, named the RangerBot and developed with a grant from Google, would serve as a "robo reef protector" for the vast World Heritage site off Australia's northeastern coast.

The RangerBot has an eight-hour battery life and computer vision capabilities allowing it to monitor and map reef areas at scales not previously possible. "RangerBot is the world's first underwater robotic system designed specifically for coral reef environments, using only robot-vision

for real-time navigation, obstacle avoidance and complex science missions," said Matthew Dunbabin, the QUT professor who unveiled the submarine.

"This multi-function ocean drone can monitor a wide range of issues facing coral reefs including coral bleaching, water quality, pest species, pollution and siltation." Software will also enable the bot to detect crown-of-thorns starfish, which eat coral, and "instigate an injection which is fatal" to the predators, he said, adding that the injection is harmless for other reef creatures.

The starfish have proliferated in recent times due to pollution and agricultural runoff. The Great Barrier Reef, about the size of Japan or Italy, is reeling from two straight years of bleaching as sea temperatures rise because of climate change. Experts have warned that the 2,300-kilometre long area could have suffered irreparable damage due to the combined effects of bleaching, damage from agricultural runoff and the impact of the crown-of-thorns starfish. —AFP



QUEENSLAND: This undated handout photo shows the new RangerBot in action on the Great Barrier Reef in northern Queensland. —AFP

Dead dolphins, diseased seals wash up on US shores

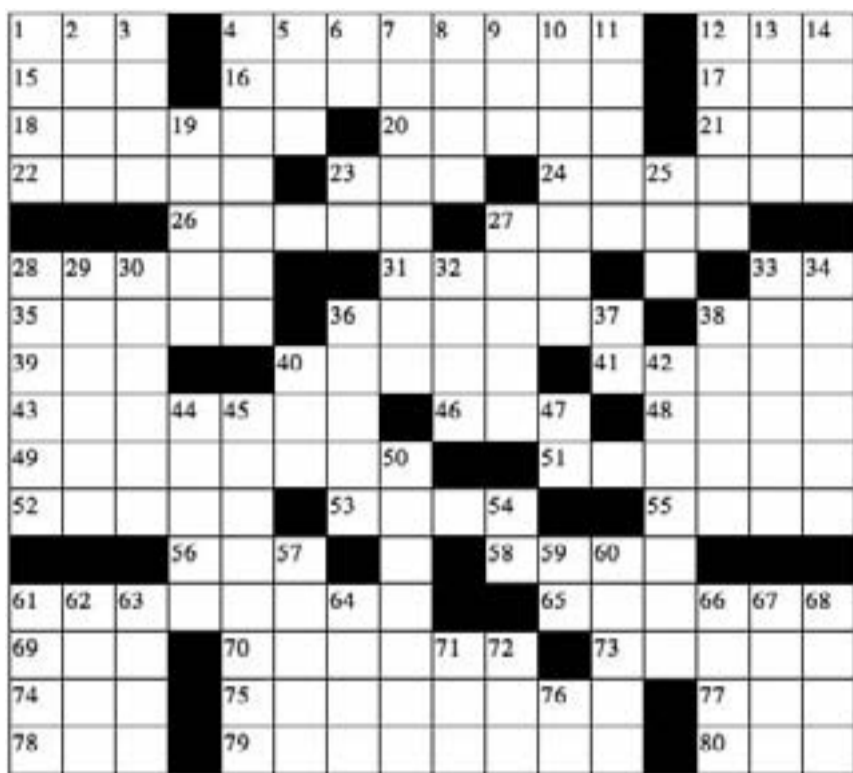
TAMPA: Over the past two months, dozens of dead dolphins have washed ashore in Florida and hundreds of diseased seals have died in the northeastern United States, officials said Friday. The unusual wave of deaths has prompted officials to declare two separate, special investigations to find out why, and how to stop it. From July 1 to August 30,

a total of 48 dolphins have been found dead in southwest Florida, as a harmful algae bloom known as red tide killed hundreds of tons of fish from Naples to Tampa, said the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Only one dolphin has been stranded alive since early July. It is currently being treated in rehabilitation. Typical dolphin strandings in the region usually number three to four per month. All 10 of the bottlenose dolphin autopsies-known as necropsies-done so far have tested positive for the red tide organism, *Karenia brevis*, a potent neurotoxin. This indicates their deaths are "likely related to red tide bloom in southwest Florida," said Teri Rowles, marine mammal health and stranding program coordinator at the NOAA Fisheries Office of Protected Resources. —AFP

Stars

CROSSWORD 2000



ACROSS

1. A container.
4. A woman sahib.
12. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
15. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
16. Produce immunity in by inoculation.
17. An easy return of a tennis ball in a high arc.
18. A loose skirt consisting of brightly colored fabric wrapped around the body.
20. A metric unit of capacity equal to the volume of 1 kilogram of pure water at 4 degrees centigrade and 760 mm of mercury (or approximately 1.76 pints).
21. Light informal conversation for social occasions.
22. Any spherical or nearly spherical bacteria.
24. Keenly excited (especially sexually) or indicating excitement.
26. Austrian composer who influenced the classical form of the symphony (1732-1809).
28. United States playwright (born in 1947).
31. The lower house of the parliament of the Republic of Ireland.
35. Of a deep somewhat purplish blue color or similar to that of a clear October sky.
39. A local computer network for communication between computers.
41. (of complexion) Blemished by imperfections of the skin.
43. (of spatial position) In or brought into line with or into proper relative position.
46. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
48. A sensation (as of a cold breeze or bright light) that precedes the onset of certain disorders such as a migraine attack or epileptic seizure.
49. A change downward.
51. An authoritative rule of conduct or procedure.
52. Not very intelligent or interested in culture.
53. The lowest brass wind instrument.
55. Strong woody fibers obtained especially from the phloem of from various plants.
56. The rate at which words are produced (as in speaking or typing).
58. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
61. Pertaining to filberts or hazelnuts.
65. A deep bow.
69. An anxiety disorder characterized by chronic free-floating anxiety and such symptoms as tension or sweating or trembling of light-headedness or irritability etc that has lasted for more than six months.
70. A kind of heavy jacket ('windcheater' is a British term).
73. A Bantu language spoken by the Kamba people in Kenya.
74. (usually followed by 'of') Released from something onerous (especially an obligation or duty).
75. A headlong rush of people on a common impulse.
77. Japanese ornamental tree with fragrant white or pink blossoms and small yellow fruits.
79. A great raja.
80. Not divisible by two.

DOWN

1. Greenish-yellow pear.
2. The United Nations agency concerned with civil aviation.
3. A lawman concerned with narcotics violations.
4. Paint with red lead or vermilion.
5. A graphical record of electric currents associated with muscle contractions.
6. A metric unit of length equal to one thousandth of a meter.
7. A nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (trade name Clinoril).
8. A blue dye obtained from plants or made synthetically.
9. A successful stroke in an athletic contest (especially in baseball).
10. Of or relating to or characteristic of Israel or its people.
11. Muscular and heavily built.
12. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
13. A rich soil consisting of a mixture of sand and clay and decaying organic materials.
14. A French abbot.
19. Of a moderate orange-yellow color.
23. A public promotion of some product or service.
25. Your general store of remembered information.
27. Any oily organic compound insoluble in water but soluble in organic solvents.
29. Any of numerous ornamental shrubs grown for their showy flowers of various colors.
30. The capital and largest city of Bavaria in southeastern Germany.
32. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
33. Large genus of terrestrial ferns of tropics and subtropics.
34. Someone who puts text into appropriate form for publication.
36. The location of something surrounded by other things.
37. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
38. Frogs, toads, tree toads.
40. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
42. An esoteric or occult matter that is traditionally secret.
44. The sound of growling (as made by animals).
45. An abnormal new mass of tissue that serves no purpose.
47. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
50. A genus of Vespertilionidae.
54. Before noon.
57. A blanket that is used as a cloak or shawl.
59. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
60. Australian shrubs and small trees with evergreen usually spiny leaves and dense clusters of showy flowers.
62. Characteristic of false pride.
63. Tropical starchy tuberous root.
64. The Hebrew patriarch who saved himself and his family and the animals by building an ark in which they survived 40 days and 40 nights of rain.
66. Projectiles to be fired from a gun.
67. In bed.
68. A female domestic.
71. The month following March and preceding May.
72. Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
76. A person who announces and plays popular recorded music.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Your way is the only way today. Others may not show great appreciation for this overly independent side of you. You may be dealing with some personal issues today. This may find you at odds with others. This is a very sensitive matter and others can not understand what you refuse to share. Your independence can be a blessing and a curse. You may feel as if no one is there for you when you need them most. This comes from you always putting on a strong front. Everyone needs a shoulder to cry on once in a while. Let your guard down and let others help you for a change.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may find yourself realizing how special you are today. Appreciating all your gifts and talents and feeling a sense of pride. This is a great time of communication with those around you as you are able to express your emotions clearly to others. Dedication and devotion have gotten you to this point in life and you in a position you can provide much help to others. You are in touch with not only your emotions but also very in touch with the needs and emotions of those close to you. This is a very nice time in your life. You may find someone close shows great support and sympathy to you today when a situation you encounter puts you in need of a listening ear.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This is a time you desire peace and harmony in your world. Make peace with your past. This is a great day to reach out and mend fences with those you have had differences with in the past. This is a great day in the workplace for you. It is your time to shine. Know that all you do will be noticed. You may be asked to represent your company in some way. Your communication skills are on point today and you will be a huge success.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Look for a rainbow today. Something good is happening in your life. It may lead to something important in your career or your personal life. Even if the pleasure you derive from it is not permanent, you can find pleasure in the moment. You're getting a break you deserve. Don't discount it by projecting the future. If you take a "live today" attitude, the future will take care of itself-and you.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

A friend will seek your advice today. What she really wants is your approval for what she has decided to do. If you tell her what to do, it may lead to a rift in your friendship. You can give your opinion, but make it clear that she has to make the decision for herself. You might offer some options and point out the possible consequences of each. That mean she takes responsibility for her action. Regardless of how her decision turns out, your friendship will be strengthened. You are a rock in the lives of many.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You don't need a shovel for the type of digging you are about to begin. This is an emotional venture. Digging deep into your inner workings. What has happened in your life that has molded you into the person you are today? Remember, stress is brought on not by circumstance, but by our reaction to circumstances. Take a step back, take a deep breath, and remember you are in control of your reaction. You have successfully turned stumbling blocks into stepping stones in the past. This has made you who you are today. You not only have the strength, but also the wisdom to make your world a happy place.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This is a great day for letting your mind drift back in time. Memories of days gone by will bring a smile to your face and warm your heart. With time you have not only gained knowledge, but you have gained wisdom. There is no better teacher than life itself. You have had your ups and downs but overall you are a survivor. You have conquered the challenges and today finds you proud of all you have accomplished. It is at times like this your self confidence is boosted and you are truly proud of your position in life. Your positive attitude and strong will to be successful have always been a driving force in your life. Reach for the stars, Libra. If anyone can reach them, you can.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Sit tight. Now is not the time to make any changes concerning your living situation. It is a time to let things remain the same and change shouldn't be an option right now. You may feel alone and disconnected from your friends and crave some time out and about. This is a time you should resist temptation and just keep to yourself to avoid conflict and hard times. Time is best spent at home with your lover, close family, or children right now. Surround yourself with those closest to you who truly understand you best. You may find that the admiration and appreciation you receive from them is just what you need.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 18)

If you find someone challenging your good taste or choices today just brush it off. You may find your mind is a million miles away. Focus may not be a strong point for you today. This probably isn't a great day to make decisions but that is ok. Take a break. Get out and enjoy some of the beauty that surrounds you and enjoy what the world has to offer. Good fortune is soon to come your way. A break from reality may be in order to truly appreciate and recognize the opportunities that are placed in your path.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

All that is dear to your heart takes priority today, you need to love and be loved. Take a chance today. You may receive a great reward. Love is a huge factor in your life today. You are learning to love yourself and pay close attention to the needs and want of those close to you. Getting in touch with your emotions and the emotions of those around you will cause others to be drawn to you. Capricorn, others will value your opinions and sense of independence. You are becoming someone others look up to.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Just because something is easy doesn't mean it is the right thing to do or the right way to handle a situation. You may find yourself involved in a situation you need to put great thought into before you act. Actions have consequences. Be sure you are ready to face them. Hard work and determination will help you acquire your goal. Remember, avoid taking the easy way out.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

If you ask you shall receive. You seem to have a way of getting exactly what you want. You are most persuasive today. Your words are sweet like honey. This is one of those days that seems to fall right into place for you. Enjoy because it just doesn't get much better than this. A great evening to spend time with someone you love. This could be very beneficial to your relationship.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Baby Shower

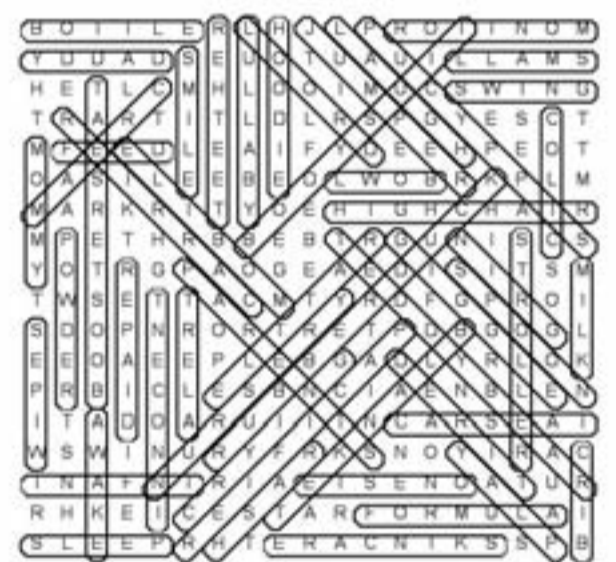
Find and circle all of the Baby Shower words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 32 letters spell a secret message.



- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| ACTIVITIES | CONFETTI | GIFTS | PARTY FAVORS |
| APPETIZERS | DECORATIONS | GLASSES | PLATES |
| BABY | EVENT | GREETING CARDS | PRIZES |
| BAKING | FAMILY | GUESTBOOK | PUNCH |
| BALLOONS | FESTIVE | GUESTS | SANDWICHES |
| BANNER | FINGER FOOD | HONESTY | SPOONS |
| BIRTH | FLOWERS | INVITATIONS | STREAMERS |
| CAKE | FORKS | KNIVES | TABLES |
| CAMERA | FRIENDS | MOTHER | THEME |
| CELEBRATION | GAMES | MUSIC | TRADITION |
| CHAIRS | GIFT OPENING | NAPKINS | WRAPPING PAPER |
| COFFEE | | | |

Yesterday's Solution

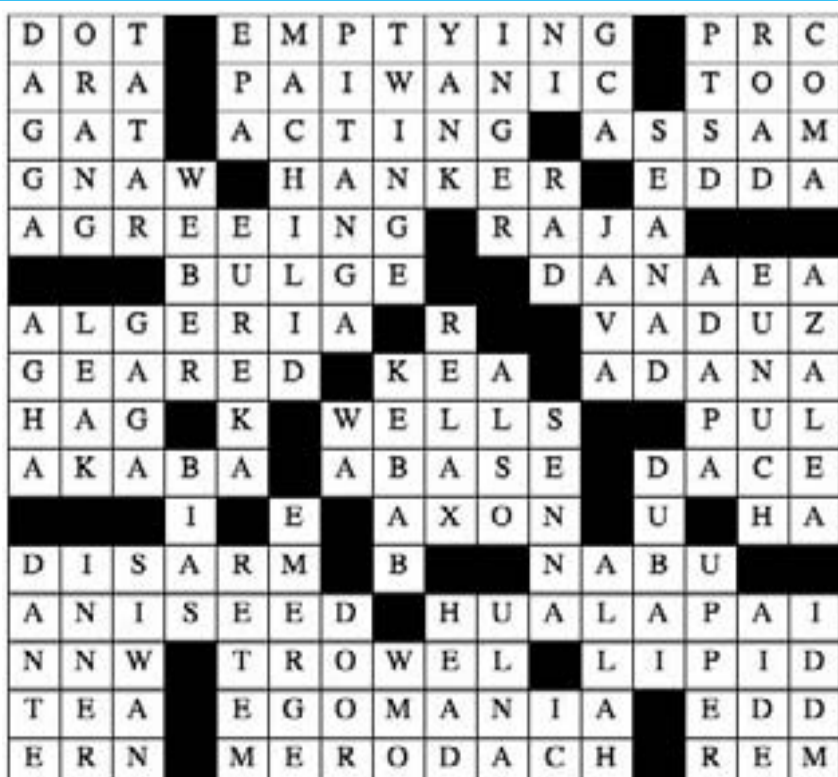
Baby



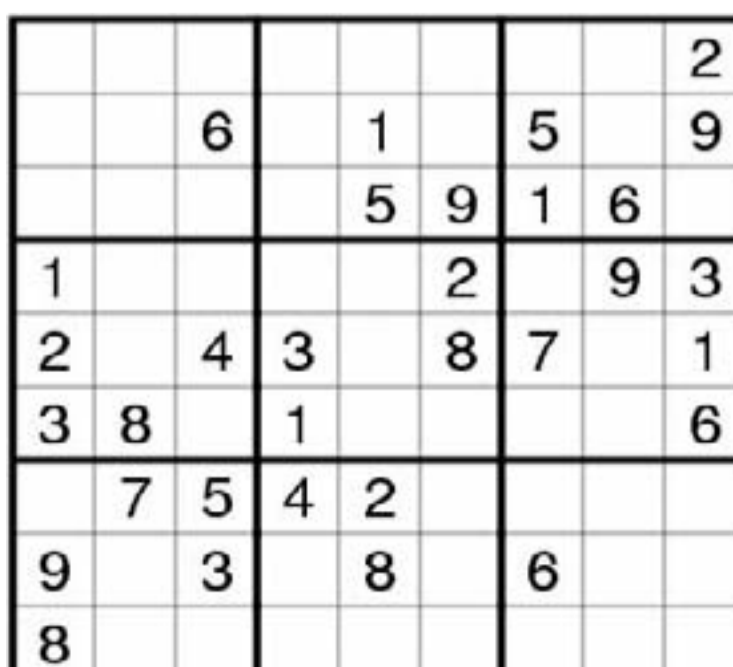
- | | | | |
|--------------|-----------|----------|-------------|
| ALERT | DADDY | LULLABY | RUBBER DUCK |
| AWAKE | OSAPER | MILK | SIPPY CUP |
| BLANKET | DROOL | MOBILE | SKIN CARE |
| BOOYSUIT | FEED | MOMMY | SLEEP |
| BOOSTER SEAT | FORMULA | MONITOR | SMALL |
| BOTTLE | GIGGLE | NURSERY | SNUGGLE |
| BOWL | GRIN | ONISIE | SPOON |
| CAR SEAT | HIGHCHAIR | PACIFIER | STROLLER |
| CARRIER | HOODIE | PARENTS | SWING |
| COLIC | INFANT | PLAY | TEDDY BEAR |
| CREAM | INNOCENT | POWDER | TEETHER |
| CRIB | JUMPER | RASH | TIED |
| CRYING | LAUGH | BATTLE | WIPES |

The hidden message is:
THE LITTLEST FEET MAKE THE BIGGEST FOOTPRINTS IN OUR HEARTS

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2018



Picture shows a mural painting in Ferrol, on September 2, 2018, during the annual street art festival 'Meninas de Canido' set up in 2008 to breathe new life in a dying neighborhood. Angry at the announced death of his neighborhood, Canido, in Ferrol, Eduardo Hermida painted his version of Velazquez's 'Meninas' on a wall. An act of protest that gave birth to a festival and gave new colors to this city of Galicia. — AFP

UAE postpones Da Vinci unveiling at Louvre Abu Dhabi

The UAE said yesterday it had postponed the unveiling of the Louvre Abu Dhabi's most prized acquisition—a painting attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, bought for a record \$450 million. The painting, which was bought last year, had been due to be unveiled on September 18. But Abu Dhabi's culture and tourism department yes-

terday announced "the postponement of the unveiling of Leonardo da Vinci's *Salvator Mundi*" in a tweet. "More details will be announced soon," it said.

The "*Salvator Mundi*", a portrait of Jesus Christ painted in 1500, was the only one of the fewer than 20 paintings believed to be the work of the famed Renaissance Old

Master still in private hands when it went under the hammer, and sold, at Christie's in November. The painting was declared authentic six years ago, after long being dismissed as a copy by one of Da Vinci's students. The Louvre Abu Dhabi has kept tight-lipped over the identity of the painting's buyer, saying only that the emirate's Department

of Culture and Tourism had "acquired" it. Last December, the *New York Times* identified the buyer as an obscure member of the Saudi royal family, Prince Badr bin Abdullah. The *Wall Street Journal* later reported Bin Abdullah was acting on behalf of Saudi Arabia's powerful crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman. He has never confirmed or denied

the report. Prince Badr was appointed to head the kingdom's culture ministry in a government shakeup in June. Saudi Arabia and the neighboring United Arab Emirates are very close allies who are both engaged militarily in the war against rebels in Yemen, and diplomatically and economically against Gulf rival Qatar. — AFP



A massive fire engulfs the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro, one of Brazil's oldest. — AFP photos



Firefighters work as a massive fire engulfs the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro.



People watch as a massive fire engulfs the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro.

Brazil mourns blaze at National Museum, seeks answers to 'tragedy foretold'

Brazil yesterday mourned a fire that destroyed its National Museum, a cherished historical repository that lacked a sprinkler system and was reeling from years of financial neglect, making its destruction a "tragedy foretold." The one-time Imperial Palace's pastel-yellow facade remained standing yesterday morning but a peek inside its giant windows revealed a roofless interior of blackened hallways and charred, smoldering beams. Every so often, firemen emerged with a pot or a painting they had managed to rescue. Authorities said the cause of Sunday evening's blaze was not yet known.

Researchers, students and others who worked in the museum, where 20 million archives were likely destroyed, huddled in small groups outside the ruined building, consoling one another and wiping away tears. The fire has stirred emotions in Brazil, whose angry electorate is reeling from a frail economy, widespread graft and rising violence ahead of an unpredictable presidential election in October. Luiz Duarte, vice director of

the museum, told Globo TV the institution had been neglected by successive federal governments, and that a 21.6 million real (\$5.23 million) financing plan announced in June included, ironically, a plan to install modern fire protection equipment. Roberto Robadey, commander of the Rio fire department, told reporters yesterday the two hydrants outside the building were dry. That forced firefighters to use water from a nearby lake and rely on water trucks. But the building burned far too fast for any of that to help.

"In an ideal world, we would have many things that we don't have here: sprinklers inside the building," he said, adding that the fire department would investigate its response and take action if needed. "Yesterday was one of the saddest days of my career." Renato Rodriguez Cabral, a teacher in the geology and paleontology department, said the museum's decline did not happen overnight. "This was a tragedy foretold," Cabral said as he hugged students and coworkers. "Successive governments would not provide



Women react a day after a massive fire ripped through Rio de Janeiro's treasured National Museum.

funds, they would not invest in infrastructure."

Cabral said the building received new wiring about 15 years ago, but that clearly there was not a sufficient plan to protect the museum from fire, adding: "The firefighters basically could only watch the blaze." "For Brazilian history and science, this is a complete tragedy," he added. "There is no way to recover what was lost." The National Museum's collection ranged from archeological finds to historical memorabilia. The museum, which is tied to the Rio de Janeiro federal university and the education ministry, was founded in 1818. It housed several landmark collections, including Egyptian artifacts and the oldest human fossil found in Brazil.

The destruction of the building, where emperors once lived, was an "incalculable loss for Brazil," President Michel Temer said in a statement. "Two hundred years of work, research and knowledge were lost." His office did not immediately respond to requests for comment on widespread allegations of neglect. — Reuters

Lifestyle | Gossip

Payne and Ora to perform at KISS Haunted House Party



Liam Payne, Rita Ora and Clean Bandit will perform at this year's KISS Haunted House Party. The trio will be joined at the annual event at the SSE Arena, Wembley, in London on 26 October by Jess Glynne and Mabel and 'Strip That Down' hitmaker Liam is particularly excited about being a part of the spooky show. He said: "Can't wait to perform at this year's KISS Haunted House Party, so many great artists on the line up! Looking forward to seeing all the crazy costumes this year, it's going to be a lot of fun!" The event will once again be hosted by KISS Breakfast show hostess Rickie Haywood Williams, Melvin Odoom and Charlie Hedges, who have already started planning their outfits. Melvin said: "KISS Haunted House Party is going to go off! Where else can you dress like the undead and lose it to some of the biggest names in UK music? Let's do this. Rickie added: "Fancy Dress game has been STRONG the past few years, but we think this year everyone's going to take it up another level. Now where's my fake blood at..." And Charlie said: "This event always brings the vibes, and I can't wait to see what the artists have in store for us this year."

MCCARTNEY'S MUSIC LESSONS FOR STORMZY

Sir Paul McCartney taught Stormzy how to play the piano. The 76-year-old Beatles legend was asked for advice by the grime star on how to improve his musicianship, so he gave him a "basic" lesson in tinkling the ivories. He said: "Stormzy asked for advice. He's looking to advance his music. "As a rapper, I thought he'd have words down, but there was a piano, so I showed him basic stuff-how you get middle C, make a chord, a triad and, just by moving that, get D minor, E minor, F, G, A minor, and how that's enough for anyone." The 'Norwegian Wood' hitmaker caused a stir with an unlikely collaboration with Kanye West and Rihanna on 'Four Five Seconds' in 2014 and he admitted he had no idea what the track would sound like, or even that it would feature the 'Work' hitmaker, until it was finished. He told the Sunday Times magazine: "Working with Kanye, I'm sitting around the Beverly Hills bungalow, (strumming a slower riff than was used on the track). "I originally thought we would sit down and [play something upbeat] 'Well, today's a good day! And he'd go, 'Yes, it sure is.' And I'd go, 'Come on now, Kanye, we have gotta take a p**s!' Or whatever. But it turned out it wasn't like that. He recorded with his iPhone and, months later, I got this... "I didn't even know we were connected to Rihanna!" Despite his years in the music industry, Paul has never grown tired of his career. He said: "It's never got to be like a job. I love it. You sit down and there's a black hole you pull something out of. Little things, chords, planets. And then you've got something, where there was nothing."



AC/DC working on new album

AC/DC are working on a new album. The rock band haven't released a studio LP since 2014's 'Rock or Bust', but it's believed lead guitarist Angus Young has been working on a new release, which will feature his late brother Malcolm Young - who died last year - on "every track." A source told Dallas publication JAM Magazine: "Turns out, five years prior to the 'Black Ice' LP, AC/DC's 15th studio release, Angus and Malcolm Young lived together where they literally wrote hundreds of songs, many were recorded and have been stashed away until now. "Angus has decided to select the best tracks from those recordings that Malcolm played on and is now back in the studio recording and mixing them with fellow band mates Phil Rudd, Cliff Williams and yes, Brian Johnson on vocals." Malcolm tragically passed away in November last year at the age of 64, following a three-year battle with dementia. AC/DC - which was co-founded by Malcolm and Angus - confirmed the sad news in a Facebook post at the time, writing: "Today it is with deep heartfelt sadness that AC/DC has to announce the passing of Malcolm Young. "Malcolm, along with Angus, was the founder and creator of AC/DC. "With enormous dedication and commitment he was the driving force behind the band. As a guitarist, songwriter and visionary he was a perfectionist and a unique man. He always stuck to his guns and did and said exactly what he wanted. "He took great pride in all that he endeavored. "His loyalty to the fans was unsurpassed. (sic)" The 'Highway to Hell' rockers recruited Guns N' Roses' Axl Rose for their tour last year after their frontman Brian Johnson was forced to quit the band in 2016 due to hearing loss, but it's not yet known whether he will join them for the album.

Die Hard 6 to be called McClane



The title of the new 'Die Hard' film will be 'McClane'. The sixth movie in the action franchise, which has followed Bruce Willis as wisecracking police detective John McClane, was originally rumored to be called 'Die Hard: Year One', however, the movie's cleaner title has been chosen to represent the importance of Bruce's character in the series. The film which follows a 60-year-old McClane and a younger incarnation of himself in his 20s, comes after the original 1988 film 'Die Hard', 1990's 'Die Hard 2', 1995's 'Die Hard With a Vengeance', 2007's 'Live Free or Die Hard' and 2013's 'A Good Day to Die Hard'. Speaking to Empire magazine about the significance of the title, producer Lorenzo di Bonaventura said: "You can tell our intention by the fact that the title page we handed in says, 'McCLANE'. We want you to get invested in John McClane more than ever before. I don't know how you do 'Die Hard' without Bruce. The idea that he's not very significant in this movie is not accurate at all. We are gonna explore John McClane in his 20s. But just as prominent is the 60-year-old version." Casting is underway to find a younger McClane and director Len Wiseman admits it is "crucial" to get the right man for the job. Wiseman previously said: "The right casting for this role is crucial. "Those bare feet have some very big shoes to fill." In the last film, McClane and his son Jack (Jai Courtney) had to complete a mission which took them into the heart of a Russian organized crime gang.

Farrell says he 'miscalculated' Keoghan

Colin Farrell admits he initially "miscalculated" his 'Killing of a Sacred Deer' co-star Barry Keoghan. The 42-year-old actor has conceded he made the mistake of judging the 25-year-old star - whose mother died of a drug overdose - based on his youthful appearance, saying he's "older, wiser, more experienced" than he assumed. Colin shared: "My first impression of him was that he was a pure burst of Irish energy. "He seemed young - but that was a miscalculation on my part. Before too long I got to know a little more about him and rather than younger than his years, he's older, wiser, more experienced than them. "He's stepped between the pillars of tragic loss way more often than most twice his age and he's done so with his head unbowed." Colin is hugely impressed with how Barry - who is, perhaps, best-known for his role in 'Dunkirk' - has dealt with tragedy in his life. He told the Guardian newspaper: "I love Barry. I think all the experiences he's had in life would bury most of us. "Certainly, I believe such struggle would place me in anger and destructiveness that is counter to what I've seen in him. He's about creating. "Just look up his CV and see who he's worked with already, and the depth and mystery he's brought to each role. He's focused, driven and grateful, all alongside the natural talent he has."



Dakota Johnson: I'm a very porous person



Dakota Johnson thinks she's a "very porous person". The 28-year-old actress - who stars as a dancer in new movie 'Suspiria' - has revealed the way in which making the supernatural horror film has subsequently left an impression on her. She shared: "I'm a very porous person, and I absorb a lot of people's feelings. And sometimes when you work on a dark subject matter, it can stay with you. "And to talk to somebody really nice about it afterwards is really comforting, and my therapist is a very nice woman." Despite this, Dakota - who is best-known for her starring role in the 'Fifty Shades' movies - has insisted that making the Luca Guadagnino-directed film was not a traumatic experience. She said: "It was the most fun and the most exhilarating and the most enjoyable that it could be. So it's not like I ended up in a psych ward afterwards. I just had a lot of feelings!" Meanwhile, Dakota recently admitted she found Chris Hemsworth's physique very distracting on the set of 'Bad Times at El Royale'. The Hollywood star joked it was a "really big mistake" for producers to film her co-star shirtless in the mystery thriller - which is set in a hotel and features a group of strangers being spied on by an unknown person - because it drew all the attention to him. She said: "I think it was a really big mistake to have him take his shirt off. "Because it's all you can look at. It's so astonishing. It's really impressive. He may or may not do a little dance of sorts. And it's so, so spectacular."

Keoghan says acting is therapeutic to him

Barry Keoghan says becoming an actor has been very "therapeutic" for him. The 25-year-old Irish actor achieved notoriety playing Martin Lang in Yorgos Lanthimos' 2017 psychological horror 'The Killing of a Sacred Deer', an American teenager exacting a grisly revenge on a surgeon, played by Colin Farrell, and he followed that performance up with a role in Christopher Nolan's 2017's World War II drama 'Dunkirk'. Although Barry first wanted to break into acting to have fun and earn some money the art form soon took on a deeper meaning for him. Speaking in an interview with The Guardian newspaper, he said: "I was looking for something. I was looking to mess around, to joke. And get paid! But on a deeper level, it was very therapeutic for me. I could be someone else. I think you get to release a few of your problems there through being another person." Barry endured a tough upbringing and journey to the big screen as his mother died of a heroin overdose at the age of 31 and he and his brother Eric were moved between 13 different foster care homes over a five-year period until their grandmother took them in. The rising star admits it was not easy to get over the grief of losing a parent but it led to he and his brother forming an unbreakable

bond. He explained: "Foster care was a big part of my life. My mother dying of drugs is not easy for any kid. Anyone dying is not easy, but certainly not a mother. Me and my brother, we stuck together. The foster families were good to me and then my nanny took me in. "It really did shape me into who I am. That's why I say I'm happy [to talk about it], I'm proud of it. And as I've said before I'm very proud of my mother." It was Barry's brother Eric who encouraged him to follow his dream of becoming an actor and that gave him the confidence to go for it. He said: "Eric never took the p**s out of me. Because where I'm from, to do acting is not heard of. Being one of the lads and all, you don't just go, 'Oh, I want to be an actor.' They'd laugh and joke about it. Not in a mean way, but like taking the p**s. But once you get the seal of approval from your brother, you just know." Explaining how his love of cinema was fostered, he added: "I'd mitch (bunk) off school and go to this place to watch all of these films. I'd watch Paul Newman and all these greats and I was like, 'Who are these?' I was learning my craft by watching these old movies. I was getting educated and I didn't even know it."



Director of Venice's Western favorite blasts film sexism

French director Jacques Audiard went gunning for sexism in the film industry Sunday after his extraordinary new Western, "The Sisters Brothers", received a standing ovation at the Venice film festival. The maker of "A Prophet"—whose first American movie stars Joaquin Phoenix, John C. Reilly and Jake Gyllenhaal—is the early favorite to pick up the Golden Lion for best film. But as he basked in the applause of critics, Audiard blasted the festival's organizers with both barrels for choosing only one film by a woman to vie for the top prize. "I was surprised when I read that the line-up was 20 men against one woman," Audiard told reporters. "I wrote to the other directors but there wasn't much a reaction," he added.

The acclaimed auteur attacked the "opaque" way films were picked for big prizes, adding that "in the 25 years my films have been competing, I have never seen a woman at the head of a festival." His comments come after Venice—now the key launchpad for the Oscars race—was accused of "toxic masculinity" for all but cold-shouldering women directors for a second year in succession.

'We have to act!'

Festival director Alberto Barbera even threatened to quit rather than give in to quotas before Venice bowed Friday to the 50/50 by 2020 equality goals already signed by Cannes and other festivals. He had insisted that films should be chosen on merit and not on the film-maker's gender. But Audiard—who faces stiff competition in a rich and starry Venice line-up—was having none of it. "Let's stop thinking about the sex of film, it doesn't make sense.

"We can, however, count equality—it's very simple... When we start getting serious we can avoid aberrations like 20 against one." When his words were met with loud applause, Audiard declared, "No, don't clap—we have to act!" Audiard said that he was not attacking Barbera's integrity, but "there was a problem (in the industry). The other problem is that for 25 years we have had the same people at the top, the same men, who have changed a little bit, but who are still there."

'Men control world'

Earlier Oscar-nominated actress Berenice Bejo of "The Artist" fame said women had to be strong and learn to say no. "The world is controlled by men and the (film) industry too," she told reporters after her powerful new female Argentine drama, "The Quietude", by "El Clan" director Pablo Trapero, was also cheered by critics. "The world is changing (with #MeToo) but we have not yet won," said the Paris-based star of the arthouse hit "The Past".

"When I feel humiliated (on a film) or not in the right place I say no. I play women the way I think they should be played. I'm not scared to say what I think. "When you have strong mother and father who tell you you can be what you want, you will be strong enough to say no," she added.

"The Sister Brothers" star Reilly—who co-produced the film after getting the rights to Patrick deWitt's darkly comic bestseller set in the lawless Far West of the 1850s—wore a pin supporting the 50/50 to the premiere. He compared the period to the "crisis point... we are in now. The way we arrived to that place was through brutality and violence and genocide, and the strongest prevailing over the weak. "But that is not a sustainable plan for the future, that is self-destructive," Reilly told AFP.

Strong female stories

Despite the dearth of female directors, Venice has hummed with films with female-led stories and strong female characters. As well as "The Quietude" and the adaptation of the first of Elena Ferrante's Neapolitan novels, "My Brilliant Friend", singer Lady Gaga has shone in "A Star is Born", while British star Maxime Peake is the heart around which Mike Leigh's historical epic "Peterloo" hangs.

Alfonso Cuaron's highly-praised "Roma" is centered on two resourceful Mexican maids, and even the blood-soaked arty horror flick, "Suspiria", by last year's Oscar winner Luca Guadagnino, is set in a kind of feminist Berlin coven. The Golden Lion for best film will be awarded next Saturday at the glittering ceremony on the Venice Lido. —AFP



Director Jacques Audiard arrives for the premiere of the film "The Sisters Brothers" presented in competition during the 75th Venice Film Festival at Venice Lido.



Model Bruna Marquezine arrives for the premiere of the film "The Sisters Brothers". —AFP Photos



Model Bianca Balti arrives for the premiere of the film "The Sisters Brothers".



Actress Stefania Rocca and her husband, President of the Italian Chamber of Fashion, Carlo Capasa arrive for the premiere of the film "The Sisters Brothers".



Model Annabelle Belmondo arrives for the premiere of the film "The Sisters Brothers".



Singer Elio, from the band "Elio e le Storie Tese", and model Bianca Balti arrive for the premiere of the film "The Sisters Brothers".



(From right) Director Jacques Audiard, screenwriter Thomas Bidegain, actor John C. Reilly, his wife, producer Alison Dickey, composer Alexandre Desplat and his wife, violinist Dominique Lemonnier arrive for the premiere of the film "The Sisters Brothers" presented in competition.

Bono says 'back to full voice', U2 tour will resume

U2 frontman Bono has said he will be "back to full voice" for the rest of a European tour after the Irish rock band was forced to cancel a gig in Berlin when they were only a few songs in. Thousands of fans were left disappointed on Saturday night when the band's set was abruptly cancelled after Bono appeared to be unable to sing. "It's not right for you. It's useless," he told fans from the stage after pausing to drink from a thermos before the show was eventually called off.

The surprise cancellation left the remainder of U2's seven month "Experience + Innocence" tour in doubt. But in a statement released through his publicist late Sunday, Bono said he had recovered his vocal health and that the tour would continue as planned. "I've seen a great doctor and with his care I'll be back to full voice for the rest of the tour," the 58-year-old singer said. "So happy and relieved that anything serious has been ruled out."

He added that his joy was "tempered by the knowledge that the Berlin audience were so inconvenienced". But he said the band will return to Berlin at the end of their tour to play a new gig on November 13th for those who missed out on Saturday. The statement will come as a relief to U2 fans across Europe with tickets for upcoming shows. The band's next scheduled concert is in Cologne on Tuesday before they head to France, Portugal, Spain, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Britain and Ireland. At the first Berlin show on Friday, Bono condemned the recent far-right violence in the eastern German city of Chemnitz. During the concert, the slogan #wirsindmehr (we are more) used by counterprotesters in Germany against the far-right was also projected on the stage, to cheers from the crowd. —AFP



First Paris attacks feature film shown at Venice

The first feature film to touch on the Paris jihadist attacks premiered Friday at the Venice film festival just months after another was pulled over protests by survivors. "Amanda" tells the story of a young man who is left to look after his seven-year-old niece after her mother is killed in an attack on a Paris park. Although the attack itself is fictional, the film by French director Mikhael Hers draws on the shock and trauma in the French capital after the November 13, 2015, massacres in which 130 people died.

French public television was forced in December to put on ice a controversial love story starring Sandrine Bonnaire set on the night of the killings at the Bataclan concert venue. Although "Ce soir-la" (That Night) had by then finished shooting, executives promised it would not be shown until all of the survivors and families of victims were consulted following protests. Claire Pelletier, the partner of one the people murdered at the Eagles of Death Metal concert, had set up a petition calling for the "scandalous" film to be shelved. She said it was far too soon for "such a painful" story to be revis-

ited. But the makers of the new film told AFP that "Amanda" was not directly about the 2015 attacks but rather about the trauma they created in those left behind. Hers insisted that he wanted to "bear witness to the Paris of today" and the movie only "comes partly from the attacks". "The attacks had a powerful impact on people. Unconsciously there's the fear of a shooting whenever you hear a loud bang; there's a hazy tremor of insecurity when you're on a cafe terrace or in a crowded public place," he added.

Did not talk to survivors

First reviews of the film were generally positive, with the Hollywood Reporter calling it a "quietly moving celebration of human resilience" even if its "tasteful understatement" was sometimes too low-key for its own good. The producers admitted that Hers did not "sit down and talk to the survivors one-on-one but he read all their official testimonies". "He didn't want to make a direct comparison between his characters and the experiences of the victims,"

a spokesman told AFP. Hers said the film "fits into a much bigger picture of a period when people are tormented by an awareness of our fragility". Sociologist Gerome Truc, author of "Shell Shocked: the Social Response to Terrorist Attacks", who worked with the film, said it was more a portrait of the "Bataclan generation" in post-attacks Paris.

While the aftermath of a fictional attack in Paris is briefly shown, the film is "about all terrorist attacks and the ordeal that an attack represents", he said. The main focus of the story is the relationships between the young uncle and his niece (Vincent Lacoste and Isaure Multrier), and his wounded musician girlfriend played by Stacey Martin. "The story of David and Amanda is set in Paris, but it could be London, Baghdad or Bombay," Truc said. Netflix screened a documentary mini-series, "Attack on Paris", in May based on testimony from dozens of survivors, and the bestseller "You Will Not Have My Hate", a moving rebuke to the attackers by Antoine Leiris, the husband of one of the victims, has been adapted for the stage. —AFP

Missing DR Congo rapper 'found'

A young rapper in the Democratic Republic of Congo missing for four days has been found after apparently being kidnapped by unknown assailants, a spokesman for the singer said on Sunday. Bob Elvis Masudi who went missing on his way to his producer's home on Wednesday was "found on Sunday, released by his captors who took all he had on him: phone, wallet, clothes", the spokesman Willy Kanyinda told AFP.

"He is very tired but had not suffered any physical violence during his detention," said Kanyinda, adding that the "identity of his kidnappers was still not known". "We are relieved because we had feared the worst," he said of the rapper, a known critic of President Joseph Kabila. Kinshasa police chief Sylvano Kasongo earlier told AFP he was "surprised by this affair". "Nobody in his family... has reported his disappearance to police," he had said.

Velazquez's ladies in waiting spruce up struggling Spanish town



In 2008, sick of watching his derelict neighborhood dying a slow death, Spanish artist Eduardo Hermida walked out of his studio and painted a mural inspired by Diego Velazquez's masterpiece "Las Meninas". It was a spontaneous protest begging authorities to do something in Canido in the industrial northwestern town of Ferrol, dubbed Spain's Detroit for its shrinking population and abandoned homes. His friends joined in. As the years passed, so did other artists from as far afield as Taiwan and before he knew it, Hermida had created an annual urban art festival that has helped breathe life into the neighborhood, attracting visitors and new residents.

In April, a mural sporting the alleged signature of legendary street artist Banksy appeared overnight, generating breathless excitement. Was this the famously anonymous graffiti star's first foray into Spain, coming to the rescue of the struggling Galician town? Unfortunately not. Banksy's official website has since denied he was behind the stenciled image of two Guardia Civil police agents kissing, and the author's true identity remains a mystery. But the show goes on.

'Agonising' decline

During last weekend's edition of the event, now sponsored by commercial brands, artists from around Spain got busy on walls marked with a yellow "M", indicating where they were allowed to work. Some perched on aerial work platforms to spray-paint giant building facades, others delicately glued mosaics to the wall of a house in ruins. The neighborhood has accumulated around 240 quirky variants of Velazquez's 17th century painting, which depicts young Infanta Margarita with her ladies-in-waiting (Meninas in Spanish), wearing tight corsets and wide, bouffant skirts.

Cubist Meninas, a Menina with a Darth Vader head, another sporting the feminist slogan "Time's Up", a mermaid Menina with long blue hair and a scar on her breast campaigning for breast cancer, another whose face lines follow the cracks of a wall... In Canido, they come in all colors and sizes, helping liven up a town that Hermida says has suffered an "agonizing and chronic" crisis sparked by the decline in its

once buoyant shipyards. "That pushed people to migrate, to leave, and there are lots of abandoned houses," the bearded 52-year-old artist says.

Since 1981, Ferrol, also the birthplace of late dictator Francisco Franco, has lost more than 20,000 inhabitants according to Galicia's statistics institute. Between 1998 and 2017 the number of under-30s living there fell by nearly 47 percent. In February, Zara, the high-street fashion favorite whose billionaire owner is Galician, closed its only store there.

Injection of youth

Canido, perched high in town overlooking lush rolling hills, has been "one of the worst-hit" neighborhoods, says Hermida. But it has gradually changed over the decade helped in no small part by the Meninas, locals say. While many dilapidated, single-storey houses remain, several new homes have sprung up. A popular supermarket chain has also opened. "There is a gynecologist, fishmonger, restaurants with good food," Hermida adds. Jose Gandara, a 46-year-old newsagent who has run a small shop since 1996, estimates that Canido's population has doubled since the festival began. "There are more customers... young people have come to the neighborhood, couples, young people with kids."

He says tourists from cruise ships that now dock in Ferrol trek up to the neighborhood to see what all the fuss is about. The concept of art helping revive a town is not new. Fanzara in eastern Spain, for instance, has been revitalized by giant murals painted by street artists from around the world. For Maria Fernandez Lemos, Ferrol's 46-year-old urban planning councilor, the Meninas festival—and a close-knit community—has helped generate pride in a town that didn't have much to go on. "It's had a huge impact," she says. —AFP

There are more customers... young people have come to the neighborhood, couples, young people with kids



Pictures show murals paintings in Ferrol, during the annual street art festival "Meninas de Canido" set up in 2008 to breathe new life into a dying neighborhood. —AFP photos



PANAMA'S FIRST INDIGENOUS BEAUTY QUEEN opens doors, breaks social barriers

Born into Panama's Comarca Ngobe Bugle indigenous community, Rosa Montezuma is only too well aware of the challenges girls face getting an education and pursuing their dreams. Now as Panama's first indigenous woman in the Miss Universe beauty pageant, Montezuma hopes to become an example to show others they can overcome prejudice and stereotypes. "Indigenous women by nature are a little bit demure, hidden and submissive because of the culture we live in," Montezuma told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "More

than anything, it's being an example for other women and opening the doors not only to participate in a beauty pageant but also to be able to do any kind of work in society."

The 67th annual pageant will be held in Bangkok in December. When Montezuma, 25, decided to take part in the Miss Panama beauty contest to become a candidate for Miss Universe, controversy and bullying ensued on social media, she said. People questioned her indigenous heritage and where she was born and lived, she said this week. "Panama wasn't ready to accept

an indigenous woman to take part in the competition," Montezuma said. "This has shown that we should also be included in all spheres of society, and in all types of competitions. The pageant has been a platform for inclusiveness in the country." She grew up in a remote and impoverished rural community in western Panama with no internet or mobile phone reception.

Against the odds Montezuma went to the capital, Panama City, an eight-hour drive away, to get a university education. There she said she faced discrimination and prejudice from other students.

"They'd look at me and say for being indigenous, she doesn't have the same abilities that we have," Montezuma said, a food science and technology graduate. Indigenous people make up more than 10 percent of Panama's population of 4 million. While Panama has laws to protect indigenous culture and collective land rights, nearly nine in every ten indigenous people live in poverty, a problem the United Nations described in a 2014 report as "alarming."

Ensuring indigenous girls get educated is a key challenge facing the community,

Montezuma said. In 2007, Panama introduced a program to promote bilingual education in indigenous communities for children to learn in both Spanish and their native languages. But indigenous children from the Ngobe Bugle community, especially girls, go to school on average for less than four years. That is half of the national average. "Many indigenous women don't study, but I did want to study," said Montezuma, adding she was supported by her parents. "You have to make a lot effort to be able to overcome the obstacles and to advance." —Reuters



MUMBAI: Indian Hindu devotees take a vow before forming a human pyramid in a bid to reach and break a dahi-handi (curd-pot) suspended in the air during celebrations for the Janmashtami festival, which marks the birth of Hindu God Lord Krishna, in Mumbai yesterday. — AFP

Mediterranean crossings 'deadlier than ever': UN

Tens of thousands sign up online

GENEVA: Even as the number of migrants and refugees crossing the Mediterranean to Europe has fallen sharply, the likelihood of dying during the dangerous voyage has risen significantly, the UN said yesterday. Between January and July, more than 58,000 asylum seekers and migrants reached Europe's shores after crossing the Mediterranean Sea - 41 percent fewer than during the same period in 2017, the UN refugee agency said. The number of people taking the particularly dangerous central Mediterranean route to Italy fell to just 18,500, down from over 95,000 during the first seven months of last year, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in a fresh report. But the agency warned that Mediterranean crossings were now "deadlier than ever", with the rate of deaths at sea rising sharply. During the first seven months of the year, nearly 1,600 people perished trying to make the treacherous journey. Around 1,200 of those deaths occurred along the central Mediterranean route-around half the number seen last year when there were five times as many arrivals in Italy.

One in 18 died

That means that one person died for every 18 who attempted to make the journey along that route, compared with one in 42 who crossed during the same period in 2017. "This report once again confirms the Mediterranean as one of the world's deadliest sea crossings," Pascale Moreau, who heads UNHCR's Europe operations, said in a statement. "With the number of people arriving on European shores falling, this is no longer a test of whether Europe can man-

age the numbers, but whether Europe can muster the humanity to save lives," he said. Despite the dramatic drop in arrivals, Europe is facing a large-scale political crisis over the migrants and refugees who continue to arrive from Africa and the Middle East.

Italy's recently-installed populist government has vowed to stop taking in migrants rescued off Libya, and along with Malta has repeatedly closed its ports to NGO ships criss-crossing the Mediterranean to help those in need. Spain, which has opened its ports to several rescue ships run by charities which were turned away from Italy, has meanwhile seen the number of arrivals during the first seven months of this year more than double to 27,600, UNHCR said.

In recent months, UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration have been calling for a "predictable, regional approach" to the rescue and disembarkation of people in distress in the Mediterranean. Yesterday's report was released three years after photos of the limp, lifeless body of Syrian boy Alan Kurdi washed up on Turkish shores brought into sharp relief the dangers faced by migrants and refugees trying to reach safety in Europe.

Afghan author and UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Khaled Hosseini warned that Europe had not heeded the lessons present in those shocking pictures. "When I saw those devastating images of the body of Alan Kurdi, my heart shattered," Hosseini said in the statement. "Yet, just three years on and despite thousands more people losing their lives at sea, our collective memory and urgency to do better seems to have faded." — AFP



TRIPOLI: Libyans swim to cool off in the Mediterranean Sea in the capital Tripoli. — AFP

Phone ban rings in new school year in France

PARIS: Texting under the table should be a thing of the past after French children returned to class yesterday following a nationwide ban on mobile phones in schools. The new rule, a campaign pledge of President Emmanuel Macron, was brought in under a law passed in July which for primary and junior schools also banishes tablets and smart watches.

High schools, which teach students aged 15 to 18,

can introduce partial or total bans on electronic devices as they reopen after the summer break, though this will not be obligatory. Proponents say the law, which has prompted vigorous debate, will reduce distraction in the classroom, combat bullying, and encourage children to be more physically active during recess. "I think it's a good thing," Marie-Caroline Madeleine, 41, told AFP after dropping her daughter off for the first day of middle school in Paris.

"It's a good signal that says 'school is for studying', it's not about being on your phone," she added. "It's hard with adolescents, you can't control what they see and that's one of the things that worries me as a parent." Nearly 90 percent of French 12- to 17-year-olds have a mobile phone, and supporters hope the ban will limit the spread of violent and pornographic content among chil-

dren. Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer has hailed the legislation as "a law for the 21st century" that would improve discipline among France's 12 million pupils. "Being open to technologies of the future doesn't mean we have to accept all their uses," he said in June, as the bill was going through parliament.

PR 'stunt'

But critics dismiss the measure as a public relations exercise, and predicted it will be difficult to apply. The government has left schools to decide how to implement the new rules, recommending that they store students' phones in lockers during the day — but some schools don't have them. Research shows that in French schools that have already banned phones, many pupils admit to breaking the rules. Schools all over the world

have struggled to adapt to the rise of pocket-sized devices as parents grow increasingly anxious about the amount of time their children spend glued to the screen.

In 2015 New York Mayor Bill de Blasio lifted a ban on phones in his city's schools on security grounds, saying parents should be allowed to stay in touch with their children. Macron, a 40-year-old centrist, pledged widespread reforms when he was elected, and education has been no exception. Along with the mobile phone ban, he has halved primary school class sizes in disadvantaged areas to 12 in a bid to narrow a massive gap in outcomes between children from poor families and those from wealthy ones. On the other end of the age spectrum, a shake-up of the higher education system to make university access more selective prompted a wave of student sit-ins this year. — AFP

India builds the world's biggest ...

Continued from Page 1

There is also a political motive to the mega project, with India heading into a campaign for a national election early next year. Patel was deputy to India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru after independence in 1947 and Modi's nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party says his name has been unfairly overshadowed by the dominant Nehru dynasty. Patel became known as the "Iron Man of India" by persuading - through talks and a hint of force - some 550 princely states to become part of

India after independence from Britain in 1947. He died three years later. Many Hindu nationalists feel it was a slight when Patel was asked to step aside to let the secular Nehru become the country's first leader. "Every Indian regrets Sardar Patel did not become the first prime minister," Modi said while campaigning in 2013.

"Modi has used Patel's legacy a lot in his election campaigns," said Ghanshyam Shah, a former professor of class politics at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. "He is very likely to use the Statue of Unity during the upcoming campaign but I am worried about how it will influence voters," Shah added. The opposition Congress party says that a plan to change the Nehru Memorial museum in New Delhi into a centre devoted to all of India's prime ministers is another bid to taint Nehru's name.

In 2016, Modi laid the foundation stone in

Maharashtra state for the statue of Shivaji, a hero of the 80 million strong Marathi community based in the state. Hindu nationalists have also adopted Shivaji, who made his name battling the Muslim Mughal empire. Critics say the 36-billion-rupee (\$515-million) statue is a way of winning Marathi votes in next year's election. Fuelling the fervor, the government announced last week that the word "Maharaj", or king, had been added to the title of Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport.

Statue politics

"The BJP has been appropriating icons for some time," said Sudha Pai of the Indian Council of Social Science Research. "Patel has been used to wipe out the Nehru legacy. The BJP wants to change the way history is perceived and show that the right wing was as

important in India's freedom struggle." Preliminary work has started on the controversial project - with a museum, park and helipad - on reclaimed land two kilometers out to sea. Environmentalists and thousands of fishing workers oppose the statue because of the threat to fishing stocks.

The price of the monument is certain to rise, analysts say and the state government has already changed the design to bring down costs. How it will eventually look and when it will be finished remains in doubt. India's statue politics often fall victim to "hard economic reality", according to Badra Narayan, a professor at the Pant Social Science Institute in Allahabad. An overrun is inevitable, according to IC Rao, head of a Mumbai citizens' group, who has questioned the cost and safety of the Shivaji design. He said finishing the statue on time, would be "an impossibility even for the Trojans". — AFP

Sports

Hernandez's blast leads Blue Jays to 6-1 win over Marlins

Rockies topple Padres, grab 2nd in NL West

MIAMI: Rookie Sean Reid-Foley earned his first major league win as Toronto won at Miami. Reid-Foley (1-2) held the Marlins to four hits, one walk and one run in seven innings. He struck out a career-high 10, including all three batters he faced in the first inning. Teoscar Hernandez led Toronto's offense with a three-run homer, and Luke Maile went 3-for-3 with three doubles. Miami's Jeff Bringham, making his major league debut, took the loss, allowing four hits, four walks and three runs in three innings. He struck out two.

ROCKIES 7, PADRES 3

Chris Iannetta snapped a tie with a two-run double in the seventh inning, and David Dahl homered in the eighth as Colorado gained a split of a four-game series at San Diego. Kyle Freeland (13-7) held the Padres to three runs on seven hits and two walks with three strikeouts over six innings. Dahl drove in two runs for the Rockies, who got three hits from Charlie Blackmon and two hits from Trevor Story.

BRAVES 5, PIRATES 1

An error by Pittsburgh second baseman Kevin Newman on a grounder struck by Freddie Freeman allowed Ronald Acuna Jr. to race home with the go-ahead run in the eighth inning, leading host Atlanta to a win. Acuna singled against Steven Brault (5-3) to start the inning and was bunted to second. Freeman hit a sharp grounder that took a bad hop off Newman and scooted into right field, allowing Acuna to score. The Braves went on to add three insurance runs in the inning. Acuna hit his seventh game-opening homer of the season, leaving him tied with Marquis Grissom (1997) for the franchise's single-season record. He is tied with Nomar Garciaparra (1997) and Hanley Ramirez (2006) for the second-most leadoff homers by a rookie. The rookie record of nine was set by Chris Young in 2007.

CUBS 8, PHILLIES 1

Javier Baez recorded his 30th home run and 100th RBI on the same swing of the bat in the sixth inning, helping Chicago win at Philadelphia. Jon Lester survived two three-hit innings to throw six shutout innings, sending the Cubs to the 10th win in their last 12 games. Baez became the first Cubs middle infielder to record a 30-homer/100-RBI season since Ryne Sandberg in 1990 when he hit a solo homer off Phillies starter Aaron Nola (15-4) to put the Cubs up 3-0. Nola allowed three homers and four runs in 5 2/3 innings. He struck out 11.

REDS 6, CARDINALS 4 (10 INNINGS)

Eugenio Suarez clubbed his 31st home run, a two-run shot in the 10th inning, and Brandon Dixon then added a solo shot as Cincinnati outlasted host St. Louis. The burst came after the Cardinals loaded the bases with no outs in the bottom of the ninth against Michael Lorenzen (2-1), the Reds' fifth pitcher. However, the right-hander preserved the 3-3 tie with a strikeout, a forceout at the plate and a shallow flyout. The loss dropped St. Louis one-half game behind the Milwaukee Brewers for the top spot in the National League wild-

card race. The Cardinals were also foiled in their effort to pick up a franchise-record 11th straight series win.

ASTROS 4, ANGELS 2

George Springer and Alex Bregman homered, and Houston earned a split of its four-game series with visiting Los Angeles. Springer followed a leadoff walk from Tony Kemp in the third inning with a two-run homer, his 20th, off Angels right-hander Shohei Ohtani (4-2). Ohtani, starting on the mound for the first time since June 6, departed one batter later after reaching his pitch count. He allowed two runs on two hits and two walks with two strikeouts over 2 1/3 innings. Ohtani recently was limited to hitting but not pitching due to a right elbow sprain.

A'S 8, MARINERS 2

Stephen Piscotty hit two home runs and had five RBIs as Oakland defeated visiting Seattle. Edwin Jackson pitched six strong innings as the A's earned a split of the four-game series. Jackson (5-3) gave up just one run on three hits. He walked two and struck out two. Seattle's Felix Hernandez (8-13) didn't give up a run through four innings before the A's tied it at 1-1 in the fifth on a solo homer by Piscotty. Hernandez wound up yielding four runs in five-plus innings.

RANGERS 18, TWINS 4

Jurickson Profar, Robinson Chirinos and Nomar Mazara each hit two-run home runs in a nine-run sixth inning, and Yohander Mendez picked up his first major league win by throwing six shutout innings as Texas crushed Minnesota in Arlington, Texas. Profar, who went 4-for-5, also had a pair of doubles and scored three runs, while Mazara added a second home run in the eighth. Elvis Andrus and Drew Robinson also homered for Texas, which set a club record with 13 extra base hits. Chris Gimenez, who started at first base for the Twins, pitched a scoreless eighth inning. He then homered in the ninth, becoming the first Minnesota pitcher to homer since Jim Kaat in 1972.

ROYALS 9, ORIOLES 1

Whit Merrifield had two hits, an RBI and a stolen base while extending his on-base streak to a career-high 22 games, and Jorge Lopez struck out a career-high eight in Kansas City's victory over visiting Baltimore. Alex Gordon and Alcides Escobar had three hits and an RBI apiece, and Jorge Bonifacio had two hits and an RBI as the Royals won their fifth in a row and seventh in their past eight, both season bests. Lopez (1-4) gave up five hits and one run in seven innings and did not walk a batter in his first victory since September 2015, when he was with Milwaukee. He was acquired from the Brewers in the Mike Moustakas deal in July.

BREWERS 9, NATIONALS 4

Keon Broxton hit a three-run homer and Christian Yelich added a grand slam, both coming in a seven-run fifth inning, as Milwaukee took command en route to a



MIAMI: Lourdes Gurriel Jr. #13 of the Toronto Blue Jays hits a sacrifice fly in the third inning against the Miami Marlins at Marlins Park on Sunday in Miami, Florida. — AFP

victory at Washington. The Nationals held a 4-2 lead coming into the fifth, but both of the homers came with two outs and gave the Brewers a 9-4 lead. Milwaukee has tied a team record by hitting home runs in 12 straight games. Brewers reliever Brandon Woodruff (3-0) tossed four scoreless innings for the win. He gave up three hits and no walks while fanning five.

TIGERS 11, YANKEES 7

Rookie Victor Reyes went 4-for-5, hit his first career homer and matched a career high with three RBIs as Detroit recorded a victory at New York. Reyes helped the Tigers earn a split the four-game series by getting a hit in four consecutive at-bats. Nicholas Castellanos homered, and Castellanos, Ronny Rodriguez and Dawel Lugo each had three hits for Detroit.

RAYS 6, INDIANS 4

Brandon Lowe homered, doubled twice and had three RBIs, Ryan Yarbrough pitched five-plus relief innings, and visiting Tampa Bay held on to defeat Cleveland. Yarbrough (13-5) allowed one run, two hits and one walk as the Rays won the rubber match of the three-game series. The left-hander struck out three. Jose Alvarado pitched two-thirds of an inning to pick up his seventh save despite allowing Melky Cabrera's

two-run double in Cleveland's three-run ninth. Cleveland's Carlos Carrasco (16-8) allowed five runs on nine hits in 6 1/3 innings.

METS 4, GIANTS 1

Noah Syndergaard threw a two-hitter for the first complete game of his career, and Michael Conforto hit a two-run homer in the second inning, guiding New York to a victory at San Francisco. Syndergaard (10-3) became the Mets' first 10-game winner this season, going the distance in his 81st career start. He walked one and struck out a season-high-tying 11. The former All-Star gave up a triple to Alen Hanson in the third inning that was followed by a Chris Stratton sacrifice fly. Syndergaard yielded a one-out single to Evan Longoria in the fourth, then retired 17 of the last 18 batters he faced.

WHITE SOX 8, RED SOX 0

James Shields pitched six scoreless innings, Tim Anderson and Daniel Palka each homered, and host Chicago cruised to a win over Boston. Shields (6-15) scattered four hits, walked two and struck out six. Matt Davidson went 2-for-4 with a double and two RBIs as the White Sox earned a four-game series split. Xander Bogaerts had two of Boston's five hits. The Red Sox were blanked for the sixth time this season. — Reuters

Sato wins at Portland, Dixon stays atop IndyCar title hunt

LOS ANGELES: Japan's Takuma Sato held off American Ryan Hunter-Reay over the last 19 laps to win Sunday's IndyCar Portland Grand Prix while New Zealand's Scott Dixon boosted his season points lead.

The 41-year-old racer from Tokyo used fuel strategy and pit stop timing to take his third career IndyCar victory after last year's Indianapolis 500 and Long Beach in 2013. "This weekend has really paid off," Sato said. "We carefully calculated. The strategy worked well. The car worked extremely well."

A caution flag for US rookie Santino Ferrucci set up a restart with 23 laps remaining and when pit stops evened up, Sato seized the lead with 19 laps to go. It set up a thrilling finish to the first IndyCar race at Portland since 2007, but Hunter-Reay settled for second. "I knew he was coming but I kept really cool," Sato said. "Ryan really raced me hard, in and out, but (I was) brilliant." Frenchman Sebastien Bourdais was third with American Spencer Pigot fourth and Dixon fifth, giving him 598 points with only one race remaining in the season title chase, that in two weeks on the road course at Sonoma, California.

On a day when he started 11th, barely escaped damage in a first-lap crash and had a penalty for violating pit lane speed, Dixon stretched his lead over second-place American Alexander Rossi from 26 to 29 points. "Not a huge amount," Dixon said.

Dixon, seeking the fifth IndyCar season title of his career, can eliminate his only other rivals-Australian Will Power and American Josef Newgarden on 511 points-with a 21st-place showing at Sonoma.

Dixon's car had tire rubber on the nose cone and front wing from a five-car crash on the second turn of the opening lap but was able to continue despite heading into the mishap blinded by a cloud of dirt.

"I thought it was pretty bad," Dixon said. "I couldn't see anything in the dirt. There was dust everywhere. I was getting hit everywhere. I think the suspension was a bit bent. The car didn't drive like it usually does. But I was able to get going. This feels like a win for us in this situation. Crazy. Crazy." — AFP



MONZA: Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton celebrates as he stands on his car after winning the Italian Formula One Grand Prix at the Autodromo Nazionale circuit in Monza on Sunday. — AFP

Booing just makes me stronger, Hamilton tells Ferrari fans

MONZA: Ferrari fans had mocked up a picture of Lewis Hamilton as a cry baby ahead of the Italian Grand Prix but the Mercedes driver was not the one shedding tears of frustration at Monza on Sunday.

The boos and jeers rang out as the beaming Briton bounded out onto the podium as a five times winner of Ferrari's home race-and the mass of red-shirted tifosi showed how much it hurt. Hamilton had started third, behind Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen and Sebastian Vettel on the starting grid, and yet he beat them both to stretch his championship lead to 30 points with seven races remaining.

Monza is the one race a Ferrari driver always has to win and none has done that since 2010. The wait will now go on for another year. "Here there was a lot of negativity, as there is when you're against an opposing team," Hamilton said as a throng of fans invaded the track and filled the start-finish straight with their red flags and flares.

"In future, the negativity is really a positive thing for me because I harness it and turn it from negative to positive," added the 33-year-old, who also paid tribute to his fans for holding firm. "I know I've got those individuals who are out there who travel the world to support me. I know they're there," he told reporters. "I'm really really proud of them, because obviously when you're in a big sea of red and there's the booing and... you notice there's one guy standing there with a flag or there's a kid waving it and you can imagine being surrounded by that, feeling the heat on him," he said. Hamilton's win equalled the number achieved by Ferrari great Michael Schumacher at Monza, a circuit where Mercedes have won for the last five years. The Briton has many admirers in Italy too, even if Monza is more about demonstrating passion for Ferrari than the sport itself, and he refused to criticise the crowd for their response.

"It doesn't offend me, no. There's nothing to get offended by," he said, even if he had never himself booed anyone or any team. "It happens in all sports. It definitely happens in football and probably here more than I've noticed in others but it is the way it is," added the Briton.

"It is very, very easy to allow it to get to you, to allow it to have an impact on your life and have you think about it, all these different things. But it is also quite easy to harness it and use it and that gave me so much motivation today. I welcome it. If they want to continue to do it, that just empowers me." — Reuters

F1's McLaren put teenager Norris on the grid

MONZA: British teenager Lando Norris has been given a dream contract to race in Formula 1 with McLaren from 2019, replacing the departing Belgian Stoffel Vandoorne. England's Norris, who had taken part in practice at the last two races in Belgium and Italy, was confirmed as McLaren's new driver just minutes after the team confirmed Vandoorne would be leaving.

He will be the second Briton on the 2019 grid after world champion Lewis Hamilton. "To be announced as a race driver for McLaren is a dream come true. Although I've been part of the team for a while now, this is a special moment, one I could only hope would become reality," Norris said.

"I'd like to thank the whole team for this amazing opportunity and for believing in me. I'm also extremely grateful for the commitment McLaren has already shown in my development, allowing me to build my experience in a Formula 1 car in both testing and on Fridays during the past two race weekends.

"I'll also be working closely with McLaren at every opportunity to learn as much as possible from the drivers, engineers and mechanics to give myself the best preparation ahead of next year." Norris will form a new-look McLaren team alongside Spaniard Carlos Sainz, who was signed last month to succeed Fernando Alonso following the star's decision to quit after 17 years in the sport.

Lando has been part of the McLaren young driver programme since early 2017, when he officially joined the team as test and simulator driver. Since then, Lando has regularly conducted race simulation work for the team and also participated in Formula 1 testing - in Abu Dhabi in 2017, and Spain and Hungary in 2018. Last year, he contested the European Formula 3 Championship, which he won at the first attempt. Norris currently sits second in the Formula 2 championship, having won on his debut from pole position, with four races from two events remaining.

"We believe Lando is an exciting talent, full of potential, who we've very deliberately kept within the McLaren fold for exactly that reason," McLaren CEO Zak Brown said. "We already know he's fast, he learns quickly, and has a mature head on his young shoulders. We see much potential for our future together." — AFP

Sports

Kuwaiti minister welcomes committee seeking post-ban sports resurgence

Amir congratulates Kuwaiti shooters for international medals

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri has welcomed the International Olympic Committee's announcement of a six-party committee tasked with designing a roadmap after a sports ban on Kuwait was provisionally lifted. The committee, which holds its first meeting next week, aims to make sure that Kuwait's Olympic ban is totally removed, Jabri, who also serves as Minister of State for Youth Affairs, told reporters yesterday. The minister hoped that future international events would mark the triumphant return of Kuwaiti athletes, encouraging them to go above and beyond to attain glory for the nation.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday cables of congratulations to Kuwait shooting team members who have won medals in the 52nd world championship, held in Changwon, South Korea. The cables were sent to members of the Kuwaiti trap shooting team, Abdulrahman Al-Faihan, Khaled Al-Mudaf, and Talal Al-Rashidi who have won gold medals in the trap team's competition, in addition to securing a bronze medal by Al-Faihan in the individual competition. In the cables, His Highness the Amir wished the athletes more future success to accomplish more achievements for Kuwait in regional and international championships. His Highness the Deputy Amir and 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 similar cables to the Kuwaiti champions.

In the meantime, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent cables of congratulations to horse rider Ali Al-Kharafi and athletes Essa Al-Zankawi and Hussain Al-Mesri for winning medals in the 18th session Asian Games, held lately in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The Defense Minister sent a cable of congratulations to Al-Kharafi for grabbing a gold medal in equestrian jumping contests, Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public

Relations in the Kuwaiti Army said in a statement yesterday. The Minister also sent a cable of congratulations to athlete Essa Al-Zankawi for winning a bronze medal in discus throw, as well as athlete Hussain Al-Mesri for bagging a bronze medal in Kurash wrestling. The Defense Minister praised efforts exerted by the

Kuwaiti athletes in the Asian games, wishing them further success and progress to better serve their country under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince. — KUNA



Mohammad Al-Jabri



Defense Minister congratulates medalists

Kuwaiti athletes in the Asian games, wishing them further success and progress to better serve their country under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince. — KUNA



JAKARTA: File photo shows gold medalist Kuwait's Ali Al-Kharafi waves to the crowd at the end of the individual final round jumping event at the equestrian competition at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta on August 30, 2018. — AFP

Olympic clock ticking on boxing's 'cultural change'

JAKARTA: The International Boxing Association says it is embarking on a "cultural change" to prevent the sport being thrown out of the Olympics, as one Asian boxing chief warned "the clock is ticking". The Asian Games were again marred by ugly protests at judging decisions, with two North Korean coaches removed by police and booted from the Asiad after their fighter lost a split decision. "We are going to change the culture in AIBA," the governing body's executive director Tom Virgels told AFP on the sidelines of the Asian Games boxing tournament in Jakarta. Four years ago in Incheon, South Korea, there were scuffles with police in the arena and foul-mouthed tirades from coaches and relatives after a series of controversial decisions. One boxer even tearfully refused to accept her bronze medal and was banned from the sport for a year. "We have an issue of competence in our officiating and that's on us," admitted Virgels. "Our president Gafur Rakhimov is very, very committed to putting in whatever resources necessary to improve the education process of our officials. We've got to get better."

The noble art was one of six original sports in the ancient Olympics, but it faces the real prospect of being knocked out by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and losing its place at Tokyo 2020. The IOC has been losing patience with boxing since a judging scandal at the 2016 Rio Games when all 36 officials and referees were suspended while allegations of bout-fixing were investigated.

An internal power struggle saw Taiwanese AIBA president CK Wu ousted and earlier this year Uzbek businessman Rakhimov—who has always vigorously denied US government allegations of links to organised crime—was installed as interim president. IOC president Thomas Bach said in February that he was "extremely worried about the governance of AIBA". And though amateur boxing's under-fire chiefs handed over a crucial report on internal reforms to the IOC in April, the threat remains. "This report shows some progress and goodwill but still lacks execution and substance in some areas," Bach said in May. "Therefore we retain our right to exclude boxing from Tokyo 2020." Philippines boxing chief Ed Picson said he is worried the IOC could carry out their threat.

"I hope it doesn't happen," he told AFP. "The clock is ticking." "The IOC seems to think that unless certain drastic measures are applied, it would be justified to pull boxing out of the Olympics," said Picson, who is secretary general of the Association of Boxing Alliances in the Philippines. Rakhimov declined to speak to AFP when approached during the Asian Games, but AIBA issued a written response when asked about the problems boxing is facing. "AIBA has delivered two comprehensive update reports to the IOC Executive Board over the past months," the statement said. "These reports have outlined the documented improvements in the organisation's finance, governance, management, refereeing/judging systems, just to mention a few."

"Some of these changes will need the approval of the AIBA Congress early November, and the IOC Executive Board has therefore asked for third and final report following the AIBA Congress to confirm these changes." Picson questioned some judging decisions against Filipino boxers in Jakarta, complaining Rogan Ladon had been "short-changed" after he was stopped in the flyweight final with a cut and lost on the scorecards up to that point. The judges awarded his Uzbek opponent the first round, in which Ladon appeared to be on top. "You tell me, who won that round? Ladon won that round, no doubt," Picson said, adding that he hoped AIBA's interim president, who is a former boxer and coach, could implement changes in time to keep the sport in the Olympics.—AFP

Cook to retire from international cricket after India series

LONDON: Alastair Cook announced yesterday he would retire from international cricket after the fifth Test against India, with England's leading Test run-scorer saying he had "nothing left in the tank".

The 33-year-old Essex left-hander has amassed 12,254 runs at 44.88 including 32 hundreds, while his run of 158 consecutive Test appearances is a world record. But the former England captain, who has played in 160 Tests in total, has struggled for runs recently and averages a meagre 18.62 from nine Tests this year.

"After much thought and deliberation over the last few months I have decided to announce my retirement from international cricket at the end of this Test series against India," said Cook in an England and Wales Cricket Board statement.

"Although it is a sad day, I can do so with a big smile on my face knowing I have given everything and there is nothing left in the tank," the four-time Ashes-winner added. "I have achieved more than I could have ever imagined and feel very privileged to have played for such a long time alongside some of the greats of the English game."

Cook said it would be tough to walk away but that the timing was right. "I have loved cricket my whole life, from playing in the garden as a child, and will never

Moeen Ali masters India as England wrap up series win

SOUTHAMPTON: Moeen Ali spun England to a 60-run victory over India in the fourth test as the hosts sealed a series victory over the world's top-ranked nation with a match to spare on Sunday. Set 245 for a series-leveling victory, India were bowled out for 184 with the recalled Moeen taking four for 71 to go with the five wickets he took in India's first innings.

None was more crucial than that of India skipper Virat Kohli who shared a gritty 101-run fourth-wicket partnership with Ajinkya Rahane after India had slumped to 22-3. Kohli, who survived an early review against Moeen, looked set having reached a patient 58 but he fell to the off-spinner just before tea.

India's last six wickets went down for 51 runs and although Ravi Ashwin blazed away for 25 to hold England up he was eventually trapped lbw by all-rounder Sam Curran. England lead the series 3-1 with one match to play.

Skipper Joe Root praised his side's strength of character after they had slumped to 86-6 on day one and picked out Moeen's return as key. "I think today it was the best I've ever seen him bowl in an England shirt," Root said of all-rounder Moeen who was left out of the opening three matches of the series.

"Credit to the group. We were really up against it on that first morning. Couldn't be more proud of the group." India began the day by ending England's second innings for the addition of only 11 runs to leave an absorbing test balanced on a knife edge.

While 245 looked reachable, a worn pitch together with India having only three times successfully chased 200 plus for victory outside Asia meant the odds favoured England.

England seamers James Anderson and Stuart Broad took full advantage of the helpful conditions to rip out India's top order-leaving the visitors' hopes in tatters. In the third over KL Rahul had his off stump removed by a full-length Broad delivery that shot through at ankle height. Anderson sent Cheteshwar Pujara, whose century helped India establish a small first-innings lead, back to

underestimate how special it is to pull on an England shirt," he said.

"So I know it is the right time to give the next generation of young cricketers their turn to entertain us and feel the immense pride that comes with representing your country." England took an unassailable 3-1 lead in their five-match series against India with a 60-run win in the fourth Test at Southampton on Sunday.

But Cook, who scored a century on Test debut against India at Nagpur in 2006, has managed just 109 runs from his seven innings in the series at 15.57.

He is sixth in the all-time list of leading Test run-scorers, having surpassed mentor Graham Gooch's previous England record of 8,900 runs three years ago. Gooch was also a predecessor of Cook's as an Essex and England opener, as well as Test skipper.

"There are too many people to thank individually, but a special mention must go to Graham Gooch," said Cook, who is to continue playing for Essex. "As a seven-year-old I queued for his autograph outside Essex County Cricket Club and years later was so fortunate to have him mentoring me," he said.

"Graham was my sounding board, especially in the early years of my career, spending hour after hour throwing balls at me with his dog stick. He made me realise you always need to keep improving whatever you are trying to achieve."

Gooch, now the president of England's Professional Cricketers' Association, paid tribute to Cook by saying: "Alastair has been the rock of England's batting for the last 12 years since he made his debut...He is a genuine legend of English cricket."

Meanwhile former England captain Nasser Hussain described Cook-about to become a father for the third



Alastair Cook

time—as a "truly remarkable cricketer". Speaking to Sky Sports he said: "To carry on this long... You'd think somewhere along the line you'd lose form or fitness. Huge credit to the lad. He's been England's best player."

Alec Stewart, another former England skipper, paid tribute to Cook's robustness, telling BBC Radio: "That record of over 12,000 runs, if someone breaks it they're very, very good players, but it will take a long, long time to get there."

ECB chairman Colin Graves hailed Cook's "selfless dedication", saying he deserved to be remembered as "one of England's greatest ever cricketers". England have yet to announce their squad for the fifth Test at The Oval, which starts on Friday, but it would be a major surprise if Cook were omitted. —AFP

Indian media bemoan 'spineless' cricketers

NEW DELHI: Decrying a "meek surrender" and "heartbreak" defeat, Indian newspapers said yesterday that Virat Kohli's world number one Test side had only themselves to blame for their series defeat in England.

"The cherished dream of staging one of the greatest comebacks in modern cricket history could so easily have been fulfilled but some spineless batting saw Kohli's men crashing to another series loss away from home," the mass-circulation Times of India wrote.

Mail Today bemoaned India's "meek surrender" and the Times of India said it was a heartbreak that will not be easy to deal with. Kohli's side needed 245 to win the fourth Test in Southampton but they were bundled out for 184 after tea Sunday, giving the hosts a 3-1 lead with one match left to play.

Earlier this year India lost 2-1 in South Africa. India faltered with the bat in both the innings against England, triggering questions about their temperament and technique. The Indian Express headlined its story: "Almost, but not good enough" and said the loss should both hurt and teach. "They have a band of men that comes close but falters, can't cross over," the English-language daily said. The papers concurred with Kohli that challenging rivals is not enough and that India must find ways to win close matches.

The Hindustan Times said the bowlers had given momentum to India's push for overseas success but the "batsmen haven't stood up, leaving far too much to the class and consistency of skipper Virat Kohli".

Kohli has been the leading batsman in the five-Test series with his tally of 544 runs at an average of 68, including two hundreds. —AFP



Moeen Ali

the pavilion lbw after rapping him on the back thigh with an inswinger.

Opener Shikhar Dhawan struck three boundaries in his 17 but fell in next over, thick-edging to Ben Stokes at gully after being squared up by a beauty to leave India reeling on 22-3. Kohli and Rahane both got the benefit of reviews, however, as the visitors limped to lunch on 46-3.

England were incensed not to have Kohli out lbw off Moeen after replays failed to show conclusively that the master batsman had got an edge. After lunch Kohli began to work singles and twos with Rahane also showing good technique against spin duo Moeen and Adil Rashid and India's fans in the ground began to dream of victory. There was no panic from England, though, and with tea approaching Moeen got the prized wicket of Kohli.

Having just seen Kohli survive a half chance from his previous delivery, Moeen got another ball to climb out of the rough and catch the glove before looping up into the grateful grasp of Alastair Cook at short leg.

Kohli looked deflated as he trudged off and shortly after tea India were in deep trouble as Hardik Pandya edged a rising Ben Stokes delivery to second slip where Root took a great catch. Rishabh Pant mounted a brief attack with a feisty 18, launching Moeen for a six, but his aggression cost him as he holed out to Cook in the deep. When Moeen pinned Rahane lbw for 51 India's last hope had gone. Stokes got his second wicket by removing Ishant Sharma for a duck and Moeen had Mohammed Shami caught slogging.—Reuters

Sports

Magical Messi, Suarez score doubles in 8-2 rout of Huesca

Barcelona's third win of the campaign

MADRID: A magical Lionel Messi and on-form Luis Suarez scored doubles apiece as champions Barcelona thrashed newly-promoted Huesca 8-2 to join Real Madrid at the top of La Liga on Sunday.

Barcelona's third win of the campaign in as many games saw Ernesto Valverde's men go top thanks to superior goal difference over Real before the break for Nations League matches. Celta Vigo, who stunned Atletico Madrid 2-0 on Saturday, sit in third place at two points adrift with Atletico now five points adrift of the top after a shaky start to the campaign.

Huesca travelled to the Camp Nou perhaps more in hope than belief, although it was the latter that dominated the Aragon-based minnows' thinking in the early stages after Cucho Hernandez headed past Barca goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen to hand them a surprise third-minute lead.

But reality soon kicked in, a slick Messi levelling in the 16th minute after leaving right-back Luisinho on the deck on his way to beating Argentine goalkeeper Axel Werner. Eight minutes later VAR was deployed to confirm an own goal from defender Jorge Pulido, who got his foot to Jordi Alba's cutback before it wriggled past Werner and into the net.

Alba, recently left out of Spain's squad by former Barcelona coach Luis Enrique, was in the thick of it again on 39 minutes when he set up Suarez to put Barca 3-1 in front by the 39th minute with his maiden goal of the campaign.

Although Alex Gallar pulled one back for the visitors three minutes before the interval when he turned in Hernandez's deflected cross to reduce arrears to 3-2, it merely delayed a second-half onslaught.

LEVEL WITH BENZEMA

Barca emerged from the dressing room to hit five goals, Ousmane Dembele starting the rout with an angled drive that beat Werner on 48 minutes. Four minutes later Ivan Rakitic's superb half-volley from Messi's delivery had the Camp Nou on its feet.

Messi doubled his tally for the night on the hour mark to make it four in three games and completed his night's work by setting up Jordi Alba for a magnificent seventh nine minutes from the final whistle.

Barcelona made it eight in the final seconds of the game when Suarez stepped up to beat Werner from the spot. "It's always important to be top of the league but it's barely started," Suarez told beIN Sports.

"The championship is very long and the main thing is to keep on doing as we are." Messi's haul of four goals means he is level with Real striker Karim Benzema, the Argentine star foregoing the opportunity to take the sole lead of the scoring charts when he allowed Suarez to hit the late penalty.

With a question mark still hanging over his international career, Messi is expected to return from the international break rested having decided not to play for Argentina during the international break. —AFP



CAMP NOU: Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi vies with SD Huesca's Spanish defender Xabier Etxeita (C) during the Spanish league football match between FC Barcelona and SD Huesca at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Sunday. — AFP

African players in Europe: Mane upstages Salah

PARIS: Sadio Mane upstaged Liverpool team-mate Mohamed Salah among the African stars in Europe at the weekend by scoring his fourth goal this season in a 2-1 league win over Leicester City.

Senegalese Mane was overshadowed by reigning African Footballer of the Year Salah last season with the Egyptian scoring 32 Premier League goals for the Reds. A former African Footballer of the Year, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang of Gabon, broke his goal drought this season by scoring for Arsenal in a 3-2 win at Cardiff.

England

SADIO MANE (Liverpool)

The Senegal winger helped Liverpool extend their flying start to the season as his early goal inspired a win at Leicester. Mane struck in the 10th minute when he collected Andrew Robertson's pass and prodded home from 10 yards. It was Mane's fourth goal of the season and Liverpool went onto score again through Roberto Firmino before surviving a second-half Leicester fightback. Thanks to Mane, Jurgen Klopp's side sit top of the table with four consecutive wins.

RACHID GHEZZAL (Leicester)

The Algeria midfielder scored his first goal for Leicester, but it was not enough to stop Claude Puel's team losing. Trailing by two goals at the King Power Stadium, Leicester were given a lifeline by Ghezal when the 26-year-old finished off Nigerian Kelechi Iheanacho's pass in the 67th minute. Ghezal, who arrived from Monaco in August, won't get many easier goals as he slotted into an unguarded net left vacant by Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson, whose needless attempt to dribble past Iheanacho had given possession to the Foxes.

PIERRE-EMERICK AUBAMEYANG (Arsenal)

The Gabon striker finally scored his first goal of the season, producing a fine finish in Arsenal's win at Cardiff. After going three games without getting on the scoresheet, questions were being asked of Aubameyang, who had made such an excellent start to life with the Gunners last season following his January move from Borussia Dortmund. New Arsenal manager Unai Emery had admitted Aubameyang was struggling for confidence, but the 29-year-old didn't look low on morale in the 62nd minute when he curled home from 20 yards. Aubameyang's 150th goal in the top five European leagues put Arsenal 2-1 up and on course for their second win of the season.

Italy

GERVINHO (Parma)

Ivorian international Gervinho, playing again in Italy after two years with Chinese club Hebei China Fortune, shocked champions Juventus by cancelling out Mario Mandzukic's opener with a 33rd-minute goal for promoted Parma. It was the first start for Gervinho, who last played in Serie A with Roma in 2016. To the anger of the crowd, he was substituted after an hour by coach Roberto D'Aversa, who later said the 31-year-old had problems during the week, explaining: "I can't let him get injured." Juventus came back to win 2-1.

FRANCK KESSIE (AC Milan)

Ivory Coast midfielder Kessie got AC Milan off the mark after 40 minutes for their first game in the San Siro, a 2-1 win over Roma. Ricardo Rodriguez rolled the ball across the goal face, with Kessie pouncing past Ivan Marcano to tap in at the back post and give AC Milan their first points of the season.

KEVIN-PRINCE BOATENG/KHOUMA BABACAR (Sassuolo)

Germany-born Ghana forward Boateng scored his second goal in three games for new club Sassuolo in a come-from-behind 5-3 win over Genoa. The 31-year-old Boateng revived his side with the equaliser for 1-1 after 34 minutes following a back-heel from Senegalese striker Babacar, who then finished off a Boateng

rebound to score his first of the season four minutes before the break as the side from Modena remain unbeaten this season with seven points from three games, second behind champions Juventus.

NICOLAS NKOULOU (Torino)

Cameron defender Nkoulou scored the only goal on a stormy night in Turin to give Torino their first win of the season and end SPAL's winning run. Nkoulou, 28, headed in off a Roberto Soriano corner seven minutes after the break after the game had been suspended for an hour because of rain which made for soggy playing conditions in northeastern Italy.

Germany

PIERRE KUNDE MALONG (Mainz)

The Cameroonian midfielder made his first start for Mainz since joining from Atletico Madrid in mid-year, coming in for the injured Jean-Philippe Gbamin. As Mainz picked up a point in Nuremberg, Kunde picked up a yellow card for a foul on Alexander Fuchs.

SALOMON KALOU (Hertha Berlin)

The Ivorian veteran helped his side to a first away win over Schalke in 14 years as Hertha triumphed 2-0 in Gelsenkirchen. Kalou missed a superb chance in the first half, dragging his shot across goal when one-on-one with goalkeeper Ralf Faehrmann.

SALIF SANE (Schalke)

Schalke's Senegalese defender cut an unfortunate figure in the home loss to Hertha. Having inadvertently deflected Ondrej Duda's opener into the net on 15 minutes, Sane nearly gifted Hertha a second goal 20 minutes later when a miscommunication with Abdul Rahman Baba allowed Kalou a free run on goal.

France

AMBROISE OYONGO (Montpellier)

The Cameroonian left-back bagged his first goal for Montpellier in a 1-0 victory at Reims. The 27-year-old Oyongo, an Africa Cup of Nations winner who joined from Montreal Impact in January, drilled a crisp half-volley from a deflected cross low into the far corner on 77 minutes to settle a tight encounter. —AFP

Injured Lloris ruled out of France matches

CLAIREFONTAINE-EN-YVELINES: France World Cup-winning captain Hugo Lloris will miss his country's games in the inaugural UEFA Nations League this week due to a thigh injury, coach Didier Deschamps confirmed yesterday.

Lloris missed Spurs' 2-1 defeat at Watford in the English Premier League on Sunday and will now sit out France's games against Germany in Munich on Thursday and at home to the Netherlands on Sunday. The uncapped Montpellier goalkeeper Benjamin Lecomte has been called up to the squad as a replacement for Lloris. With Marseille's Steve Mandanda—the regular back-up to Lloris—also absent due to injury, Paris Saint-Germain's Alphonse Areola is set to win his first cap when France play Germany in a meeting of the last two world champions.

Areola went to the World Cup but did not play a single game in Russia as Les Bleus won the trophy for the second time. "The fact he came with us to the World Cup means I consider him to be one of the three best French goalkeepers. He knows the squad well, so this is not all new to him," said Deschamps of Areola.

"We have these two matches and logically he will take the number one spot." Lloris was at France's training centre at Clairefontaine, south of Paris yesterday, to have his injury assessed by medical staff.

It has been a complicated start to the new season for the 31-year-old, who was charged with drink driving last month after being arrested in central London in the early hours of August 24. —AFP

Real unity vital in flying start to post-Ronaldo era

MADRID: When Cristiano Ronaldo left Real Madrid in July it was the end of an era at the Santiago Bernabeu as the European champions said goodbye to their all-time top goalscorer and best player.

But although Julen Lopetegui's side failed to sign a replacement, they have started the season flying with three wins from three games. Joint top of the table with arch-rivals Barcelona, both boasting 100 percent records, it has been a seamless transition into the post-Ronaldo period at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Real thrashed Leganes 4-1 at home on Saturday, taking their tally to 10 goals in three games in the Spanish top flight. Although a relatively easy start to the season has helped, Real have started playing with joy and it looks as if pressure has been lifted off the team's shoulders.

"The truth is that now Madrid are playing with 11 and not 10 plus one, like in the last nine years," wrote Spanish newspaper Marca. "Now if a player receives a bad pass they try to encourage the team mate who made the error. Before it was different, Cristiano Ronaldo was understandably demanding, but everything is a lot friendlier now."

The team now boasts no "galactics", with the exception of Gareth Bale. The Welshman's personality, however, means he will not be demanding in the same way Ronaldo was. Bale is part of an equal attacking partnership with Marco Asensio and Karim Benzema which has so far been highly productive.

There was pressure to feed Ronaldo before, with the Portuguese forward quick to let team mates know



PARMA: Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo controls the ball during the Italian Serie A football match Parma vs Juventus at Ennio Tardini stadium in Parma. — AFP

if he felt they had unfairly ignored him on the pitch. Now there is more freedom in Real's attacking line and Benzema, in particular, is flourishing.

The Frenchman is enjoying his best start to a league season with four goals in three games, while Asensio has won three penalties and Bale has netted three times. Ronaldo, meanwhile, is yet to get off the mark in Serie A with his new team Juventus.

"I think this year the key is to play as a team," Real midfielder Casemiro said. "If we have the con-

sciousness and mentality to play as a team, we have the players to go very far and have a great league season." Captain Sergio Ramos is a natural leader and he is also shouldering his share of the responsibility to replace Ronaldo, having scored penalties in the wins over Girona and Leganes. Although sterner tests await Real, with September featuring trips to Sevilla and Athletic Bilbao, as well as the first derby clash with Atletico, Los Blancos are putting on a unified front in Ronaldo's absence. — Reuters

Furious Bayern Munich president slams PSG director Henrique

BERLIN: Bayern Munich president Uli Hoeness, exasperated by two long and eventually failed transfer negotiations with Paris Saint-Germain, fired off a volley of criticism at the French club's sports director Antero Henrique in an interview yesterday.

PSG made bids for Bayern defender Jerome Boateng and Portuguese international Renato Sanches over the summer but the way Henrique went about his business left Hoeness seething.

"I'll give Paris Saint-Germain a bit of advice - they should find a new director of sport," said Hoeness, who was re-elected as Bayern president in 2016 after serving 21-months in jail on tax evasion charges.

"This guy does not project the right image. If PSG want to become a world-class club they cannot allow themselves to have a sporting director like this one," he said in an interview published in Kicker yesterday.

Hoeness claimed Henrique behaved poorly in his negotiations for both players, although he did not go into detail. The 29-year-old Boateng had been interested by PSG's project under new German coach Thomas Tuchel, but Bayern put a 50-million-euro price tag on him with the French offer falling short of that.

Bayern Munich also say they struck a deal for Sanches but that PSG then tried to bargain them down afterwards. The Bavarian club's sports director Hasan Salihamidzic also stuck the boot in on Paris on Saturday after the club's 3-0 win over Stuttgart. "I do not want to insult anybody. But I will tell you - you can't do things like that to Bayern Munich. Especially when it is about that kind of player," he told Sky TV. — AFP

25 Boing just makes me stronger, Hamilton tells Ferrari fans

26 Cook to retire from international cricket after India series

27 Magical Messi, Suarez score doubles in 8-2 rout of Huesca



Nadal, Del Potro into US Open last-eight

Serena, Stephens reach US Open quarter-finals



NEW YORK: Sloane Stephens of the US returns the ball to Belgium's Elise Mertens during their women's singles tennis match on Day 7 of the 2018 US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center on Sunday in New York City. — AFP

NEW YORK: Defending champion Rafael Nadal on Sunday reached the US Open quarter-finals for the eighth time where he will face Dominic Thiem, one of only three men to defeat him in 2018. World number one Nadal saw off a battling Nikoloz Basilashvili, the first Georgian in a fourth round in New York, 6-3, 6-3, 6-7 (6/8), 6-4.

"It's a big victory for me," said the 32-year-old Nadal, the champion in 2010, 2013 and 2017. "He was hitting the ball very strong and when I thought I was in control of the points, he always came back with strong shots." It was world number 37 Basilashvili's strength, however, which proved his undoing. His 56 winners were erased by 59 unforced errors, three times as many as Nadal.

Elsewhere, Juan Martin del Potro, the 2009 champion, beat Borna Coric 6-4, 6-3, 6-1 to make the last-eight for a third successive year. The third seeded Argentine will next face John Isner, the last American man standing, who defeated Milos Raonic 3-6, 6-3, 6-4, 3-6, 6-2, taking his tournament aces total past the 100-mark.

Thiem, who beat Nadal on clay in Madrid in the run-up to Paris, booked his place in the quarter-finals for the first time with a 7-5, 6-2, 7-6 (7/2) win over 2017 runner-up

Kevin Anderson. The ninth-seeded Austrian's three other appearances in the last-eight of a Slam were all on Paris clay in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

Nadal leads their head-to-head 7-3 with all of their matches coming on clay courts, including in the final of Roland Garros in June when he captured an 11th French Open. "Thiem is a great opponent, he has the big serve and he had a big win today against Kevin," said Nadal who has made the last-eight of every Slam in the same year for the first time since 2011. Thiem has unfinished business at the US Open. Last year, he had two match points against del Potro in the fourth round but fell in five sets.

Thiem's progress to the last-eight comes despite choosing to play European clay court events after Wimbledon before then losing his only summer hard court outing in Cincinnati to Stefanos Tsitsipas.

He is the first Austrian in the last-eight at the US Open since Thomas Muster in 1996. "Against Rafa, I've had three very nice experiences and seven horrible experiences," said Thiem who turns 25 today. "On clay, it's one of the biggest challenges in sports to beat this guy. I hope that it's a little bit more comfortable on hard court, but I'm not sure." Third-

seeded del Potro made the last-eight for the sixth time against Croatian 20th seed Coric who was playing in his maiden last 16 of a Slam. Coric, 21, saw his challenge undone by a right thigh injury which needed two visits by the trainer as well as general unhappiness with the humidity of the Arthur Ashe court.

Meanwhile, six-time champion Serena Williams survived a spirited challenge from unseeded Kaia Kanepi to triumph 6-0, 4-6, 6-3 on Sunday and reach the quarter-finals of the US Open. The 23-time Grand Slam champion looked set to romp home when she seized the first set from Kanepi in just 18 minutes.

But the hard-hitting Estonian, who took out world number one Simona Halep in the first round, settled down in the second set, shaking off the partisan crowd in a jammed Arthur Ashe Stadium to push Williams the rest of the way.

"It wasn't an easy match at all," said Williams, who let out what she called a "Serena scream" after ripping a backhand cross court to hold serve in the opening game of the third set. "Winning a big game and a very important game and a really tight game, I think it was just a relief," said Williams, who took control with a break in the next game and main-

tained that advantage until she fired a forehand winner on her first match point. Williams booked a quarter-final date with Karolina Pliskova, the eighth-seeded Czech who beat Australian Ashleigh Barty 6-4, 6-4. Pliskova defeated Williams in the semi-finals in New York in 2016.

Defending champion Sloane Stephens, the third seed, eased past Elise Mertens 6-3, 6-3 to book a quarter-final rematch with Latvian Anastasija Sevastova. Sevastova topped seventh-seeded Elina Svitolina 6-3, 1-6, 6-0, leaving just two of the top 10 women's seeds remaining. Stephens, runner-up to Halep at the French Open, was looking forward to taking on Sevastova again in her bid to push ahead in her title defense.

"Obviously it won't be easy," she said. "Quarter-finals of a Grand Slam is always really tough. A big opportunity for both of us. Being defending champion, being able to get to the quarter-finals again, is incredible. I'm just going to try to keep building on that and keep going." Sevastova, in the quarters for a third straight year, is hoping to turn the tables on Stephens, who is trying to become the first woman to win back-to-back US Open titles since Williams won three straight in 2012, 2013 and 2014. —AFP

Messi snubbed as Ronaldo, Modric, Salah nominated for FIFA player award

LONDON: Lionel Messi was left off the shortlist for the FIFA's men's player of the year award yesterday as his old rival Cristiano Ronaldo was named alongside Luka Modric and Mohamed Salah. Messi has dominated the award along with Ronaldo over the past decade, but the Barcelona star has been omitted from the contenders list for the first time since 2006.

After featuring in the top three for 11 straight years, Messi was overlooked when the list was announced by football's world governing body yesterday. The 31-year-old Argentine was runner-up for the prestigious prize in 2007 and 2008 before winning it for the first of five times in 2009.

Messi and Ronaldo, the world's two best players, have been engaged in a fascinating duel for the sport's top individ-

ual and club honours for over a decade. Between them, Messi and Ronaldo have won the Champions League nine times and have a combined 14 domestic league titles.

Now Messi's absence from the shortlist opens the way for Ronaldo, also a five-time winner of the award, to move ahead in their personal battle. Portugal forward Ronaldo lifted a fourth Champions League title in five years in May before joining Italian champions Juventus in July.

The 33-year-old won the player of the year crown in 2008, 2013, 2014, 2016 and 2017. Joining Ronaldo on the shortlist is his former Real team-mate Modric, who enjoyed a superb season for club and country. As well as his influential displays in Real's Champions League triumph, the Croatia midfielder was the key man for his country as they reached their first World Cup final, finishing as runners-up to France. Liverpool and Egypt forward Salah has also impeccable credentials as a potential winner of the award.

Salah enjoyed a record-breaking first season with Liverpool as his goals propelled Jurgen Klopp's to the Champions League final and set a host of individual club landmarks. France's World Cup-winning manager Didier Deschamps, Zlatko Dalic and Zinedine Zidane were nominated as the finalists for FIFA's coach of the year award.

Deschamps became just the third man to win the World Cup as a player and coach with victory over Dalic's Croatia in Russia while Zidane led Real Madrid to a third consecutive Champions League win in May before stepping down.



This combination of pictures created yesterday shows (LtoR) Real Madrid's Croatian midfielder Luka Modric, Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah and Real Madrid's Portuguese striker Cristiano Ronaldo. — AFP

The best goalkeeper prize is to be contested by Tottenham and France's Hugo Lloris, Denmark and Leicester's Kasper Schmeichel and Belgium and Real goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois. The 10 nominees for the Puskas

Award of best goal include Real forward Gareth Bale's over-head kick in the Champions League final against Liverpool and Ronaldo's bicycle kick against Juventus, scored while he was still with Real.—AFP