

Friday Times

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Human rights bureau



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Finally, a Kuwaiti law has been issued with the specific task of considering human rights issues in Kuwait, by setting up the National Human Rights Bureau. Terms of membership of this body and conditions of selection have been defined, including previous experience in dealing with human rights issues.

The second article of this law states that it is an independent body supervised by the Council of Ministers, which aims to promote and protect human rights and respect for public and private freedoms. Article 3 stipulates that the new bureau will have a board of directors composed of 11 national figures. The president of the chamber and the vice-president will be fulltime members.

I believe that working fulltime is very important, because the agenda of human rights is packed. I would



There is also
the subject of
exploitation by
companies

like to congratulate Jassem Al-Mubarak on this important post, which carries great responsibility and will undoubtedly need a lot of support to carry out the work of the bureau. Everyone knows that the population of Kuwait is about 4 million people, including both citizens and expatriates. I hope the new president and members will proceed immediately in listing the main issues that can be examined and verified.

I also know that the bedoon issue is one of the outstanding issues affecting human rights directly, but unfortunately, it is not the only unresolved issue. The increase in population has added new concerns to the society. For example, there is no one considering the issue of poverty in Kuwait, as many people think there is no poverty in the state. There is also the subject of exploitation by companies, including non-payment of regular salaries and the conditions of prisoners and the provision of their humanitarian, psychological and physical needs.

I am sure that these issues are not absent from the minds of the members, because these are the issues that the Western world tackles. I hope members will make field visits to all areas where it is likely that human rights might be violated, whether of citizens or expatriates, in cooperation with the responsible government bodies.

I hope that the new bureau will be a Kuwaiti window for the Western world to view human rights issues and review outstanding issues with transparency and clarity. It should also issue online reports in both English and Arabic. I know some members of the new bureau are competent to handle this difficult task at a time when the community is raging with issues that are affecting human rights, and most importantly our reputation as a modern country with a global humanitarian leader.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



A wooden trellis covers a tiled corridor of the popular Avenues shopping mall in Al-Rai. — Photo by Mustafa Al-Badr/Kuna

A bitter compromise



Kaffeeklatsch

By Shakir Reshamwala
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The other day at a chalet in Khairan, I began chatting with the caretaker, a lanky fortysomething man from India. What he told me boggled my mind. He said he has been in Kuwait for more than three years without travelling back home, and plans to stay yet another year to save some more. He has been working for his current sponsor for a few months now, after transferring from his initial sponsor, who according to him, was mean and made him work non-stop. Apart from a few months in Funaitees at his previous sponsor's home, he has been in Khairan for his entire stay in Kuwait.

Don't you get bored living in a remote area all alone? Do you ever go to other parts of the country, I asked him. The haris laughed disdainfully - it costs KD 5 for a taxi from here to Fahaaheel, he said. That's KD 10 both ways, plus more if he headed to Kuwait City or elsewhere. Has he seen the Kuwait Towers, the ubiquitous symbol of the country? Never, he replied. I've only been to Kuwait City once, and Maliya another time, he said, as I stared incredulously.

He said Khairan was a desolate place until very recently, gesturing to rows of newly-built chalets. He misses his wife and kids - a teenage boy and a preteen girl - although the Internet has made it easier to keep in touch. He said despite his meager monthly salary of KD 100, he has managed to build a house on a plot belonging to his father. Only the structure has been erected, he said, adding it needs a lick of paint, doors and windows etc, due to which he has extended his stay in Kuwait. We are five siblings and our families live

together in a small house, he said. To have a roof over his family's head was why he came to Kuwait in the first place, reminding me that he left for foreign shores at a late age.

Although he has no complaints about his living quarters - the villa is new - he lamented the high cost of produce at the stores in the neighborhood, as his sponsor doesn't provide any food. One tomato costs 100 fils, and a kilo of onions is sold for 350 fils, while it's less than 100 fils in the city, he rued. A cylinder of cooking gas costs double at KD 1.5. All these expenses eat into his already-low salary. To make matters worse, he confessed he's not much of a cook and mostly survives on eggs, as they are cheaper, easy to cook and nutritious.

He said he plans to go back to India after his house is completed, but admitted prospects are bleak. I asked him what he did before coming to Kuwait. He said he belongs to a family of weavers who make the famed Banarasi saris that a wardrobe staple in most Indian women's closets. But changing fashion trends and cheap imports have decimated the industry, driving many weavers to ruin. After hearing his sorrowful tale, I felt thankful for all what I have been given - a wonderful family, a decent job, a cozy house and the ability to travel to any corner of the earth.

Later on the long drive home that night, I still couldn't get the poor haris out of my mind. There are countless others like him - taken straight from the airport to work as shepherds or caretakers in the middle of the desert. For many, livestock are their only companions, while others - like the haris - only have the four walls of their makeshift rooms for company. But I admired his perseverance and dogged pursuit of his goal. He sacrificed family and country to live in an alien land with no home comforts - however, at the end of the day he has something to show for it, which isn't the case for many others whose circumstances are far better. A harsh tradeoff, some would say.

The psychological impact of no rest day

Domestic helpers in Kuwait typically do not get weekly day off, despite labor law

By Ben Garcia

Domestic helpers are a vulnerable group in most labor markets in the world. In Kuwait, abuse of domestic labor rights has been in the spotlight over the last few years with several high profile cases. The domestic labor law does offer important protections for employers and employees but it is often not implemented.

Although the majority of Kuwait's nearly 700,000 domestic workers are treated well, many do not receive their full rights. One of the most widely abused rights is that of a weekly day off.

Housemaids typically work 18-20 hours a day, some are deprived of medical attention, and some are virtually held as prisoners inside their sponsors' homes for months and years without a day off.

Labor law requirements

Kuwait's domestic labor law, which was passed and implemented in 2015, specifically mentions a 12-hour working day, a weekly day off and 30 days of annual leave for every domestic helper. To some, it seems the law is only on paper, as evidenced in a recent survey by Kuwait Times of more than 200 respondents, 70 percent of whom get no weekly day off.

Dr Joanne Hands, Clinical Director of Kuwait Counseling Center, explained the psychological impact of no weekly rest day on domestic helpers - and their ability to do their job.

"We can go back to the basics if we would like to understand the importance of a 'rest day' and the impact it has on humans," she said. "We are talking about all human beings regardless of their work. We all need the right to rest. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, man's basic needs are food and rest. Why? Because we need food to live and we need rest to perform better at the workplace," she told Kuwait Times.

In the Hierarchy of Needs, according to Hands, humans also need safety and security, intimate relationships, friends, prestige and feelings of accomplishment. At the top of the pyramid is

achieving one's potential, including creative activities. She explained that in psychology, according to Maslow, a day off (or rest) is part of basic human requirements. But there are other needs like safety, belongingness and love, esteem and self-actualization.

Fundamental needs

"Notice physiological needs, which include food, water, warmth and rest, are in lower part of the pyramid, but belong to the most important and fundamental level of human lives. They serve as an anchor and the strongest side in the hierarchy of needs," she said.

Let's take a serious look at the physiological and emotional aspect of a domestic helper with and without a day off. "When we talk from the psychological point of view, the impact on the emotional part is really huge. Number one, they are already battered being away from their families. Two, they left their loved ones back in their beloved country. Three, they are labeled as minorities. Then, here comes the truth in the job - the salary is different from the rest, plus their treatment inside the family house is different. Ultimately, to make it even worse, you are not giving her the freedom to enjoy her day off," Dr Hands said.

Adding to the wounds are physical factors in the workplace. "They are also human and they are tired from the amount of work they do for hours daily. The physical stress is also connected with the kind of work they do - from cleaning, cooking, ironing, washing clothes and going up and down the house," she said. The accumulation of all tiring and physical jobs creates an emotional impact, consequences of which include bad performance."

Rest needed for good performance

"Try to examine the result of their work if you treat them badly - people who are emotionally affected and physically exhausted will not be able to give their best because you have



Dr Joanne Hands

abused them," she argued. "Don't expect banana trees to bear apples. They cannot perform well, they will not be nice to you, they will not be loyal to you, and they will be physically incapable of doing things. They will not be active and energetic. They will not have any positive and forward-looking attitude. If you want your housemaids to perform well, talk to them, heart-to-heart, and treat them as you want others to treat you," Hands noted. "If you treat them better, the housemaids will return the favor. They will even be more motivated to do their job well. But if they are hurt and degraded, they couldn't care less. It takes two to tango," she added.

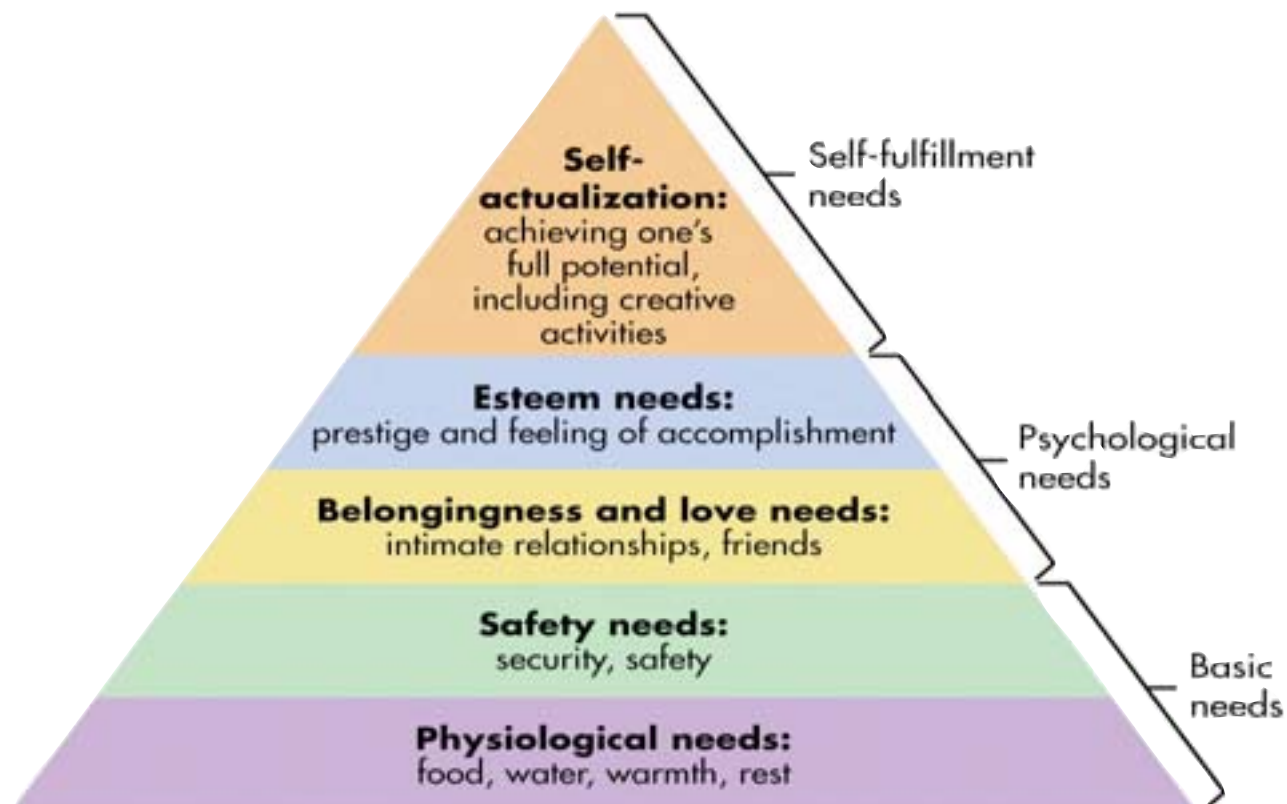
But Dr Hands isn't very impressed with the way the international media portray Kuwait. "In the media, they always portray employers as bad. In fact, such people form a very small percentage of employers. What about those good employers who are not being reported? Domestic helpers also need to understand that if they are coming to work in Kuwait, they are expected to work, not enjoy. To be treated fairly, both the employer and worker must deliver what they agreed on, otherwise they will not be good as partners," she pointed out.

Talk to each other

She advised domestic helpers to communicate with their bosses properly and build trust with their employers in the early stages of their stay. "Tell your boss frankly that 'I want to stay with you for two years, then I will go and work elsewhere'. If your objective is to get married, tell them - it has to be as crystal clear as possible," Hands noted. "When you are loyal, and if you give them the sense of trust, there is no reason why the employer will not cooperate," she said.

Earlier this year, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte highlighted the issue of the day off and appealed for this provision to be included in the negotiation of a memorandum of agreement, which was finally signed in May. Kuwait applies the 'kafala' or sponsorship system in which any migrant worker - a domestic helper or engineer - is required to have a local sponsor so that a visa and work permit can be issued. It means foreigners' right to work is at the mercy of their employers, making them more vulnerable to abuse.

Kuwait normally recruits domestic labor (male and female) from various countries in Asia, mostly from Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Nepal, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. As of March 31 this year, Kuwait was home to 683,515 domestic helpers, according to the Central Statistical Bureau.



Local



Brazilian photographer Angelica Dass is on a mission to capture every skin tone in the world for her Human Pantone Project. Pantone is the world-renowned authority on color and provider of color systems, and most known for their Pantone Color Matching System. Once Angelica takes a stunning raw photo of a volunteer, she carefully matches the background with the exact same color code as an 11-pixel portion of the model's face. The project aims to expand the definition of diversity and to shed light on how much skin tone differs from person to person.

THE SOCIOCULTURAL REALITY OF PEOPLE OF MIXED HERITAGE

By Faten Omar

Around the world, the subject of race plays a big role in stereotyping, discrimination and objectification. Religion, race, gender, nationality and culture are things that are bound to be different from person to person. Many people have embraced this diversity, while others haven't. Some people travel the world to discover new cultures and taste new foods, but others are blessed by having a mixed heritage background. Being of mixed heritage is cool for some people, but they face struggles that single-heritage people will never experience.

Local

Kuwait Times spoke with some people from mixed heritage backgrounds to learn more about their experiences.

Hamza Al-Tal, a 27-year-old software engineering graduate, told Kuwait Times about his life as a Mexican-Jordanian man. The story begins when Tal's father was studying in the US, where he met his mother, a Mexican-American. "I'm lucky to be from a mixed background - my dad is Jordanian with a Circassian mother and my mother is Mexican with a Spanish dad."

This has led him to try many tasty cuisines. Also, working in Istanbul added its own flavor to his gastronomic repertoire. When his family gathers, the table is a United Nations of food and cultures representing many countries around the world. Growing up in a Mexican-Jordanian environment was not hard, as both countries share similar traditions and his parents are on the same wavelength. "I never felt awkward joining cultural groups even if my background is all mixed up," Tal said.

Tal speaks three languages - Arabic, English and Spanish - as both his parents shared their native languages with him. "My name in my Jordanian passport is Hamza Al-Tal; however on my Mexican passport, it's a must to add my mom's surname, so my name in Mexican documents is Hamza Al-Tal Morales. My Mexican passport makes it easier for me to travel without a visa," he added.

Sharing the same societal values, habits and traditions, Alanood Al-Ghamdi's parents decided to marry after falling in love. "My father is from Saudi Arabia. He was a close friend of my Kuwaiti mother's brother. After getting to know my mom, he proposed, resulting in a mixed Gulf environment for me to grow up in," she said. Ghamdi speaks the Kuwaiti and Saudi dialects fluently. She notes that both her parents share the same Gulf mindset, but the difference is that Kuwait is more open and liberal.

"My father's family always rejected my mother, and this eventually led to divorce. The tradition in Saudi Arabia is that the man should marry a relative. My father was influenced by Kuwait's open-mindedness and from his studies in the US, but I suffered from my cousins' traditional views," Ghamdi said.

Reem Abu Qaoud is a 33-year-old economics graduate born and raised in Kuwait. She told Kuwait Times about her life as a half-Jordanian half-Egyptian with Palestinian roots. "My parents were neighbors in Kuwait and they both studied in Alexandria, so I believe the so-called love story started there," she said. Qaoud enjoys being of a mixed background, and loves the look on people's faces when they cannot figure out her ethnicity.

"My dialect is a mix of Egyptian, Palestinian, Jordanian, Lebanese (blame the singer Fairouz) and Syrian, as we have relatives of these nationalities in the family, and Kuwaiti too. I get reactions like 'Are you Egyptian?' 'I thought you were Lebanese!' 'You sound like a Kuwaiti!' and 'What is your nationality?' It's cool to see people's reaction," Qaoud exclaimed.

She affirmed that although both her parents are Arab, she feels awkward when she joins a specific cultural group, as the Egyptian and Palestinian cultures are different. "I feel left out most of the time, because I don't share the same point of view, as my values are a mix of four countries. I have few friends of these nationalities, but I have close friends that are mixed like me, so that we can suffer together," she quipped. Qaoud does not feel she has to fit in a society that does not understand mixed-race people. "I feel weird, but once someone told me 'you are not alone; you are a

child of the universe, where you belong everywhere and hold all countries in your heart'," she said.

Qaoud leans towards her Egyptian side, as she finds it funny, sarcastic and kind too. "I never ever fitted in totally. I'm always the weird one in any group, unless the group is mixed. People usually gossip about my ethnicity and make me feel that I belong to neither Egypt nor Palestine. For example, when it comes to football, I get reactions of 'Why do you care! You are not fully Egyptian/Palestinian'. This makes me sad. For my marriage, I think I will not choose anyone from these countries. I will create my own mix!"

China, Philippines, Spain and Portugal are part of the life of Maria Fatima Henriques, a 36-year-old IT graduate. "My father is a Chinese-Spanish-Filipino and my mother is Chinese-Filipino. I'm married to a Portuguese Indian Goan man. I always joke about how my kids will be like the United Nations," she told Kuwait Times. Henriques speaks Tagalog and a little Spanish. "Being a mixed person feels awkward, especially with extended families. I try to see common things, and it isn't hard. I feel uncomfortable especially when race jokes begin. The most common aspect is that we all share the Catholic faith, so holidays bring us together!" she said.

"People tend to generalize and I have learned that this is natural. The way I talk or act or react to things makes people say 'Oh you are not fully like them' or 'Oh you speak differently', but I think I am unique as an individual," Henriques said.

The views of mixed heritage people often reflect their sociocultural realities. However when it comes to discrimination, race has long been a tool utilized to suppress certain groups. Scientific research, however, proves that the concept of 'race' is a sociopolitical construct and not a scientific fact.

Indeed, there's no scientific basis for race

'Race' cannot be biologically defined due to genetic variation among human individuals and populations. An outdated concept identifies "five races": African, Asian, European, Native American and Oceanian.

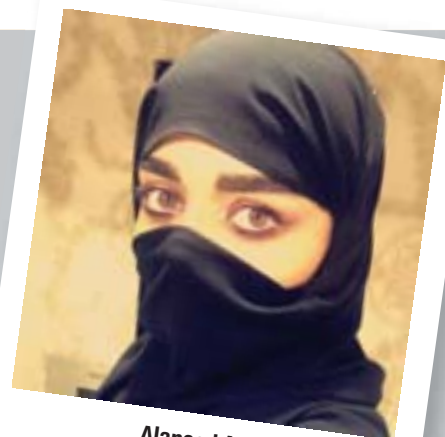
Then a landmark 2002 study by Stanford scientists examined the question of human diversity by looking at distribution across seven major geographical regions of 4,000 alleles. Alleles are the different "flavors" of a gene. For instance, all humans have the same gene code for hair: The different alleles are why hair comes in all types of colors and textures.

If separate racial or ethnic groups actually existed, we would expect to find "trademark" alleles and other genetic features that are characteristic of a single group but not present in any others. However, the 2002 Stanford study found that only 7.4 percent of over 4,000 alleles were specific to one geographical region.

Furthermore, even when region-specific alleles did appear, they only occurred in about 1 percent of the people from that region - hardly enough to be any kind of trademark. Thus, there is no evidence that the groups we commonly call "races" have distinct, unifying genetic identities. In fact, there is ample variation within races.

Ultimately, there is so much ambiguity between the races, and so much variation within them, that two people of European descent may be more genetically similar to an Asian person than they are to each other.

Brazilian photographer Angelica Dass' international Human Pantone Project challenges modern conceptions of race by showcasing the diversity of human skin tone utilizing the Pantone spectrum.



Alanood Al-Ghamdi



Hamza Al-Tal Morales



Maria Fatima Henriques



Reem Abu Qaoud

Local

Prime Minister addresses UN General Assembly

Sheikh Jaber tackles peace efforts, Palestine, Syria, Yemen, SDGs

NEW YORK: Representative of HH the Amir of Kuwait, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, delivered a speech to the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday. Following is the full text of the speech:

Your Excellency the President, Your Excellency the Secretary General, Your Excellencies distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, peace be upon you. I'd like, on behalf of Kuwaiti government and people, to congratulate you and the government of the friendly Republic of Ecuador on your election as president of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly and to affirm our full support to your efforts to shoulder your responsibilities.

I'd like to express full confidence in your competency to fulfill this mission given the fact that your experience in the international issues will have positive impact on your way of running the activities of the General Assembly. I'd like also to seize this opportunity to express Kuwait's appreciation of the outstanding efforts made by your predecessor Miroslav Lajcak in running the last session successfully.

In this context, I cannot miss to applaud the great efforts made by His Excellency the Secretary General Antonio Guterres in leading this organization through a vision and insights derived from the principles and objectives of the UN Charter foremost among which are the preservation of the world peace and security.

We renew support to his reformist initiatives, particularly those relating to peaceful settlement of disputes, and giving precedence to diplomatic preventive approach and taking it from the academic experimental frameworks to practice through a UN plan to build consensus on the reforms and push forward towards the desired role of this global organization.

Peace and security

Your Excellency the President, to prevent disputes or solve them peacefully has been and is still one of the main objectives of the foundation of the United Nations. The bloody WWI and WWII and their catastrophic unprecedented consequences to humanity had given impetus to the efforts to build a new world order capable of protecting our generations from the woes of war. The last seven decades have seen historic roles and tangible efforts by the UN in upgrading its operating mechanisms and expanding its competencies to cover the humanitarian, political, security, economic and developmental issues around the globe.

However, the accelerated challenges and exacerbating conflicts highlighted the need to enhance the ability of this organization to respond to the serious threats to peace and security in nowadays world.

Kuwait FM calls for Israel to join nuclear arms ban

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Wednesday reiterated Arab calls for Israel to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty, with its nuclear facilities subject to global scrutiny. This comes amid the need to create a Middle East region free of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, along with ballistic missiles, he said in a speech at the UN

These challenges include the phenomena of violence, extremism and terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the persistence of human rights abuses and climate change. Therefore, the plans and proposals raised by the Secretary General Antonio Guterres for restructuring the UN Secretariat in order to enhance its efficacy in preventing conflicts constitute a first step towards turning the UN reforms into reality.

We renew our support to this step that materializes a great part of the aspirations of nations for a stable and secure world. Your Excellency, the President, the State of Kuwait, nine months through its non-permanent membership in the Security Council (2018-2019), is more confident that the Security Council needs reform to become more responsive to the growing challenges of the world of today, more reflective of our reality, more credible and more representative of the groups of states, including the Arab group, and their contributions to the various activities of the UN.

Since the first day of its non-permanent membership in the Security Council, the State of Kuwait has been committed to practical approach to tackling the various issues on the agenda of the Council. This approach translated into action the country's foreign policy, which is based on respect for the sovereignty and stability of other nations and non-interference in their domestic affairs, and belief in the noble message of the UN in protecting the international peace and security.

No cultural, ethnic, political or geographical considerations affected our way of handling the agenda topics of the Security Council though the Middle East dossiers took precedence. Based on the UN Charter, the diplomacy of the State of Kuwait gives precedence to peaceful settlement of disputes and mediation among adversaries in addressing the crises in various parts of the world.

Palestine

Your excellency, the President, the Palestine question has been one of the longest standing topics on the agenda of the Security Council. This year sees the 70th anniversary of the issuance of the Resolution 56 of August 1948, the first resolution by the Council on this chronic issue. Despite the passage of this resolution and dozens of other resolutions by the Council and the General Assembly, Israel persists in its stubbornness and disregard of the international legitimacy.

Israel continues its expansionist policy through building more illegal settlements on the occupied Palestinian territories in a flagrant defiance of the UN resolutions, the latest of which is the Resolution 2334. Israel persists in desecrating the Haram Al-Sharif

Security Council. Alongside conflicts and terrorism, the global threat of these weapons is "no longer a hypothesis", he said, in spite of global conventions, treaties and agreements calling against their use.

Sheikh Sabah cited the recent firing of ballistic missiles, testing of nuclear warfare and use of chemical weapons - in reference to the Yemen-based Houthi militia, backed by Iran, Syria and North Korea - as examples.

The minister said that Saudi Arabia's civilian and religious communities are currently being exposed to "unprecedented attacks" by Houthi militia, using Iranian-made ballistic missiles. Kuwait reiterates its utter condemnation of these attacks, he underlined.

Moreover, in spite of Iran's implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 on its nuclear ac-

(Temple Mount) and the Al-Aqsa Compound and violating the human rights and the international humanitarian law through jailing thousands of Palestinians and recurrent military onslaughts on Gaza Strip.

Kuwait tabled to the Security Council in May a draft resolution calling on Israel, the occupying power, to stop using force against civilians and abide by the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) regarding the protection of civilians at times of war. The draft, also calling for providing international protection to the Palestinians in the occupied territories, was passed by the Council. Kuwait spares no effort in supporting the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to regain the occupied territories and establish an independent state within the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Syria

Your Excellency, the President, the Syrian crisis enters its eighth year amid apparent international failure to put an end to its horrific humanitarian and material damage. The crisis took its toll on civilians with more than 400,000 deaths and 12 million refugees and internally displaced people. The State of Kuwait and the friendly Kingdom of Sweden co-sponsored the Security Council Resolution 2411 on the humanitarian situation in Syria.

The resolution which was unanimously passed sent a message of the Council's solidarity with the Syrian people in their disaster and provided for cessation of hostilities and unhindered delivery of aid to those in need. However, we see, with great regret, the resolution failed to reflect on the ground. Since the start of the Syrian conflict, Kuwait, as part of its humanitarian role, has hosted three UN humanitarian pledging conferences on Syria and offered \$1.6 billion in voluntary aid to the Syrian people.

Yemen

Your Excellency, the President, the sisterly Yemen undergoes a crisis that has serious impacts on the political, economic and humanitarian levels due to the coup d'etat launched by the Houthi group in September 2014. The Houthi rebels continue defying the UN resolutions, rejecting the regional and international initiatives for peaceful settlement to the conflict, and jeopardizing the regional security and international navigation in the Red Sea through launching ballistic missiles towards the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In this regard, we renew full respect for the sovereignty, stability and territorial integrity of Yemen and non-interference in its domestic affairs, and reaffirm firm support to its legitimate constitutional authority.

activities, Kuwait remains concerned about UN reports indicating Iran's continuing support and financing of the Houthis and other armed groups in the region, he said. This threatens the security and stability of the region and shows a clear breach of an Arab League resolution, which calls upon Tehran to cease actions that adversely affect the security and best interests of the region.

Kuwait is also concerned over the use of chemical warfare, as has been the case in Syria. The minister said that attacks like these could only be tackled through multilateral action under the UN umbrella, but also stressed the importance of achieving the universality of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. On this, he commended diplomatic efforts to disarm North Korea's nuclear capabilities currently being carried out. — KUNA



UNITED NATIONS: HH the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah addresses the 73rd session of the General Assembly at the United Nations on Wednesday. — KUNA

We give precedence to the efforts to resolve the crisis with political peaceful means based on the three points of reference - the GCC initiative, the outcomes of the national dialogue and the UN Security Council Resolution 2216. In 2016, the State of Kuwait hosted the intra-Yemeni dialogue, which lasted for more than 100 days under the UN patronage.

We are ready to host another meeting for the Yemeni parties to sign a final peace agreement, and support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for Yemen to settle the Yemeni crisis. Regarding the humanitarian situation in Yemen, Kuwait contributed USD 350 million in aid of the brotherly people of Yemen, including the USD 250-million pledges in pledges made during the Geneva conference in last April.

Sustainable Development Goals

Your Excellency, the President, the State of Kuwait is committed to the UN efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals for the period 2015-2030, which represents one of the priorities of our national strategy "New Kuwait 2035". This strategy aims to turn Kuwait into a leading regional financial and commercial hub. We will continue working with the UN to end poverty and hungry around the globe, ensure healthy life and equitable quality education, and promote life-long learning opportunities for all. Kuwait will continue commitment to the multilateral world order, the principles and objectives of the UN Charter, and all international conventions and treaties with a view to contributing to the maintenance of the world security and peace. Thank you very much. — KUNA



UNITED NATIONS: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah delivers a speech at the UN Security Council on Wednesday. — KUNA

Kuwait Times

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Kuwait acting diligently to combat corruption

Kuwait elected rapporteur at int'l anti-corruption academy



VIENNA: Chairman of the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Abdulrahman Al-Nemsh addresses the International Anti-Corruption Academy's (IACA) 7th Session of the Conference yesterday. — KUNA

VIENNA: Kuwait has made headways in securing human and material resources for preventing and combating corruption, said the visiting head of the country's Anti-Corruption Authority. Abdulrahman Al-Nemsh was addressing the two-day International Anti-Corruption Academy's (IACA) seventh session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). He has noted Kuwait's keenness on exerting serious and diligent efforts for attaining objectives of the UNCAC since it joined the treaty, along with other relevant international accords.

Kuwait joined the treaty that established the IACA in 2014. Locally, law 2/2016 was enacted, stipulating establishment of the national anti-corruption authority (Nazaha). Nazaha is exerting maximum efforts and working professionally, in coordination with other state departments, to attain the goals upon which it had been established, Nemsh said, indicating that the approach is to accomplish the tasks according to the UNCAC criteria and priorities of the national development scheme (Vision 2035).

Moreover, it is doing its best to secure educational and vocational training in the field of preventing and combating corruption, Nemsh said, noting that his country has hosted a regional session, during which it examined the IACA expertise and programs. Also during the session, 55 participants from 13 states benefited from the experience.

Nazaha continues to follow up on the IACA training curricula

and supporting its budget, Nemsh said, indicating that Kuwait has been contributing to the financial allocations for the academy due to its belief in promoting and developing nations, which is in turn based on broader expertise exchange, ongoing communications and knowledge exchange.

It has recently begun coordinating with the other concerned authorities in Kuwait to work out necessary procedures for accrediting the IACA certificates in the country, according to relevant national legislations. He renewed the resolve for training workforce on state-of-art means for combating corruption - under patronization of HH the Amir, considering that this scourge is detrimental to the society security and stability, moral values, principles such as justice, and threatens sustainable development and sovereignty of the law.

Kuwait was later elected as a rapporteur at the assembly bureau representing the Asian Group of IACA. The newly-elected rapporteur, first secretary at the Kuwaiti embassy Abdullah Al-Obaidi, affirmed in a statement to KUNA on sidelines of the seventh assembly Kuwait's keenness on bolstering cooperation with international organizations and agencies, specialized in combating corruption. He affirmed significance of electing Kuwait to occupy this post; also noting that the Gulf country has been keen since inking the UN convention on cementing coordination with the international community in this realm. — KUNA

added that her husband also threatened to kill her. A case was filed.

Deliveryman beaten

Escorted by his Kuwaiti sponsor, an Asian deliveryman reported that a Kuwaiti client in Hitteen got angry on finding that the meal he had ordered from a Salmiya restaurant had no pickles, and assaulted him before taking a photo of him and his injuries. The sponsor also provided a medical report on filing a case.

White powder scare

Security forces were alerted on receiving a report suspecting the presence of a white substance that seemed like drugs at a girls' high school in Farwaniya. Security sources said that on reporting to the scene, detectives found the white powder was flour mixed with sugar that had been apparently brought to school by one of the students as a practical joke.

Brothers assaulted

Two Syrian brothers reported that five Asians assaulted them while working in West Abdullah Al-Mubarak. A case was filed.

— Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa

Six fire engines fight Sharq blaze

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Six fire engines managed to put out the blaze that erupted in a building under construction located in Sharq, the Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) said yesterday. According to the public relations department of KFSD, the fire began around 11:00 am local time in the 500-sq-m building project of the new National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) headquarters. Six construction workers were injured in the incident, while one fireman suffered minor burns, said the KFSD, adding that the injured received treatment onsite. An investigation was opened to determine the source of the fire. NBK later tweeted to thank the fire department, interior ministry and the health ministry's emergency medical services for their quick response in extinguishing the blaze and to the public on their concern for the safety of all.

Filipina found

The interior ministry's relations and media security department yesterday issued a statement on a report circulating on social media concerning a Filipina who had been missing for 18 months, during which she never contacted her country's embassy. The department added that the interior ministry's acting residency affairs director ordered a special investigation that resulted in locating the woman. She was handed over to a Philippine Embassy representative pending further investigation.

Hot weather seen with variable light winds at weekend

KUWAIT: Weather in Kuwait will be predominantly hot with variable light winds through the weekend, said a Kuwaiti meteorologist yesterday. Speaking to KUNA, meteorologist Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi said that temperature will fall ahead of the fall season. The daytime temperature yesterday reached between 42 to 44 degrees Celsius, said Qarawi, adding that wind speed was between 6 to 22 kilometers per hour (km/h) with the sea seeing waves of one to two feet. Yesterday's evening weather saw temperature falling to 27 to 29 degrees Celsius with waves reaching around one to three feet.

The weather today will see temperatures soaring to 42 to 44 degrees Celsius during the day and cooling down to 26 and 28 degrees Celsius in the evening, Qarawi said, adding that wind speeds will vary during daytime to reach 10 to 35 km/h while in the evening it will be between eight to 30 km/h. The sea will witness waves between two to five feet in the day and one to four feet in the evening.

Tomorrow's weather will continue the trend of hot temperatures during the day, reaching between 42 and 44 degrees Celsius, while in the evening it will cool down to around 25 to 27 degrees Celsius. Light variable northwestern winds with speeds of eight to 28 km/h during the day and six to 26 km/h are forecast for tomorrow evening. The sea will see waves reaching one to three feet during the entire day. — KUNA

Doc insulted over fake sick leave

KUWAIT: A search is on for a citizen who insulted a public servant on duty. Security sources said the suspect got angry when a Kuwaiti female doctor refused to write a fake sick leave because he was not actually sick. The sources said the suspect shouted at and insulted her, and also abused her family before he fled the clinic. The doctor filed a case and on calling the suspect's phone, it was switched off.

Man assaults wife

A female citizen filed a complaint against her husband for assaulting her over family disputes. Security sources said the woman attached a medical report of her injuries, noting that doctors asked her to take five days of rest before they conduct further medical tests to make sure there is no internal bleeding or fractures. The woman

Local

Pakistan finance minister invites Kuwait to invest in mega projects

Pak-Kuwait JMC session held • Roudhan, Alvi call for bolstering ties

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Finance Minister Asad Umar yesterday invited Kuwait to invest in the mega projects of Pakistan including the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. After a one on one meeting with the visiting Kuwaiti Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan in Islamabad, Umar told KUNA: "We have talked to China that we should invite a third country investment to the joint venture of Pakistan and China (CPEC). We invited Saudi Arabia to invest in the project during our recent visit and the kingdom responded positively. We also want Kuwait to invest in the CPEC projects."

Roudhan affirmed in a statement to KUNA that the two countries wanted to further improve ties. Earlier, Roudhan met President of Pakistan Arif Alvi. Roudhan said that he congratulated the president on his successful election on the behalf of HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Alvi thanked Kuwait for supporting the country in every hour of need and emphasized the need for strengthening cooperation between Pakistan and Kuwait. Both the leaders reiterated the stance of supporting each other on every issue at all the international forums including the United Nations and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Both the officials applauded the close relationship between the two countries and vowed to strengthen ties by forging partnerships and enhancing economic and

trade relations.

Roudhan and his 22-member delegation arrived in Pakistan to take part in the fourth session of the Pakistan-Kuwait Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) in Islamabad yesterday. In his opening statement, Roudhan expressed gratitude for the hospitality and reception during the visit. He highlighted the importance of holding these joint trade, economic and investment meetings, which have an active role in the development of bilateral relations between the two friendly countries.

He mentioned that the meeting contributed to enhancing and developing prosperous relations between Pakistan and Kuwait. "It is considered as an entrance to further bilateral cooperation between the two friendly countries, in which we hope to develop trade and economic relations and reach the highest level of its potential and ambition of the two countries, which will be reflected positively on the trade exchange," he said.

The visiting Kuwaiti dignitary sought an increase in the trade volume from \$322.270 million (not including oil and its products) in 2017 and coordinate efforts, exchange views and set goals to promote and develop trade, economic and investment relations during the JMC session. He said that the commission was an umbrella covering the country's commercial, economic and investment in public and private sectors that will contribute in pushing the trade exchanges to a wider horizon and to



Khaled Al-Roudhan

identify investment opportunities available in both countries.

Roudhan pointed out that Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) showed keenness and played a prominent role in strengthening ties. Supporting economic and social development, KFAED has financed 18 projects of worth \$442 million since 1976 in the field of electricity, railways, dams, irrigation, water and road. Concluding his speech, he expressed hope that the fourth Session of Pakistan-Kuwait JMC will be fruitful and successful.

Umar welcomed the honorable delegates to the country and hoped that it will enhance the trade volume and trade relations between the two countries. Both sides adopted the agenda of the meeting after approval by both co-chairs. Pakistan's board of investment presented investment opportunities to the Kuwaiti delegation followed by a technical session. — KUNA

Saudi Crown Prince to visit Kuwait next week

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah revealed on Wednesday that Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud will begin an official visit to Kuwait early next week. Kuwaiti-Saudi relations are distinguished and developed, Jarallah told reporters following his participation in a ceremony marking China's national day that was organized by the Chinese embassy. "We are proud of these developed relations and admired by achievements made in Saudi Arabia," he said.



Khaled Al-Jarallah

The best accomplishment is launching the high-speed rail between Makkah and Madinah, he indicated, congratulating the Saudi people on this move, which will be in favor of all Muslims. He pointed to the key role by Saudi Arabia in serving Muslim nation through continued care for the sacred places. On ties with China, Jarallah stressed that Kuwait has begun taking practical steps to reactivate deals signed with Beijing. This will be done through forming a committee at the foreign ministry to combine the country's concerned ministries and bodies to apply the deals, Jarallah told reporters.

The strategic partnership with China has been developing day after day, he said, recalling HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit to Beijing in July. Jarallah referred to the deals signed during the Amir's visit between the two countries on economic, commercial, investment and energy cooperation. The Kuwaiti official described Chinese-Kuwaiti relations as "historic", indicating Kuwait is the first Gulf state which established diplomatic ties with China. He pointed out that China plays an influential and key role in the region, affirming that Kuwait needs to develop its ties with Beijing. Jarallah, finally, lauded China's honorable and historic stance towards Kuwait during the Iraqi occupation in 1990. — KUNA

Kuwait Navy takes over command of CTF 152 from S'pore

MANAMA: Kuwait Navy celebrated yesterday the takeover of the command of the Combined Task Force (CTF) 152 from Singapore. Col Nasser Al-Semhan, the military attache at the Kuwaiti embassy in Bahrain, said in remarks to KUNA that this was the first time that Kuwait takes the helm of the board command for two consecutive terms from September 27 until June, next year. Kuwait commands the force that groups units from brotherly and friendly countries, namely Australia, Bahrain, Brazil, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Denmark and Oman.

Kuwait is a prime member of the 33-state, multinational Bahrain-based force. This coalition has been created to safeguard security within nearly 3.2 million nautical square miles including some of the "most important sea lanes in the world," said Semhan. The force is divided into three units; one tasked with marine security and combating terrorism, another for fighting piracy and a third one also charged with maintaining security at the sea. Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah, the dean of the diplomatic corps and the Kuwaiti ambassador to Bahrain, attended the ceremony. — KUNA



MANAMA: The ceremony of taking over the command of the Combined Task Force (CTF) 152 from Singapore was held yesterday. — KUNA

Bundestag VP lauds Kuwait's parliament efforts

BERLIN: Vice President of the Bundestag, the German parliament, Thomas Oppermann, lauded yesterday the unique democratic atmosphere in Kuwait, saying that the GCC country was known for its parliamentary efforts in the Middle East region and the world. This statement came during Oppermann's reception of Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Najib Al-Bader. Speaking to KUNA, Bader said that Oppermann affirmed that Kuwait was one of the chief states contributing to the Middle East's political stability. He affirmed that both he and Oppermann focused on means to bolster ties especially within the parliamentary domain, noting that both Kuwait and Germany were eager to coordinate on matters of regional and international importance. — KUNA

International

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Cash cows: Pakistani PM's house auctions buffalos

Malaysian to be caned for prostitution under Islamic law

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NEW DELHI: A general view of the Supreme Court of India is pictured in New Delhi yesterday. Adultery is no longer a crime, India's top court ruled yesterday, declaring a colonial-era law that punished the offence with jail time unconstitutional and discriminatory against women. — AFP

Adultery no longer a crime in India

Court declares a colonial-era law unconstitutional

NEW DELHI: Adultery is no longer a crime, India's top court ruled yesterday, declaring a colonial-era law that punished the offence with jail time unconstitutional and discriminatory against women. It was the second legal decision this month reflecting a more liberal outlook in Indian society with the Supreme Court having on September 6 scrapped a ban on gay sex dating back to 1861.

Sparking celebrations, the court argued that Section 377 on homosexuality had become "a weapon for harassment" of homosexuals and "history owes an apology to the members of this community and their families". The more than century-old adultery law prescribed that any man who slept with a married woman without her husband's permission had committed adultery, a crime carrying a five-year prison term in the conservative country. A petitioner, an Indian businessman, had challenged the court to strike down the law, describing it as arbitrary and discriminatory against women. "Thinking of adultery from a point of view of criminality is a retrograde step," unanimously declared the five-

judge bench of the Supreme Court. Women could not file a complaint under the archaic law nor be held liable for adultery themselves, making it solely the realm of men. The court said it deprived women of dignity and individual choice and "gives license to the husband to use women as a chattel". "It disregards the sexual autonomy which every woman possesses and denies agency to a woman in a matrimonial tie," said Supreme Court Justice DY Chandrachud. "She is subjugated to the will of her spouse."

Locked in the bedroom

Convictions for adultery are very rare because of the social stigma, and mostly families resolve matters among themselves, Supreme Court lawyer Utsav Bains said. "For a man to be convicted for adultery is very rare because the crime has to be proved conclusively beyond doubt in the court. And it is very difficult to do that," Bains said. But in one case in 2015, a 50-year-old policeman was jailed after he was caught in bed with the wife of another man. The husband locked the couple in a room and called the police. Gov-

ernment lawyers argued that adultery should remain a crime as it threatens the institution of marriage, and caused harm to children and families.

But in its ruling, the court said extramarital affairs-while still a valid ground for divorce-were a private matter between adults. Prashant Bhushan, a lawyer in the Supreme Court, said the watershed decisions on gay sex and adultery had shown the judges' "adherence to liberal values and the constitution". "Another fine judgment by the SC," he tweeted after Thursday's ruling. But the head of the government's Delhi Commission for Women said instead of making adultery a crime for both genders, the ruling effectively condoned cheating.

"How can that be allowed? What is the sanctity of marriage?" Swati Maliwal, the high-profile commission chairwoman, told reporters in New Delhi. "In a way, it is very anti-women." In 1954, the court upheld adultery as a crime arguing "it is commonly accepted that it is the man who is the seducer, and not the woman". But in their ruling on Thursday, the judges said this narrative no longer applied, noting also that Britain

did away with its own laws penalizing adultery long ago. "Man being the seducer and women being the victim no longer exists. Equality is the governing principle of a system. Husband is not the master of the wife," the verdict added.

Stoned

Adultery remains illegal in many countries around the world, including in 20 US states, and in countries with Islamic law such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. In Pakistan, it is punishable by up to 25 years in prison while in Bangladesh-both formerly part of British India-men, but not women, can be jailed for five years. In Somalia, Islamist Shabaab militants often carry out stonings of women for adultery. Some northern states in Nigeria practise capital punishment for adultery, rape and homosexuality. In Indonesia's staunchly-Islamic Aceh province, men and women found guilty of adultery can be whipped 100 times with a thin rattan cane in public. In 2015, South Korea's Constitutional Court struck down an adultery law, sending shares in condom maker Unidus soaring. — AFP

International

Chairman ousted as Australia's public TV hit by politics scandal

Broadcaster scrambles to salvage its hard-won reputation

SYDNEY: Australia's much-loved public broadcaster scrambled to salvage its hard-won reputation for impartiality yesterday, forcing out its chairman who is accused of intervening in news coverage to please the current government. Justin Milne told ABC he would step down as the institution's board held crisis talks in Sydney and the government announced an inquiry into his actions. According to leaked emails, Milne unsuccessfully pressed for the sacking of two senior reporters over coverage that did not please his friend, then center-right prime minister Malcolm Turnbull. Milne told the ABC the crisis had been a "firestorm" and said he "wanted to provide a release valve".

The almost century-old Australian Broadcasting Corporation is incredibly popular Down Under, with polls showing it is not just the most trusted news organization in the country, but also seen as a national treasure. ABC journalists had demanded Milne go on Wednesday as the revelations became public. Initially the Liberal Party-

led government stopped short of forcing that move, but said its Department of Communications would conduct an inquiry "to establish the facts in these matters". "It is important for the community to have confidence in the ABC and its independence," said minister Mitch Fifield.

Milne did not directly address the allegations in his statement, but insisted the board had worked to ensure the independence, interests and continued funding of the organization. Acting center-left opposition leader Tanya Plibersek, demanded an fully independent investigation into what happened. "The ABC is not the propaganda arm of the Liberal party of Australia. It is our national broadcaster. Australians love their ABC. They are, rightly, very protective of its integrity and independence." Around 70 percent of Australians want a strong ABC, despite government spending cuts and daily withering criticism from its commercial rivals—who balk at unfair competition from the taxpayer-funded behemoth.—AFP



SYDNEY: The logo for Australia's public broadcaster ABC is seen on its head office building in Sydney yesterday.—AFP

On French Indian Ocean island as migrant crisis bites

MAMOUDZOU: They had scattered before the border police even got there, fleeing their corrugated shacks in a densely-populated slum in Petite-Terre, part of France's Indian Ocean archipelago of Mayotte. A dozen police ran through dirt-track paths strewn with rubbish and furrowed by the rain, watched by a visiting French parliamentary delegation. On a normal day, these officers round up between 20 and 35 migrants, most of them Comorans. But today was different.

Alerted by the presence of the VIPs from Paris, men without papers did not wait around. They fled their flimsy encampments in this neighborhood of 9,000 people and left their wives and children to fend for themselves. Situated between Madagascar and Mozambique, the Mayotte archipelago is prosperous relative to neighboring Comoros, an impoverished and unstable island nation which is one of the poorest countries in the world. Mayotte was part of the Comoros until they split after a referendum on independence from France in 1974.

Mayotte, comprising two islands, Petite-Terre and Grande-Terre, voted strongly to remain part of France while the rest of the Comoros opted for self-rule. Defying Comoros' continuing claims over Mayotte, the territory today has the administrative status of a French "department," roughly equivalent to a county. This entitles it to support for infrastructure, medical care, and education just as in mainland France. Its citizens,

living in the farthest region of the European Union, have unfettered rights to travel, work and live in the EU.

But one outcome has been a growing migrant crisis. Thousands of Comorans have been making the 70-kilometre crossing to Mayotte in search of a better future. The influx prompted a six-week-long wave of strikes and protests this year. Many on Mayotte, home to 250,000 people, blame uncontrolled migration for spiraling crime and increasing demands on public health services. According to the chief of police, foreigners account for nearly 42 percent of Mayotte's total population and more than half of them are illegal.

Some help, others hinder

As the police pushed their way through scrap metal doors into the tiny homes of the island's poorest, one resident pointed them towards an area where she thought some migrants might be hiding. "There are a lot of people who rat on them," confided a member of the border police operations support group, a 44-person unit. "Sometimes, when we turn up in a car, people come out to find us." Others, though, help the migrants flee, like the children who act as spotters and start yelling "moro, moro"—the equivalent of "fire, fire!"—to warn that the police are on their way, another officer said. "These areas are difficult to reach... it's quite dangerous" for the officers, said Julien Kerdoncuf, the deputy prefect in charge of illegal migration. A policeman agreed. "People often resist (arrest)," he told AFP, saying a colleague had been injured the day before.

'Kwassa' crossing

Police and gendarmes pick up between 50 and 60 migrants every day, roughly half the number that are turned away daily at the border. With two-thirds detained on land, the others are caught at sea, usually aboard makeshift boats called kwassas.—AFP

Vietnam's hardline president laid to rest

HANOI: Vietnamese president Tran Dai Quang, a lifelong communist stalwart with a reputation as a hardliner, was buried in his home village yesterday in a ceremony blessed by monks, as relatives and leaders bid him a final farewell.

Quang died on Friday aged 61 after a prolonged illness that officials described only as a "rare virus". A long-serving communist apparatchik and former national police chief, Quang was celebrated by peers for his dedication to the country that he spent much of his career serving. But his legacy is a chequered one, and he will be remembered by some as a tough leader with little tolerance for dissent, even during his two years as president which saw a brutal crackdown on activists in the one-party state.

Though he was a member of the powerful politburo, his public role as president was largely ceremonial and his death is not expected to shake up politics in a country where the communist party yields enormous power. His comrades remembered him fondly at the ceremony in his home province of Ninh Binh, south of Hanoi. "We gather here at his birthplace, where he will take his final rest. May he rest in peace," Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh said. Quang's wife wept as his red coffin, emblazoned with Vietnam's national logo, was lowered into the ground by about 20

soldiers in crisp white uniforms.

She was held by her son, who earlier praised his father for his lifelong dedication to the country. "My father's wish was to spend his whole life contributing to the nation and revolutionary cause," Tran Quan said at an emotional memorial. Golden-robed monks offered blessings with gong chimes at the burial ceremony, while relatives and officials threw soil onto his coffin in line with Vietnamese tradition. Thousands of people lined the rain-slicked streets of Ninh Binh to greet Quang's passing coffin, including a group of school children who held a banner offering their "deepest condolences".

Courted controversy

This is the first major state funeral since the death of General Vo Nguyen Giap in 2013, a beloved war hero and revolutionary leader who drew massive crowds to the streets when he died at age 102. But Quang was less of a galvanizing force and most Vietnamese feel little connection to the government he spent his life serving. He spent more than 40 years climbing the security apparatus before taking the helm of the shadowy Ministry of Public Security in 2011. His long dedication to the notorious institution instilled rancour among the rights community at home. As president since 2016 - officially the head-of-state-Quang backed a clampdown on dissenting voices that has seen dozens of critics jailed in the past two years, and his reputation as a tough leader has resonated at home and abroad since his passing. By contrast, he was praised by the country's security forces, many of whom lined the streets Thursday to salute his passing funeral procession. But even in death he has courted controversy.—AFP

International

Trump pledges Middle East peace plan within months

US President vows a 'very fair' peace plan

UNITED NATIONS: President Donald Trump vowed yesterday to present a "very fair" Middle East peace plan by the end of the year and endorsed a two-state solution, apparently confident that the Palestinians would return to talks despite his unwavering support for Israel. Holding talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in New York, Trump said it was a "dream" of his to bring about a peaceful solution to a conflict that has eluded several of his predecessors. While Trump said he expected Israel to make concessions in any final settlement of the decades-old conflict, the Palestinians said his administration's policies in the Middle East were destroying hopes of peace.

Jared Kushner, who is Trump's son-in-law as well as a senior advisor in the White House, has been working on a peace plan for more than a year, but there have been few

clues to date on what he is expected to propose. "I would say over the next two to three to four months," Trump said, referring to his prospective timetable for presenting a plan. Trump, who met with Netanyahu on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, said explicitly for the first time that he backed a two-state solution, saying: "That's what I think works best, that's my feeling."

"I really believe something will happen. It is a dream of mine to be able to get that done prior to the end of my first term," added Trump, who was elected to serve four years through January 2021. "Jared, who's so involved, he loves Israel but he's also going to be very fair with the Palestinians," the US president later told a news conference. "I think probably two-state is more likely

but if they do a single, if they do a double, I'm okay with it if they're both happy. If they're both happy, I'm okay with either. I think the two-state is more likely," he said.

Palestinians skeptical

Middle East peace efforts effectively stalled when the Palestinians broke off contacts with the Trump administration last year in protest at Trump's landmark decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Palestinian foreign affairs minister Riyad al-Maliki was unimpressed with Trump's remarks, saying the US president chose his tone because he was appearing with Netanyahu.

Maliki-speaking after meeting in New York with representatives from 40 countries but not Kushner or other US officials-said Trump needed to state clearly

that a two-state solution would include a return to borders from before the 1967 Six-Day War and that east Jerusalem is occupied rather than part of Israel. "These are important statements that President Trump has to say in order just to convince anyone that he is committed to real peace in our region," Maliki told reporters.

Maliki said that the Palestinians met more than 40 times with Trump's envoys only "to discover that they have opted to open that war against the Palestinians to inflict the most damage." Relations between the Palestinian Authority and the United States plummeted even lower in recent weeks after Washington cut off all funding to a UN agency that helps millions of Palestinian refugees, triggering a budget panic. Trump said, however,



Netanyahu, Sisi discuss Gaza on sidelines of UN



UNITED NATIONS: A handout picture shows Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (right) meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (left) on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly at the UN headquarters in New York. — AFP

that he was in no doubt that the Palestinians would soon return to the negotiating table. "Absolutely, 100 percent," he said. "Lots of good things are happening," said Trump, before adding: "Israel will have to do something that will be good for the other side."

'Security control'

Israeli media quoted Netanyahu as saying that Israel must retain security control in any peace deal with the Palestinians west of Jordan to the Mediterranean—which includes the occupied West Bank. "Israel will not relinquish security control west of Jordan. This will not happen so long as I am prime minister and I think the Americans understand that," he reportedly said.

Netanyahu, Sisi meet

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah

El-Sisi met in New York on Wednesday to discuss Gaza and reviving peace talks with the Palestinians, officials said. During the meeting, which lasted nearly two hours and took place on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, the two "discussed regional developments and the situation in Gaza", a statement from Netanyahu's office said.

In recent months, mass protests along Gaza's border with Israel have triggered repeated deadly clashes with the army, prompting warnings of the risk of a new conflict. On Tuesday, the World Bank warned that the Gaza Strip's economy is in "free fall" as cuts to aid and salaries add to an already crippling Israeli blockade on the Hamas-run enclave. Gaza lies between Israel and Egypt, which along with the UN has been seeking to broker a long-term truce between Israel and Hamas, but those efforts have stalled in recent weeks. —Agencies

Singapore officer charged in sex bribery case

SINGAPORE: A Singapore immigration official was yesterday charged for allegedly receiving sexual favors from Chinese women in exchange for helping them extend their visas, a rare case of corruption in a city-state known for its clean image. Chin Peng Sum was also accused of tipping off the two women about impending raids and obstruction of justice for deleting incriminating text messages that he had exchanged with them.

The 51-year-old, a staff sergeant with the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, allegedly accepted sex as bribes from the for-

eign women in exchange for ensuring that their visitor passes were extended, the country's anti-corruption body said. He was also accused of violating the Official Secrets Act by informing the women in advance about impending raids so that they could evade arrest for "vice-related and/or immigration" offences, the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau added.

"It is a serious offence for public officers to act in their own interests and use their position to solicit corrupt benefits," it said. Singapore, a thriving business hub and financial centre, takes a tough stand against graft, and has consistently ranked in surveys as among the least corrupt countries in the world. Its civil servants' salaries are among the highest in the world, in what authorities say is a bid to deter corruption. Cases do still occur sometimes. In 2013, Peter Lim—former head of the civil defense force, which oversees emergency services—was found guilty of corruption in a sex-for-contracts case and jailed for six months. —AFP

Malaysian to be caned and jailed for prostitution

KUALA TERENGGANU: A Malaysian woman was sentenced yesterday to be caned and jailed for six months for prostitution in violation of Islamic laws, weeks after the flogging of two lesbians sparked outrage. The 30-year-old single mother of one admitted to offering sexual services in a hotel in the conservative northern state of Terengganu this month after being caught by religious enforcement officers. Multi-ethnic Malaysia has a dual-track legal system, with Muslims subject to Islamic laws in certain areas. Critics say a traditionally tolerant brand of Islam in the Muslim-majority country is being eroded as more conservative attitudes gain ground.

Sentencing the divorcee to six strokes of the cane and jail time, judge Rosdi Harun told an Islamic court that he was "very disappointed" the

woman had not shown any remorse. "Your punishment will give you time to reflect on your mistakes and repent," he said. The woman, who was not identified, has 14 days to appeal against the sentence. If the caning goes ahead it will take place in the prison where she is serving her sentence. Rozana Isa, executive director of women's rights group Sisters in Islam, criticized the sentence: "There really is no compassion in these kinds of punishment. 'Is this really where we want the country to go?'"

Two women were caned in Terengganu on September 3 after admitting breaking Islamic laws that prohibit lesbian sex, sparking a storm of criticism from politicians and rights groups. Campaigners said it was the first time women had been caned for same-sex relations in Malaysia, and that the case highlights the worsening climate for the country's gay community. Caning under Islamic laws is carried out with a thin rattan cane on a person who is fully clothed. It is also a punishment for many crimes under civil law in Malaysia. About 60 percent of Malaysia's 32 million people are Muslim, and the country is also home to substantial ethnic Indian and Chinese communities. —AFP

Bin Laden business grew from humble beginnings

Family came under scrutiny at home and abroad after 9/11

JEDDAH: In Saudi Arabia, the Bin Ladens are known as the Kennedys of Jeddah for their wealth and tragedies. They built Saudi Arabia's roads, mosques and palaces. Family patriarch Mohammed died in a plane crash, as did the son who succeeded him. Younger son Osama plotted the 9/11 attacks on the United States.

Mohammed arrived in Saudi Arabia from Yemen during the 1920s as an impoverished teenager, blind in one eye. He sought his fortune amongst the pilgrims and hustlers of the Red Sea port of Jeddah. After founding a small construction firm in 1931, he won the favor of then King Abdulaziz by completing a palace for him within 20 days, according to a biography by former Saudi Binladin Group executive Khalaf Al Sibeia. He became Saudi Arabia's go-to builder, earning contracts for the kingdom's most strategically significant projects.

As the conglomerate grew, the Bin Laden family, consisting of some 70 children and dozens of wives, cultivated ties with King Abdulaziz's sons and grandsons to secure the alliance's longevity. Contracts were awarded and expanded through those relationships, rather than a formal bidding process. Many were bestowed on a cost-plus basis, in which the contractor earns a fee on top of expenses. The problem with this model is that there is often no incentive for the contractor to keep a lid on costs.

The family came under scrutiny at home and abroad after Sept 11, 2001, when Osama, one of Mohammed's younger sons, brought notoriety to the Bin Laden name. Under the quiet stewardship of chairman Bakr bin Laden, the company kept its footing and the company went on to reach the height of its power during the reign of King Abdullah, who took the throne in 2005. During Abdullah's 10-year rule, oil rocketed above \$100 a barrel and the kingdom

went on a spending spree. Saudi Binladin Group snared contracts to manage construction of new projects worth tens of billions of dollars, including a Riyadh financial district, a new airport in Jeddah and an economic city on the Red Sea coast meant to house 2 million people.

The company handled the kingdom's most sensitive projects, including expansions of the two holy mosques in Mecca and Medina. For such deals, senior Bin Laden brothers, often Bakr, Saleh and Saad, held negotiations directly with King Abdullah and a special unit within government the monarch created for them, according to one Jeddah businessman who has known the family for decades. Those contracts generally involved Saudi Binladin Group's "Rush Projects" division, designed to perform work at short notice for the government, he said. The rush division also handled construction of King Abdullah's new palace in Jeddah.

Not far from that palace, Bakr built a villa of his own with marble corridors and swimming pools looking out onto the Red Sea, which he opened regularly for traditional all-male parties to cultivate the family's royal relationships, said a source who attended one such event. As they prospered at home, the brothers expanded the business internationally, making particular inroads in Africa. Around 2011, they first floated the idea of an initial public offer of shares in the company, by then a behemoth with more than 500 subsidiaries.

With the company thriving, Bakr began to step into semi-retirement and spent much of his time at his mansion in Egypt's Sharm al-Sheikh. He still managed the company's relationship with the senior royals, hopping back over the Red Sea in his private jet for important meetings. — Reuters

New deal allows Israel natural gas exports to Egypt

JERUSALEM: A US-Israeli consortium leading the development of Israel's offshore gas reserves announced yesterday a deal that would enable the export of natural gas to Egypt. Noble Energy and its Israeli partner Delek, along with Egyptian East Gas Company, bought 39 percent of a disused pipeline connecting the Israeli coastal city of Ashkelon with the north Sinai.

The consortium paid \$518 million for the interest in the East Mediterranean Gas Company pipeline. The mainly undersea pipeline will be used to transport natural gas from the Tamar and Leviathan reservoirs to Egypt from as early as 2019, allowing a 10-year \$15 billion deal signed in February with Egypt's Dolphinus to move forward, Delek said in a statement.

It will be the first time Egypt, which in 1979 became the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel, imports gas from its neighbor. Israel had bought gas from Egypt but land sections of the pipeline were repeatedly targeted by Sinai jihadists in 2011 and 2012, and soaring demand meant Egypt could use the gas domestically. — AFP



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International

Uproar over Dutch plan to ask race, religion of gun owners

Dutch government has come under fire

THE HAGUE: The Dutch government has come under fire for plans to register the race and religion of gun owners following a string of European terror attacks, a news report said yesterday. Lawmakers and gun owner associations say that the proposal by Justice Minister Ferdinand Grapperhaus risks breaching privacy rights and could be a form of "ethnic profiling". The proposals are part of the Dutch response to new EU guidelines to beef up gun laws after a series of terror attacks including those in Paris on November 13, 2015 in which 130 people died.

"There are diverse risks factors for gun ownership," Grapperhaus said in a memorandum explaining the changes in a concept bill published in late June, the centre-left De Volkskrant daily

said. Therefore police "required personal data including race or ethnical origin, political views and religious and philosophical convictions," said the



Lawmakers allege 'ethnic profiling'

Christian Democrat minister, whose party forms part of Prime Minister Mark Rutte's four-party

coalition. But these inclusions "are unnecessary, even according to the minimum European guidelines," said Monica den Boer, a lawmaker in the progressive D66 party, which is also part of the ruling coalition.

"We don't discriminate and ethnic profile. These proposals must be dropped from the draft bill," she told the paper. Even some within Grapperhaus' own party opposed the plans. "I cannot foresee any situation justifying the inclusion of these suggestions," said CDA lawmaker Chris van Dam. The Royal Dutch Sports Rifling Association (KNSA) also took aim at the plans, saying it "could have a discriminatory affect" and stigmatize people. "Almost no shooting incidents (in The Netherlands) are committed with legal weapons"

apart from a major shooting in 2011, said KNSA director Sander Duisterhof.

He was referring to one of the country's worst shootings since World War II when 24-year-old Tristan van der Vlis shot six people and wounded 16 others at a shopping mall in April that year. Van der Vlis, who had a gun permit, unleashed a hail of automatic gunfire on lunchtime shoppers before turning the gun on himself. He had suffered from psychological problems before the shooting. "To think that terrorists will get nervous because of these proposed new rules is wishful thinking by politicians," Duisterhof said. The new law will be before parliament within the next few weeks, De Volkskrant said. — AFP

Stressed out by Brexit, MPs try meditation

LONDON: In the shadow of London's Big Ben, members of parliament weary of the endless commotion over Brexit head into a chimney-stacked building to meditate and recharge. The stressed out MPs do not fold themselves into the lotus position on yoga mats but instead sit at desks and breathe inside polished offices. And their special instructors come from a centre in Oxford that promotes "mindfulness" for dealing with mental strain. "It's basically giving you a technique to be able to settle and, you know, pause and get that sense of where you are," Nic Dakin, an MP from England's industrial north, said in a phone interview. "It might only take five minutes or it might take 30."

Nearly 200 lawmakers have attended the Oxford Mindfulness Centre's courses this year and anywhere from a handful to a couple of dozen drop by meditation sessions each week. Many are seeking solace from a turbulent time for the UK. Britain's split from the European Union—a long, bitter and messy process—appears to often subsume much of London's political life. MPs in the House of Commons take turns firing insults at each other during debates about how to avert economic meltdown once Britain strikes out on its own.

The appointed peers from the House of Lords are more philosophical but still bitter in their own discussion about the country's leap into the great unknown. The Oxford centre aims to take MPs and peers to another place. The centre's mission statement sets out to achieve "a world without the devastating effects of depression, where mindfulness enables people to live with awareness, wisdom and compassion." The centre first began offering courses to MPs and peers in 2013 and the Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group—where Dakin is vice-chair—was set up a year later.

The Oxford centre defines it as "moment-to-moment awareness of one's experience, without judgment". MPs find their solace in mindfulness at Portcullis House—a building across the street from the Houses of Parliament to which some MP offices were relocated because of a space shortage. "I think it's quite useful for giving you techniques for calm and to settle," said Dakin. But he admitted that Brexit duties took priority for the time being. "It's good for me if I go along. But I'm not good at attending—the very opposite happens when a busy world interrupts," he said with a laugh. — AFP

Erdogan arrives in Germany under tight security

BERLIN: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan arrived in Germany yesterday for a controversial three-day state visit that both sides hope will help rebuild relations that have been battered in recent years. Ties between the NATO allies plummeted after Erdogan's government arrested tens of thousands of people in a mass purge following a 2016 putsch attempt, including some who were also German nationals.

Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose country is home to a three-million-strong Turkish community, has repeatedly stressed the importance of good relations with Ankara, a partner she relies on to help stem the flow of migrants arriving on European shores. With no shortage of political and economic issues hanging over the visit, the shadow of football also looms large. Turkey and Germany are locked in a bitter contest to host the Euro 2024 tournament, with the winner to be announced several hours after Erdogan's arrival.

Security was tight in the German capital, where Erdogan was

to be greeted outside Tegel airport by press freedom protesters of the group Reporters Without Borders. Thousands of Erdogan critics have vowed to take to the streets in Berlin and across Germany to protest against everything from Turkey's record on human rights to its offensive against Kurdish militia in Syria. Erdogan has said he would use the visit to improve relations and also to press Germany to step up the fight against "terrorist groups" like the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the movement of Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom Ankara blames for the failed coup.

Despite the tensions, Berlin and Ankara have been at pains to rebuild ties at a time when Erdogan is openly sparring with US President Donald Trump and the Turkish economy is in rapid decline. The gradual rapprochement began after German-Turkish journalist Deniz Yucel was freed in February, while journalist Mesale Tolu was also allowed to return to Germany last month. Both still face terror-related charges in Turkey.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier will welcome Erdogan on his first official visit to Germany since he became president in 2014 - with military honors and a state dinner at Bellevue Palace on Friday—which several opposition politicians have vowed to boycott. During his stay he will also twice meet Merkel for talks that are also expected to focus on the Syria conflict. On Saturday, Erdogan will travel to Cologne to open one of Europe's largest mosques, commissioned by the Ankara-controlled Ditib organization. — AFP



BERLIN: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan waves as he sits inside a car with his wife Emine Erdogan as a European flag is reflected on the car window after disembarking at Berlin's Tegel airport for his three-day official visit to Germany yesterday. — AFP

International

China fumes as US B-52s fly over disputed seas

Trump admits friendship with Xi could be over

BEIJING: The Chinese defense ministry yesterday denounced flyovers by US B-52 bombers over the South China Sea and East China Sea as “provocative” actions amid soaring tensions between the two global powers. The Pentagon said Wednesday the heavy bombers had taken part in a combined operation with Japan over the East China Sea and had flown through international airspace over the South China Sea a day before. “Regarding the provocative actions of US military aircraft in the South China Sea, we are always resolutely opposed to them, and will continue to take necessary measures in order to strongly handle (this issue),” Chinese defense ministry spokesman Ren Guoqiang told a monthly news briefing.

China has claimed large swaths of the strategic waterway and built up a series of islands and maritime features, turning them into military facilities. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam have competing claims to the region, and an international maritime tribunal ruled in 2016 that China’s claims have no legal basis. Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Dave Eastburn said this week’s flights were part of “regularly scheduled operations.”

The United States rejects China’s territorial claims and routinely says the military will “continue to fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows at times and places of our choosing.” Washington this week enacted new tariffs against China covering another \$200 billion of its imports while it last week sanctioned a Chinese military organization for buying Russian weapons. China

has reacted angrily, and this week scrapped a US warship’s planned port visit to Hong Kong and cancelled a meeting between the head of the Chinese navy and his American counterpart.

US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said he was not concerned the US transit flights would increase tensions with China. “If it was 20 years ago and they have not militarized those features there, it would have just been another bomber on its way to Diego Garcia or whatever,” he told Pentagon reporters, referring to the US military base in the Indian Ocean. “So there’s nothing out of the ordinary about it, nor about our ships sailing through there.” The Pentagon chief went on to say there is no “fundamental shift in anything.” “We’re just going through one of those periodic points where we’ve got to learn to manage our differences,” he said.

Friendship could be over

Meanwhile, Trump admitted his friendship with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping could be over on Wednesday as he accused Beijing of undermining his prospects in upcoming elections. With tensions growing sharply between the two sides on a range of issues, Trump said China wanted him to suffer an electoral setback as payback for his hard line over trade.

After accusing the government in Beijing of using a variety of tactics to damage his chances at the vital midterm polls in November, he said that relations with Xi might have taken a permanent turn for the worse. Trump has spoken many times since coming to office of his friendship with

Now it appears that the dramatic meeting might not happen after all, as Trump said he doesn’t want “to do anything that gets in the way” of the Kavanaugh crisis, and a Rosenstein meeting did not appear on the president’s schedule. Not that this will make the Rosenstein issue disappear. The number two justice department official is reported to have been considering gathering recordings to campaign for Trump’s removal under the constitutional provision for incompetent presidents. He strenuously denies that. But Trump already mistrusts him: Rosenstein oversees the investigation into whether the president colluded with Russia during his election.

“Chaos,” said Michael Genovese, a politics professor at Loyola Marymount University in California, “is the norm for the president. That’s his operating style.” Defenders say that Trump is only doing what he was elected to do—to end politics as usual and disrupt the capital elite. But November midterm congressional elections are six weeks away and with Republicans at risk of losing the lower house, and possibly also the Senate, questions are mounting over how to prevent the mayhem from turning to meltdown. “It’s like the US government has a shiny new sports car and we elected someone to drive it who doesn’t know how to drive and doesn’t have a map and he’s decided to go 95 miles an hour,” Genovese said. “It’s an incredibly frenetic pace but that pace is unsustainable,” he said. — AFP



NEW YORK: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (right) listens at the United Nations Security Council meeting on North Korea yesterday at the United Nations in New York. — AFP

Xi, praising the Chinese leader for his role in helping bring pressure to bear on North Korea over its nuclear program. But asked at a press conference in New York how Xi could remain his friend given the hike in tensions, Trump indicated that he preferred to be respected than liked.

“He may not be a friend of mine anymore but I think he probably respects me,” said the president, who said the US economy was easily weathering the impact of the trade dispute.

Washington this week enacted new tariffs against China covering another \$200 billion of its imports, shrugging off threats of counter measures from Beijing. “We have to make it fair,” he said. “A lot of money is coming into our coffers. And it’s had absolutely no impact on our economy.” China has vowed to retaliate with duties on \$60 billion in US goods, but since the country only imports a total of \$130 billion, its ability to hit back with matching tariffs is limited. — AFP

In Trump world, chaos is the new normal

WASHINGTON: Will President Donald Trump tell his most politically sensitive justice department official: “You’re fired!” Will Brett Kavanaugh, the Supreme Court nominee Trump calls “unblemished,” save himself from mounting allegations of sexual assault? In the wild West Wing of Trump’s White House, no one knows—and those are just this week’s questions. Again and again since his surprise 2016 election, the Republican businessman and former reality TV star has proved capable of upping the shock factor, sowing what pundits and White House insiders alike describe as chaos through Washington.

This week is proving particularly unhinged. Yesterday, the Senate Judiciary Committee met for the politically explosive hearing over sex assault allegations against Kavanaugh. At around the same time, Trump had been expected to receive his deputy attorney general, Rod Rosenstein, for a chat on his job future—not a good future, it seems, following a newspaper report that Rosenstein once secretly discussed wearing a wire to record Trump.

Drink until you pass out: The Kavanaugh’s high school world

WASHINGTON: The school sits on a sprawling campus with manicured lawns, multiple sports fields and indoor tennis courts, a virtual country club that promises students with deep-pocketed parents top-level educations and a path to Ivy League universities like Harvard and Yale. But when Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh attended the exclusive Jesuit-run all-boys Georgetown Preparatory School in the early 1980s, students joined something different: an elite party network of weekend bacchanalia and trips to the beach where teenage boys and girls drank and drugged themselves into stupors.

Kavanaugh’s nomination has opened the door to a shocking world of the children of Washington’s wealthiest, who pay as much as \$50,000 a year to exclusive schools which

offer guilt-edged educations and entries into elite circles. “All of these Catholic schools were wild,” said one woman who attended an exclusive Washington school for girls and whose brother attended Prep. “They have a wonderful reputation for education, and they also have a lot of bad boys. If it wasn’t drinking, it was gambling,” she said. Kavanaugh has denied accusations that he sexually assaulted or abused women in some of those parties.

But student yearbooks from Prep and other schools, including Holton-Arms academy, where one of his accusers went, testify to the rowdy party culture they lived at the time. The teens of the time clearly had money to burn and their own cars to get to weekly parties students held in massive suburban Washington homes, usually when parents were out of town. The Holton-Arms yearbooks note that invitations to Georgetown Prep parties were highly coveted, where the things of importance were “boys and beers” and the main activity all-night drinking games. “Striving to extend our educational experience beyond the confines of the classroom, we played such intellectually stimulating games as Quarters, Mexican Dice, and everyone’s favorite, Pass-Out, which usually resulted from the aforementioned two,” one student Holton-Arms student wrote. — AFP

International

Cash cows: Pakistani PM's house auctions buffaloes for austerity

The latest push for highly publicized austerity drive

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani premier's house milked its livestock reserves yesterday as dozens gathered for a buffalo auction in the capital Islamabad, in the latest push for Prime Minister Imran Khan's highly publicized austerity drive. A total of eight buffaloes were auctioned off for nearly 2.3 million rupees (\$19,000) at the prime minister's residence, as Khan's new administration aims to cut expenditure and increase revenue collection to boost Pakistan's struggling economy. "The auction was not just good. It was very, very good," said government official Javaid Iqbal, who oversaw the sale. An auctioneer shouted prices to a crowd carrying stacks of rupees in the residence's backyard, where the shiny, black buffaloes for sale were tied to nearby trees.

The animals were purchased in 2014 by the government of ousted premier Nawaz Sharif, with supporters of the erstwhile leader flocking to the auction and paying several times the market price for a piece of history. "I bought a buf-

falo for 300,000 rupees, which is three times higher than the market price. But I am happy because it's a memory tied to my leader Nawaz Sharif," Malik Tayyib Nawaz told AFP. Sharif, who was removed from office last year by the Supreme Court for alleged corruption—was freed from prison earlier this month after being jailed weeks ahead of July elections.

However, others at the auction complained of the high prices. "A common man like me cannot afford to buy them," said Zameer Khan, who travelled to the event with the hope of netting a buffalo but left empty handed. Khan was elected in July on promises to cut excessive government spending and build an Islamic welfare state in the impoverished South Asian nation. As part of the ongoing austerity drive, Pakistan has auctioned off dozens of luxury vehicles belonging to the prime minister's house and also launched a crowdfunding campaign to build a dam in the country's north.—AFP



ISLAMABAD: Pakistani men take part in an auction of buffaloes during an auction at the premises of the Prime Minister house in Islamabad yesterday. — AFP

National security law looms over Hong Kong freedoms

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's landmark ban on a pro-independence party has reignited concerns the government is pushing towards national security legislation that could be the death knell for the city's freedoms. Article 23 of semi-autonomous Hong Kong's mini-constitution, the Basic Law, says the city must enact national security laws to prohibit "treason, secession, sedition (and) subversion" against the Chinese government.

But the clause has never been implemented due to deeply held public fears it would curtail Hong Kong's cherished rights, such as freedom of expression and the press. Those liberties are unseen on the mainland and are protected by an agreement made before Britain handed Hong Kong back to China in 1997. An attempt to implement Article 23 in 2003 was shelved after half a million people took to the street in protest.

But 15 years later it is back on the table, as an independence movement calling for the city to split from China incenses Beijing. Monday's ban on the pro-independence Hong Kong National Party (HKNP), on the grounds of national security and public safety, was made under the colonial-era Societies Ordinance and is the latest move in a campaign to muzzle pro-independence sentiment. Activists have been banned from standing for office and disqualified from the legislature, while protest leaders have been prosecuted.

That growing repression is "introducing the definitions, transgressions, and punishments that are to become part of Hong Kong law", once national security legislation is brought in, says Suzanne Pepper, an honorary fellow at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The introduction of Article 23 is part of Beijing's strengthening campaign to suppress separatism in any of its territories and impose its definition of a "unified China", diluting the promises made to Hong Kong in the handover agreement, Pepper told AFP. "Hong Kong is step-by-step learning that Beijing is attaching mainland definitions to all those rights and freedoms," she said.

Chinese officials are raising pressure for Article 23 to be enacted and city leader Carrie Lam has stressed it is the government's "constitutional responsibility" to do so. But she has also said it will only happen when the time is right, implicitly acknowledging the backlash it may provoke. Pro-Beijing lawmaker Felix Chung argues it is better for Hong Kong to enact the legislation itself, rather than the Chinese government imposing its own national law onto the city. Pro-China moderates have proposed combining the legislation with promised political reform to appease the pro-democracy camp. But Chung believes Beijing is unlikely to go for that. "From the perspective of the central government, national security cannot be compromised," he said.

Martin Lee, a veteran pro-democracy lawyer and former member of the Basic Law drafting committee, says he believed from the outset Hong Kong should only activate Article 23 if it did not water down existing human rights and went alongside the granting of universal suffrage, also promised in the mini-constitution. Now he regrets the article's inclusion in the Basic Law. "After all these years, people are no longer confident in the central government," Lee told AFP, saying he feared Article 23 could be used to "throw people into prison" in the future.

Business fears

Business leaders are also concerned the rule of law that has been the bedrock of Hong Kong's status as the region's leading financial hub could be dented if the clause is implemented. Jack Lange, chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, said any new national security legislation would need to be "very narrowly tailored" to reassure foreign companies. The primary concern would be "the degree to which they can use that law as basis for investigating you, intruding into what you're doing, requiring you to hand over data and other information", he said.

Journalists fear the implementation of Article 23 would foster the self-censorship that is already on the rise in Hong Kong and restrict reporting on topics deemed sensitive by Beijing. Hong Kong Journalists Association chairman Chris Yeung said he was concerned the legislation would be "deliberately vague and ambivalent" to make it easier to prosecute political targets. Yeung believes the more insecure the Chinese government feels, the harder they will tighten their grip. A "paper tiger" is no longer enough for authorities, says Yeung. "Now they want a real tiger that bites."—AFP

6 die in Kashmir violence ahead of local elections

SRINAGAR: Six people were killed in mounting violence ahead of local elections in Kashmir as Indian authorities imposed a curfew and suspended mobile internet services in the disputed territory yesterday. There were at least four separate shootings in the restive Himalayan region, where an armed insurgency against Indian rule has raged for three decades, costing tens of thousands of lives. An army spokesman, Colonel Rajesh Kalia, said three militants and one soldier died in separate shootouts in Budgam district and Anantnag district.

Elsewhere, a road-construction laborer was shot and killed by soldiers, said a police officer who spoke on condition of anonymity and could not provide further details. In the main city of Srinagar, government forces shot dead a man during an early morning patrol, sparking public unrest. Thousands defied the government curfew to attend his funeral, chanting slogans against Indian rule in the mountainous area where half a million soldiers are deployed.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since 1947 but both nuclear-armed rivals claim the territory in full, and have fought three wars over its control. Tensions have been rising ahead of local elections in October and November. New Delhi has deployed an additional 40,000 troops to the region to maintain order. Both pro-Indian parties and separatist groups fighting for self-determination have called for a boycott of the upcoming polls. The region has been under direct control of New Delhi since the local government there collapsed in June. Curfews, internet shutdowns and clashes with civilians are not uncommon when violence flares in Kashmir, where Indian forces have been accused by the UN of rights abuses.—AFP

The #MeToo movement takes legal turn in China

From chatroom to courtroom

BEIJING: When a former intern at China's state broadcaster wrote in July about being groped and forcibly kissed by one of the country's most recognizable television stars, her story ignited a social media firestorm in a country where a backlash against sexual harassment was growing. Now her case is set to go before the Chinese legal system. The 25-year-old former intern said she had been informed Tuesday by a court in Beijing's Haidian district that she was being sued in a civil case for damaging Zhu Jun's reputation and mental wellbeing.

Also named in the suit was Xu Chao, a friend who had been championing the case online. At her request, Reuters is withholding the name of the accuser and identifying her by her online name, Xianzi. Zhu is demanding that the two women apologize online and in a national newspaper, pay compensation of 655,000 yuan (\$95,254.72) and cover the costs of legal fees for the case, according to a copy of the filing seen by Reuters. Descriptions of Zhu forcibly kissing and groping Xianzi were "pure fiction" and had caused "grave damage" to Zhu's public image and his mental health, according to the filing, which was dated Sept. 18 and is not available to the public.

In response, Xianzi applied to file her own civil suit against Zhu on Tuesday for "infringement of personality rights", she told Reuters. Personality rights is a broad term used within Chinese law to refer to personal dignity rights, but does not specifically mention sexual harassment. "I decided that you have to use the law to prove what you said happened," Xianzi said on Wednesday. Zhu, 54, whose lawyers have publicly denied the allegations, did not respond to repeated requests for comment. Zhu's lawyer issued a statement earlier this month saying he had sued the two women. Reached by telephone, Xu confirmed the filing of the lawsuit.

China's justice and public security ministries did not respond to requests for comment. China does not have a law that specifically prohibits sexual harassment. However, on Aug. 27 China's parliament announced that it was considering adding provisions to a civil code, expected to be passed in 2020, that would allow a victim to file a civil suit against someone who uses words, actions or exploits a subordinate relationship to sexually harass them. The changes would also require employers to take measures to prevent, stop and handle complaints about sexual harassment.

Vague laws, culture of silence

In recent months, women have made several allegations of sexual abuse against powerful men, including prominent university professors, the head of China's Buddhist association, and leading figures in the media and at non-governmental organizations, which have reverberated across social media in China. That intensified with the arrest and release by US police last month of Richard Liu, chief executive of Chinese e-commerce giant JD.com, on a rape allegation. Liu has not been charged and through a lawyer has denied any wrongdoing.

Up to now, vague laws, patchy implementation and a lack of understanding among lawyers, judges, police and the public have hampered attempts to handle cases through the courts, and deterred many victims from filing suits, according to activist groups. The lack of a clear definition of sexual harassment, or an agreed upon standard for addressing complaints, entrenches a "culture of silence", according to the Beijing Yuanzhong Gender Development Center, a non-profit. The group said that while workplace sexual harassment is widespread in China, only 34 specific cases have been logged in the official court case database since 2010.

Household name

Xianzi was a 21-year-old intern at the state broadcaster CCTV when she said she met Zhu, who is famous across China for hosting an annual spring festival extravaganza, one of China's top-rated programs. In an interview with Reuters, Xianzi said that she had been alone in a dressing room with Zhu when he asked her if she wanted to work for the channel after her internship, before trying to take her hand on the pretext of reading her fortune. Despite her protests, Xianzi said, Zhu groped her under her skirt before pulling her head and forcibly kissing her, only stopping when interrupted by knocking on the door. CCTV did not respond to requests for comment. Xianzi said she was moved to act after reading accounts of sexual assault and harassment posted on Chinese social media by women emboldened by the country's fledgling #MeToo movement. In July, Xianzi, now a screenwriter, wrote about her own experience on WeChat, sharing it with a small circle of friends. When Xu, her friend, shared the post on the Weibo platform, it went viral. On Tuesday, Xianzi returned to social media. "Still a bit angry, this is Xianzi, hello everyone, I'm getting ready for a fight," she wrote on Weibo. — AFP

South Korea's quiet #MeToo trailblazer embraces tough fight

SEOUL: The woman who started South Korea's #MeToo movement has a shy demeanor and a whispery voice, but Seo Ji-hyun's actions have had a resounding impact on the lives of her countrywomen. A prosecutor in Seoul, Seo was repeatedly groped by a senior colleague at the funeral of another co-worker's father. After she complained, she suffered years of career setbacks in an institution that is traditionalist even by the South's conservative standards. Finally she went public with a tearful live television interview in January, her voice trembling as she defied convention to detail her experiences. An unprecedented move in a society where patriarchal values remain deeply ingrained despite economic and technological advances, Seo's courage opened the floodgates. Countless South Korean women have since come forward to accuse powerful figures in the arts, education, politics and religion of rape and other sexual misconduct.

The disgraced figures include a former presidential contender, a top film director who has swept awards worldwide, actors well known across Asia and a widely respected poet regularly nominated for the Nobel Prize for literature. Her professional role had made her situation even more humiliating. Seo, 45, told AFP in a rare foreign media interview. "It felt so shameful that as a prosecutor whose job is to seek justice, I could not even speak out about this criminal act", she said. "I couldn't bear it any more. When I decided to speak out on TV—which amounts to social suicide—I was ready to resign and become a recluse for the rest of my life."

Seo's story exemplifies the plight of many South Korean women—well-educated and hard-working yet discriminated against and mistreated by their employers—as well as their frustration at the slow

pace of social change. Even though South Korean women generally outscore men at school and in the entry-level job market, the country consistently ranks at the bottom of OECD surveys on gender pay gaps or female presence in senior positions.

Many women have experienced workplace sexual harassment, but those who speak out are often castigated for "causing a stir", marginalized, and sometimes fired. Seo's case showed that even an elite prosecutor was no exception. She regularly faced verbal or physical harassment by bosses or male colleagues after joining the prosecution agency in 2004, she said. After the groping at the funeral, Seo consulted senior prosecutors who promised to persuade the man she accused, Ahn Tae-geun, to apologize personally.

The apology never came. Instead, Seo was reprimanded and reassigned to a relatively junior position in distant Tongyeong, a small town on the country's south coast, despite having previously received ministerial awards for her performance. Suspecting Ahn might be behind the move, she lodged a series of formal complaints, only to be scolded for rattling the agency, a deeply hierarchical organization where loyalty is highly valued. Women account for 30 percent of prosecutors but occupy only eight percent of senior positions at the agency, and a government survey this year showed 70 percent of female prosecutors had reported experiencing sexual harassment or abuse.

Most stayed silent because they feared professional setbacks. More widely, a survey by the Korea Women Workers' Association showed nearly 65 percent of women who complained about workplace harassment suffered damage to their careers. It took Seo—who is married with one son—eight years to muster the bravery to go public. Afterwards, she said, "many women thanked me, saying they took courage from my move because my case made them realize that it was not their fault that they could not dare to speak out after being abused—it was society's fault."

Seo's television interview triggered an outpouring of support for her as well as a deluge of accusations by other women. Ahn—who was separately fired for corruption last year—could not be charged with sex abuse because the one-year statute of limitations had expired. However he was indicted for abuse of power, accused of using his position to pressure senior prosecutors to reassign Seo



SEOUL: This picture shows Seo Ji-hyun, a prosecutor, during an interview with AFP in Seoul. — AFP

to a junior position in revenge. He denies the sexual abuse accusations, maintaining he was too drunk to remember what happened at the 2010 funeral, and a verdict in his closely watched trial is expected later this year. But some of those who followed in Seo's wake have faced a legal backlash, their alleged abusers countering with lawsuits in a country where libel is a criminal offence and the truth not necessarily a defense. In other cases, victims have been shamed for coming forward and subjected to vicious personal attacks.

Former presidential contender Ahn Hee-jung was acquitted last month of repeatedly raping a female aide with the court saying she had not shown "victim-like" behavior because she had not quit the job. One of the politician's male aides was recently caught posting more than 1,000 anonymous online diatribes against the woman. Seo has not been exempt from paying what she describes as "a hefty price for speaking out". — AFP

International

World leaders gather to breathe new life into Paris global accord

'We are losing the battle' against climate change

NEW YORK: World leaders gathered in New York to try to breathe new life into the Paris global climate accord, amid backsliding from several nations over commitments made in the historic deal. The "One Planet Summit," launched last year by French President Emmanuel Macron, aims to accelerate the implementation of the 2015 pact. "We are not here just to speak, but to be accountable," Macron told delegates at the Plaza luxury hotel in New York.

Having last year warned that "we are losing the battle" against climate change, Macron called on countries to massively increase funding for climate action. Despite a stream of announcements and summits—including in Bonn in May, and Bangkok and San Francisco this month—the front line in the climate war has hardly moved, and much of the hope and goodwill brought by the Paris deal has been replaced with passivity. President Donald Trump in June 2017 announced the US would pull out, effective November 2020, and momentum from several other countries has stalled.

Trump has abandoned targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, set by his predecessor Barack Obama, by slashing dozens of environmental regulations. Australia, one of the world's worst per capita greenhouse gas polluters, has scrapped plans to enshrine targets for reducing carbon emissions into law. And in Brazil, right-wing presidential front-runner Jair Bolsonaro has said he would pull the country

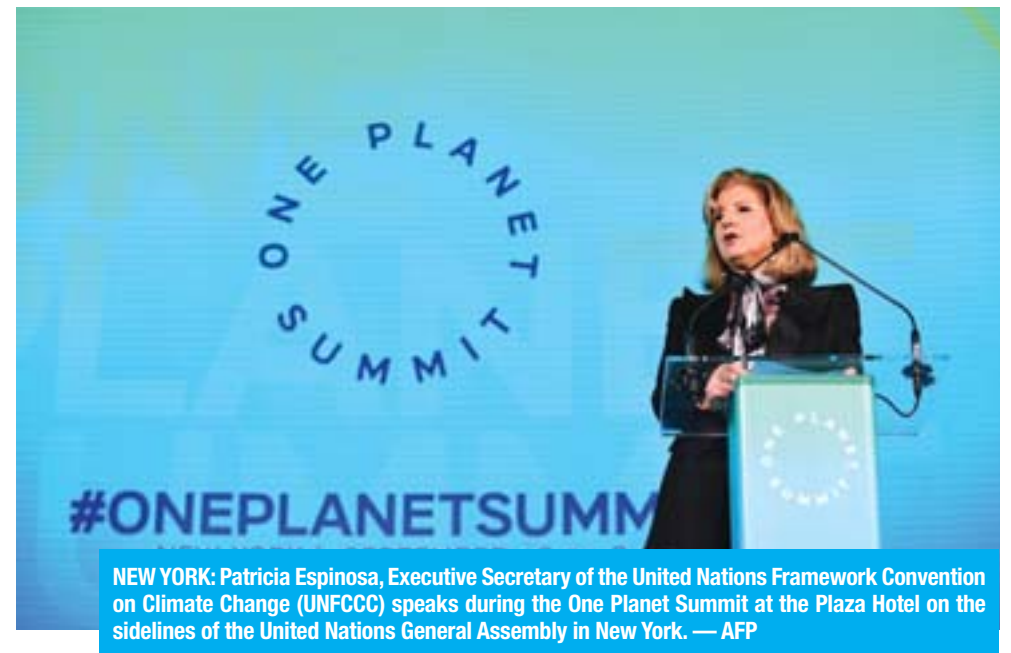
from the deal if he is elected. The Paris agreement also stipulated that rich countries establish an annual \$100-billion fund to help developing nations react to our heating planet. But only \$10 billion has been collected so far. The United States had promised \$3 billion and only gave \$1 billion—under Obama.

'Very challenging'

The next UN negotiating summit, COP24, will take place in December in Poland. Preparatory meetings ended in deadlock. "It looks very challenging," Patricia Espinosa, the executive secretary of UN Climate Change, told AFP. "We do not yet have certainty that we will be able to make it a success, but it's not impossible either." Fewer leaders participated in this year's One Planet Summit, organized with the World Bank and the UN.

About 30 presidents, prime ministers and ministers are due to attend, including from Spain, Denmark, Norway, China, as well as from small Pacific island nations whose coastlines are getting eaten by a rising ocean. "Time is not our friend," said New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. We should not "have the ability to opt out of action either." Over the course of the day, participants were to announce billions of dollars of new actions to "decarbonize" the world economy, help vulnerable countries and finance the ecological transition of developing countries, particularly in Asia and in Africa.

But these commitments only represent a small



NEW YORK: Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) speaks during the One Planet Summit at the Plaza Hotel on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. — AFP

portion of what is needed to limit global warming to less than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, as enshrined in the 2015 Paris accord. Experts warn the global temperature is on track to surpass three degrees by 2100. A study in the journal *Nature* this month found that even global temperature rises of two degrees

Celsius could still be enough to melt parts of the largest ice sheet on Earth, in the Antarctic, and raise sea levels by several meters (yards).

Greenpeace questioned Macron's climate credentials, given that greenhouse gas emissions have recently crept up in France, mainly from the transport sector. — AFP

Wetlands disappearing three times faster than forests: Study

GENEVA: Wetlands, among the world's most valuable and biodiverse ecosystems, are disappearing at alarming speed amid urbanization and agriculture shifts, conservationists said yesterday, calling for urgent action to halt the erosion. "We are in a crisis," Martha Rojas Urrego, head of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, told reporters in Geneva, warning of the potential devastating impact of wetland loss, including on climate change.

The convention, adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar nearly a half-century ago, yesterday issued its first-ever global report on the state of the world's wetlands. The 88-page report found that around 35 percent of wetlands—which include lakes, rivers, marshes and peatlands, as well as coastal and marine areas like lagoons, mangroves and coral reefs—were lost between 1970 and 2015. Today, wetlands cover more than 12 million square kilometers, the report said, warning that the annual rates of loss

had accelerated since 2000. "We are losing wetlands three times faster than forests," Rojas Urrego said, describing the Global Wetland Outlook report as a "red flag". While the world has been increasingly focused on global warming and its impact on oceans and forests, the Ramsar Convention said wetlands remain "dangerously undervalued". Yesterday's report, released in advance of a meeting of the parties to the convention in Dubai next month, stressed the importance of wetlands to all life on Earth.

Directly or indirectly, they provide almost all of the world's consumption of freshwater and more than 40 percent of all species live and breed in wetlands. Animals and plants who call wetlands home are particularly vulnerable, with a quarter at risk of extinction, the report said. Wetlands also provide a livelihood for more than one billion people, while mitigating floods and protecting coastlines. They are also a vital source of food, raw materials and genetic resources for medicines.

The Ramsar Convention stressed that wetlands are essential to reining in climate change, pointing out that peatlands store twice as much carbon as the world's forests, even though they cover just three percent of all land surface. Salt marshes, seagrass beds and mangroves also store large quantities of carbon. So when wetlands disappear, carbon that has been safely locked in the soil is released into the atmosphere. — AFP

It's not that bad! Science, tourism clash on Great Barrier Reef

SYDNEY: A row is raging over Australia's warming-damaged Great Barrier Reef, with firms worried that scientists' apocalyptic warnings are scaring visitors out of the water. Every year, more than two million snorkel-wielding tourists head to Australia's famed coral ecosystem, generating revenues of \$4.3 billion (Aus\$5.9 billion) and supporting 64,000 local jobs. But damage done by higher temperatures — which turn patches of the reef ashen white — has threatened to put a break on the number of tourists willing to wrestle their way into a wetsuit.

There was surprise then, when the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre recently published a markedly more optimistic report, heralding "significant signs of recovery" at major dive sites around Cairns and prompting a flurry of upbeat news coverage. If the report's findings seemed out of kilter with other studies about the reef, that was by design. It was part of an effort to show that not all of the Great Barrier Reef is an aquatic wasteland, according to Col McKenzie

of tourism industry lobby group AMPTO, which helped carry out the research. "Overall, are we seeing a drop in visitation because of the negative press, absolutely we are, there's no doubt about that," McKenzie said.

He suggested visitor numbers to the reef and nearby islands had dropped by 10 percent in 2017 and were on track to plunge by a further 15 percent this year. Although government data shows that the number of visitors to the broader region has actually increased, those figures are older and don't include coral-viewing activities. McKenzie said it was vital to get the message out that some areas of the massive ecosystem are still teeming with color and life. "What people miss with our reef system is... it's a massive structure," he said.

His comments are the latest salvo in a battle between ecologists and the tourism industry, as they struggle to come to terms with competing interests and new realities on the reef. Professor Terry Hughes of James Cook University, who leads the surveys of bleached corals, cautioned that while some damaged coral regain their color within several months, more badly damaged reefs can take a decade to recover. "It's very early days yet," he told AFP, describing a patchy recovery that makes generalizations difficult.

"Basically we are in year one in the middle of the reef, or year two in the northern reefs, in the decade-long process of recovery." The government's Australian Institute of Marine Science says coral cover has "continued to decline due to the cumulative impacts of multiple, severe disturbances over the past four years". — AFP

Lifestyle

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A model presents a creation by Manish Arora during the Spring-Summer 2019 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show in Paris yesterday. —AFP

Golden-age glitterati return on canvas to old Lebanon hotel

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'J'accuse': Polanski takes on Dreyfus Affair in new film

He has spent half his life as the accused, but director Roman Polanski's next film will be called "J'accuse" (I accuse), its producers told AFP yesterday. The Polish-born film legend, who has spent four decades as a fugitive from US justice after admitting to the statutory rape of a 13-year-old girl in 1977, is making a historical spy thriller based on the Dreyfus Affair—the most famous miscarriage of justice in French history. The script has been written by British novelist Robert Harris, who previously worked with Polanski, 85, on the critically-acclaimed "The Ghost Writer" in 2010 starring Ewan McGregor.



Director Roman Polanski is making a historical spy thriller based on the Dreyfus Affair. — AFP

"J'accuse" will star French Oscar-winner Jean Dujardin as the often forgotten counter-espionage officer who proved that the Jewish Captain Alfred Dreyfus had been wrongly accused of spying for the Germans. The case divided France for more than a decade from 1894, with the bitterness and divisions it created ranking right up until World War II. Legende Films confirmed that shooting would begin soon around Paris, and began advertising for

extras yesterday for scenes to be filmed at the end of November.

The French title of the film—the working title in English is "The Dreyfus Affair"—comes from the famous open letter written by novelist Emile Zola in support of the captain, lambasting the French government for its anti-Semitism. Such was the official backlash that the author of "Germinal" had to flee into exile in England for 10 years after being convicted of libel.

'Story of a witch-hunt'

Polanski, the maker of such classic films as "Chinatown", "Rosemary's Baby" and "Tess", has tried to get an English-language version of the story of Lieutenant Colonel Georges Picquart off the ground for years without success. "I have long wanted to do a film about Dreyfus, not as a costume drama but as a spy thriller," Polanski said in 2012. The story, he argued, was "absolutely pertinent for today's world—a witch-hunt against a minority, paranoia about security, secret military courts and intelligence services out of control; lying governments and an enraged press."

The new film will be in French, with actor Louis Garrel playing Dreyfus, and will also star "Bond" villain Mathieu Amalric and Polanski's wife Emmanuelle Seigner. While Dreyfus was rotting in the notorious Devil's Island penal colony off French Guiana, Picquart reinvestigated the case in secret, proving that he was not the German mole. But when he presented the evidence to the general staff of the French army they refused to admit there had been a mistake and did everything in their power to destroy him. The producers said that "Picquart is the forgotten hero of the Dreyfus Affair... who discovered that the evidence against the captain had been fabricated".

"From that moment he put his life and career at risk, and he never stopped trying to identify the real guilty parties and to rehabilitate Dreyfus," they told Le Film Francais magazine. Picquart was later made war minister in 1906 in a government led by Georges Clemenceau, who would go on to lead France during World War I. Meanwhile, Polanski will be played by the Polish actor Rafal Zawierucha in Quentin Tarantino's new film, "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood", about the Manson Family murders that rocked Los Angeles in the late 1960s. Polanski's actress wife Sharon Tate was murdered by members of the group in their home in 1969. She was eight-and-a-half months pregnant at the time. — AFP

'We have the blues': ZZ Top star says genre will live on

Though the great Mississippi bluesmen have passed away, blues music will survive and thrive because it always grabs the rawest human emotions, ZZ Top frontman Billy Gibbons told AFP. The blues encapsulates life's peaks and troughs, said the giant-bearded guitarist, who has returned to his roots in the musical genre with his second solo album, "The Big Bad Blues". After 2015's Cuban-flavored solo debut "Perfektamundo", Gibbons decided to go back to basics. "This great American art form we now call the blues, it grabs me and it has always grabbed me," the 68-year-old Texan said. "There's something with the humanness, the natural feeling. It's this connection with the highest of highs, the lowest of lows and all points in between. It brings everything together."



In this file photo Members of the US band ZZ Top, Dusty Hill (left) and Billy Gibbons (right) perform on the stage during the 28th Eurock-eennes rock music festival on July 3, 2016 in Belfort, eastern France. — AFP

Generational shift

His 11-track album features eight Gibbons-penned originals, and covers including Muddy Waters classics "Standing Around Crying" and "Rollin' and Tumblin'". The death of blues giant B. B. King in 2015 at the age of 89 seemed to mark the passing of a generation—Waters included—that grew out of the music's homeland in the dirt-poor Mississippi Delta plantations and took the blues to the world. In London to sign albums

for fans, the US rocker said he was not worried about the blues dying out in the face of the latest musical styles.

"What is the future of this thing called the blues? Remarkably, it seems to reappear decade after decade," he said. "We all have this spirit. We haven't always found the words to express it, but we have the blues—and that pretty much says it all. "I don't see the blues disappearing any time soon." He said the blues had branched out from its three-chord origins into all sorts of "lofty realms", but however far it gets stretched, "it all comes back to square one: simplicity followed by complexity and sophistication. It's really a fascinating art form. "We never know who's going to be the next exponent," he said. "Sooner or later, we're going to find a bluesman in this 11th hour that really floats the boat."

ZZ trip

Instantly recognizable in their trademark long beards, dark shades and hats, ZZ Top have been plying their Texas-toned blues rock for nearly five decades. Gibbons said that in between making records, the trio would head down to the homeland of the blues and infuse the spirit into the soul. "When we could escape from the studio, many times we would trip down through the Mississippi Delta, particularly Clarksdale," he said. "There is definitely the feeling that the blues still wiggles up from the very ground. "There's an immediate connection with where this all started."

On the road again

Gibbons and his solo backing band are touring the album through North America from October 13 to November 18. The tour is followed by celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of ZZ Top—a remarkable achievement for an unchanging line-up. "Same three guys playing the same three chords. It's all good," said Gibbons. The rockers are playing a residency at The Venetian hotel in Las Vegas from January 18 to February 2. —AFP

Kuwaiti playwright Sulayman Al-Bassam opens 'UR' in Munich

"UR", the latest offering from the mind of Kuwaiti playwright Sulayman Al-Bassam, will premiere at the Residenz theater in Munich today. The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC), one of the main contributors to the play, said that the play traverses time with a captivating agility. The drama moves back and forth between the eve of Ur's destruction in 2000 BC, and the year 1903, which marks the arrival of European archaeologists to Mesopotamia, then forward again to our recent present, the year 2015, marking the brief, yet destructive passage of

ISIS, to finally jump to the year 2035 with a coup de theatre in the finale.

At the heart of the dramaturgy are questions of cultural memory and oblivion that transpire through the series of events and are embodied in the UR's main role, Nin Gal, goddess daughter and governor of UR. UR is a co-production between the Residenz theater, Al-Bassam's Sabab Theater and the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC). — KUNA





Local artist Fong So poses next to an artwork he produced during the pro-democracy rallies at his studio in Hong Kong.



Local artist Fong So shows artworks which are included in the British Museum's "I Object" exhibition at his studio in Hong Kong.



Local artist Fong So poses with two wood blocks which were used to make an artwork at his studio in Hong Kong.— AFP photos

Disappearing act: What happened to Hong Kong's Umbrella Art?

Illuminated under a spotlight at London's British Museum, hand-drawn sketches of Hong Kong's 2014 Umbrella Movement are part of a new exhibition on dissent that offers a rare glimpse of the artworks produced during the pro-democracy rallies. The months-long demonstrations, which kicked off on September 28 four years ago, brought parts of the city to a standstill as protest camps took over areas normally clogged with traffic and commercial hustle. Images of some of the thousands of posters, banners, drawings, sculptures, shrines and caricatures that adorned walls, bridges and roads in the tent-filled camps have been gathered online and in library archives. But the original works have largely fallen out of view.

With Beijing tightening its grip on the semi-autonomous city and fears that freedom of speech is being curtailed through moves such as a ban on a pro-independence party and the prosecution of Umbrella Movement leaders, some feel it is safer to send the art abroad. Fong So was one of dozens of local artists who sketched the protests and his works are on display as part of the British Museum's "I Object" exhibition. He has given his entire collection of more than 100 Umbrella Movement sketches to the museum. A yellow umbrella, symbolic of the protest, printed with the lyrics of John Lennon's "Imagine", is also on display at the current show from an anonymous donor.

The movement earned its name after protesters used umbrellas to defend against police tear gas on September 28. "I consider the collection of sketches a documentation of a piece of contemporary history. So, it's good to see it enter a museum", Fong told AFP. He describes the political situation in Hong Kong as "more and more

suffocating" and says he plans to send away other politically sensitive works. Alvin Wong, founder of Hong Kong's Urban Sketchers group, brought together hundreds of sketches by 31 artists in a book entitled "Sketches under the Umbrella", published in 2015. "All these sketches belong to Hong Kong people. We shouldn't keep them in our own sketchbooks. We have to tell everybody what we saw," Wong told AFP.

He has sent copies to libraries around the world, mainly in the United States, and says only a few bookstores in Hong Kong would stock it. Politically sensitive titles have been steadily removed from many city bookshops, particularly since the disappearance in 2015 of five booksellers-known for publishing gossipy accounts of China's political leaders-who resurfaced in custody on the mainland.

In storage

Although Umbrella art and memorabilia were part of local exhibitions soon after the movement, the largest trove is now in storage at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's (CUHK) library, where the public can only view it as a digital catalogue. The majority of works were donated by artists and activists who rescued them from the protest camps to create the Umbrella Movement Visual Archive. The library collection ranges from scrawled slogans on placards to bags, jewelry, kites and sculptures, reflecting the fact that the public, not just accomplished artists, created the ad hoc landscape that became a hallmark of the movement.

But the whereabouts of some major pieces, including the famous 12-foot-high (3.6-metre) wooden "Umbrella Man" statue, remain a mystery. Artist Sampson Wong, co-founder of the visual archive group, said they handed over the collection because they lacked the funds and manpower to preserve it.

The library is a "reliable institution", Wong told AFP, adding: "It preserves a part of the movement that in some years could be overlooked." With the democracy camp still on the back foot after the protests failed to win political reform, there is little appetite among activists to mount a public exhibition of the works. And with concerns over the erosion of freedoms, some who created or collected pieces may prefer to keep them to themselves, says Clarisse Yeung, co-founder of the visual archive, and now a district councillor.

Online photo collections like the wide-ranging Umbrella Movement Art Preservation Facebook page, put together by Hong Kong artist Kacey Wong, also provide a shareable digital resource. But some feel the physical works should go on show once more. Oscar Ho, Associate Professor of Practice in Cultural Management at CUHK, says Hong Kong's new government-funded art museum M+ should devote a gallery to the artworks. "It's like the whole world

is interested except the institutions of Hong Kong," says Ho, who has delivered lectures globally about Umbrella art.

M+ told AFP it was still "carefully evaluating this recent past" and would not currently consider Umbrella Movement works for its collection. Hong Kong-born academic Dan Tsang, a former visiting Fulbright scholar at CUHK researching how to archive protest culture, says he is concerned that works not yet gathered from the public may be thrown away or sent out of the city. "I think people like to touch and see the real thing, the actual artwork-it's different from just looking at a digital image on a computer screen or phone," he said.— AFP



A sketch work by artist Gary Yeung shows a Guandi temple (above right) and a Catholic church (below right) in Hong Kong.



This picture shows 45-year-old British artist Tom Young standing next to one of his paintings depicting a 1947 meeting of the Arab League discussing the Palestine question, during an exhibition at the Sofar Grand Hotel in the Lebanese village of Sofar, some 30 kilometers (20 miles) east of Beirut. — AFP photos



Visitors viewing a painting by 45-year-old British artist Tom Young during an exhibition at the Sofar Grand Hotel.



A visitor viewing a painting by 45-year-old British artist Tom Young during an exhibition at the Sofar Grand Hotel.



British painter Tom Young poses in a room with his paintings during an exhibition at the Sofar Grand Hotel.

Golden-age glitterati return on canvas to old Lebanon hotel

Inside an abandoned century-old hotel near Lebanon's capital, paintings of the Arab world's once powerful and famous hang around a worn poker table, testimony to its glamorous past before the civil war. Arab diplomats, French and British officers, but also Egyptian film stars all flocked to the Sofar Grand Hotel before the 1975-1990 conflict forced it to close down. This month, the hotel opened its doors to the public for the first time in decades to exhibit dozens of works celebrating the hotel's past by British artist Tom Young. "This place is just full of history," says the 45-year-old painter, who researched the building's past for the project. "It was once one of the greatest hotels in the Middle East," explains the blond artist, who has been living in Lebanon for 10 years. "It was where kings and princesses and emirs and generals used to meet—also the most famous singers of the day."

Built in 1892 under Ottoman rule by Lebanon's wealthy Sursock family, the forgotten hotel today lies near a disused train station in the village of Sofar some 30 kilometers (20 miles) east of Beirut. Despite the war, the Middle East's first casino has maintained its impressive facade. Sunlight spills into the deserted gal-

leries and halls on its ground floor. On its peeling walls, Young's paintings evoke a livelier, more cosmopolitan past when high society came to party and secret political meetings took place in the garden. In the main hall, a painting in green and turquoise blues celebrates the stars of Egypt's golden era, once patrons of the hotel.

'Latest Parisian fashion'

Crooner Abdel Haleem Hafez serenades belly dancer Samia Gamal in the foreground, while singer Um Kulthum appears in her trademark cat-eye sunglasses seated at a table in the background. In another painting, at the bottom of the hotel's sweeping staircase, smartly dressed men lead their female partners in billowing long dresses around the ballroom floor. The scene is inspired by the writings of Lebanese-American author Ameen Rihani, who described attending a party there during his travels to Lebanon from 1907. "My friend and I stood in the big lobby and watched the male dancers, mostly in formal attire, and the female dancers dressed in the latest Parisian fashion. All dresses were low-necked 'Decollete'," he writes. In another painting, late Egyptian actor Omar Sharif—who starred in "Doctor Zhivago"—appears to be absorbed in a card game. His portrait hangs near an octagonal poker table, dimly lit by an overhead beige lampshade. Turned over playing cards and colourful poker chips lie on its faded green felt surface.

"We tried to curate the exhibition so that visitors enter and feel that nothing has changed," says curator Noor Haydar. "In the poker room, there are still cards on the table, the light is on in the kitchen and there are still cups inside," she says. "We tried to get people to imagine everything that used to happen in this hotel."



A view of the exterior of the Sofar Grand Hotel in the Lebanese village of Sofar.



Youths participate in a workshop by 45-year-old British painter Tom Young during an art exhibition at the Sofar Grand Hotel.



A visitor viewing paintings by 45-year-old British artist Tom Young.

But Young's paintings also reflect the region's political history. In one, he portrays the leaders who attended an Arab League meeting in Sofar in 1947, including Lebanon's first premier after independence Riad Al-Solh.

'Sense of identity'

Inspired by an early AFP photograph, Young paints them in a hall, silhouetted against the outside light as they convene to discuss the Palestinian issue, the year before the founding of Israel. Even the nearby Sofar train station, now defunct, features in Young's work, in a scene of passengers crowded on a platform. Lebanon's first railway track was completed in the late 19th century to ferry people and goods between Beirut and Damascus. The exhibition also includes an old train schedule, old posters and vintage postcards.

By re-opening the Sofar hotel to the public, the exhibition's organizers are seeking to give new life to the historic building, turning it into a space for art and education. The show, which runs to October 14, is also to include music and dance performances, as well as workshops for children and art students. During his time in Lebanon, Young has worked on other similar projects. In 2014, he exhibited work at the Rose House, an Ottoman-era mansion now surrounded by new apartment blocks, perched above the Beirut seafront. In a tiny multi-confessional country where accounts of the 15-year war are still deeply divisive, Young's work seeks to preserve collective memory. "The people of Lebanon are cut off from their history," he says, partly due to "rampant modern development and the unwillingness to perhaps face the past." Yet conserving the past is crucial, says Young, who was invited to become an artist-in-residence by one of the hotel's owners, Roderick Sursock Cochrane. "Memories and cultural roots give you a sense of identity," he adds. — AFP



British painter Tom Young poses next to one of his paintings.

The Spanish town that wants to shed

In a remote corner of northwestern Spain, a small town has set itself the ultimate weight loss challenge: by early 2020, its residents must shed 100,000 kilos (220,500 pounds). Gone are bacon and fried calamari from the diets of thousands of residents in Naron who are taking to sport again as part of a slimming program that kicked off in January. "In the 21st century, people forget they're made to walk," says Carlos Pineiro, the 63-year-old family doctor behind the program, which has the support of the town council.

No more tripe

Pineiro often swaps his practice for the local wooded park where he helps dozens of others warm up and exercise. Conrado Vilela Villamar, a 65-year-old former crane operator, is one of Pineiro's regulars. "In Spain where people say that you can eat everything in the pig, from the tip of the tail to the tip of the nose, the first food I stripped from my diet are tripe, pork belly and cold cuts," he says. Perched on the Atlantic coast of the Galicia region, the 40,000-strong town counts 9,000 overweight residents and another 3,000 who suffer from obesity, Pineiro says.

Known for its gastronomy and often gargantuan dishes, Galicia is the region in Spain with the most overweight people, according to a study by the Spanish Society of Cardiology. "The rainy weather means people stay at home a lot with a very big daily ingestion of calories," says Pineiro. More than 4,000 residents—or a tenth of the population—have joined the project. To show their support, the mayor, Marian Ferreiro, and her municipal councilors weighed themselves together in public on giant scales.

The program, drawn up by local doctors, offers personalized diets and physical activity adapted to those who adhere. Every now and then, they come to the town's health centres to weigh themselves. "I walk with friends including a woman who is 80 or so, who holds on to my arm," says Maria Teresa Rodriguez, 55. "In March, I weighed 82 kilos, now 70," she adds, beaming, standing on the scales. Every day, she walks or does gymnastics for an hour and a half, and has started dancing on Fridays since her "legs no longer hurt." In the town, 18 restaurants now offer healthier dishes by promoting an Atlantic-style diet full of seafood. "I replace salt with algae, fish infusions or a simple dehydrated mussel, and butter with virgin olive oil," says Diego Platas, a 37-year-old restaurant owner as he cooks a local mackerel.

'I pedal while reading'

Earlier this month, the World Health Organization warned that obesity and the growing proportion of people who are



Diego Platas, owner of a restaurant who offers healthier dishes promoting an Atlantic-style diet poses in Naron.



Pupil ride stationary bicycles for an activity called 'I pedal while reading' at the Jorge Juan school in Naron.

overweight risked reversing the general trend of rising life expectancy in Europe. In Spain, the topic regularly comes up. An interview with a 34-year-old patient in eastern Spain who weighs 385 kilos recently made headlines. "It's not at all easy to convince adults" to change their lifestyle, says Pineiro, whose own family history has been blighted by genetic cardiovascular illness, albeit not linked to weight. "Some say: 'the last thing I need is for the doctor to tell me what I must do'."

He is more hopeful that children will catch on. At the Jorge Juan school in Naron, for instance, pupils are being encouraged to live a healthy lifestyle in a pilot program in the town. During recess, "we go out to the seaside promenade" with the youngsters, says Maria Jose Cazorla, a 55-year-old teacher, who has lost 14 kilos in a year. The school's 224 students are given the option of doing sport for one hour every day and those who are reticent can ride an exercise bike for an activity called "I pedal while reading."

Those who live nearby are encouraged to walk or cycle to school, or ride scooters, wearing special electronic bracelets that let parents know when they have arrived. The slogan "get addicted to fruit" adorns the walls of the school where fruit is given out every morning. But "we don't ever talk about weight directly" to the children, which "would have a stigmatizing effect," says Pineiro. Beyond the 100,000-kilo weight loss challenge, he hopes residents will adopt "a healthy lifestyle to put a brake on chronic illness", which would also reduce health spending. — AFP



Doctor Carlos Pineiro weighs a woman at the town's health center in Naron.

The End of Plastic: Eco-fashion becomes catwalk reality

It may have been a long time coming, but eco-fashion is no longer a hippie pipe dream. Biker jackets made from pineapple leaves and leather tanned with olive extract rather than hugely polluting chemicals are now within reach, experts say. Everyone from young avant garde designers to the big-name brands are racing to hop on the bandwagon, with trainers with soles made from recycled plastic bottles already selling by the million. Last year alone Adidas sold one million of its Parley trainers—made from plastic fished from the ocean—and the German sportswear giant is ramping up production of a range of similarly recycled styles.

And on Wednesday Yolanda Zobel, the new designer at the futuristic French brand Courreges, did the “unthinkable” and declared that she was doing away with the space-age vinyl that has been the label’s stock and trade since the 1960s. After a final numbered capsule collection called “Fin de Plastique” (The End of Plastic) that will count down its stocks of vinyl, the German will try to source sustainable or recycled versions of the shiny fabric. “There’s no better world coming if we don’t take actions today,” Zobel said. Attitudes to eco-fashion have “totally changed in the last few years”, said Marina Coutelan, who helps run Premiere Vision, a hugely influential twice-yearly trade fair in Paris where the movers and shakers of the fashion industry flock in search of new materials and ideas.

Millennials driving change

With the millennials (those born between 1980 and 2000) now beginning to call the shots in the fashion industry, “we are seeing lots of trendy products from sustainable materials because they have grown up with the idea that we need to be eco-responsible”, Coutelan told AFP. A case in point are rising stars Rushemy Botter and Lisi Herrebrugh, the Dutch pair who have just been headhunted to take over the Nina Ricci Paris fashion house. “Sustainable fashion was always talked about,” said 28-year-old Herrebrugh. “Now it is something we can see.”

Their own Botter brand makes hats, scarves and jackets from



Visitors look at an exhibition area at the “Premiere Vision Paris”, a fair dedicated to the industries supplying materials and services for the fashion and luxury industries, at the Parc des Expositions convention center in Villepinte, north of Paris. — AFP

recycled plastic bags and bottles often found in the sea—a cause dear to Botter, who was born on the Caribbean island of Curacao. High street chains may still be obsessed with fast, throwaway fashion, but luxury brands are leading the way in trying to rethink the business, said Coutelan. She points to the French giant Kering, which owns Gucci, Saint Laurent, Balenciaga and Alexander McQueen among others, as one of the pioneers of sustainability.

Second biggest polluter

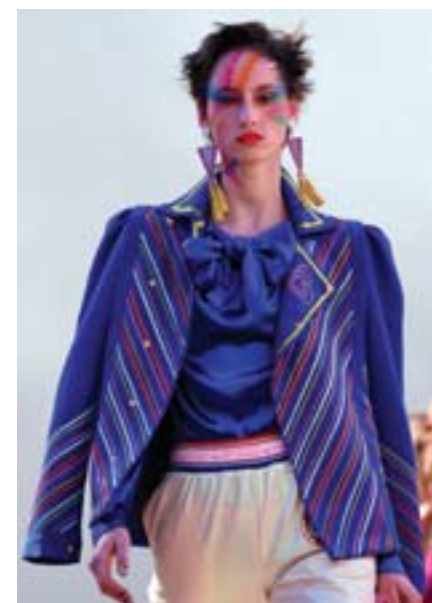
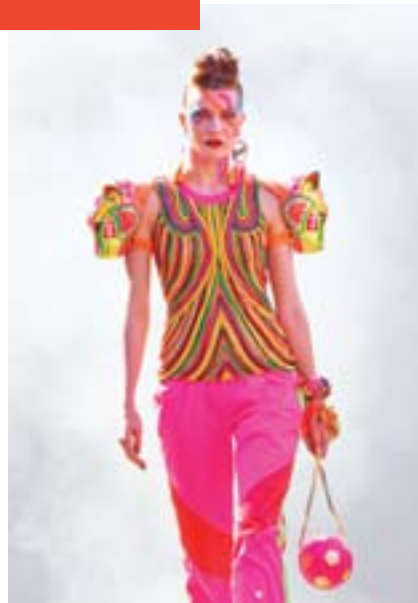
“It has reduced its environmental impact by a quarter and hopes to cut it by 40 percent by 2025,” she said. Even so, fashion is still by some measures the second most polluting industry the world. Kering until recently owned a 50 percent stake in Stella McCartney, the label that has pushed the ethical and environmen-

tal envelope the furthest, refusing to use fur, leather or feathers. The British designer uses recycled wool and polyester made from plastic water bottles, and intends to stop using “virgin” nylon entirely within two years and new polyester by 2025. Invitations for her Paris fashion week show on Monday proclaim that “Green is the new black” and feature a new cartoon where she stars with Minnie The Minx in a story extolling the virtues of regenerated cashmere.

McCartney told AFP that she would like to go faster but “the technology we need to reach this point is not yet available in a sustainable and circular way.” Campaigners say there are multiple ways to make sustainable clothes. The highly-rated young French designer Marine Serre is an often brilliant upcycler—turning old bed covers into evening gowns in her latest Paris fashion week show Tuesday. Meanwhile, the Canadian Marie-Eve Lecavalier has made a name for herself with leather knitwear made from left-over ends rejected by luxury brands. “It takes a lot of work but the result is great. In North America people waste so much. We have to find another way,” she told AFP.

With tanning one of the world’s dirtiest trades, leather alternatives like Pinatex, which is made from the fibres of pineapple leaves but is equally supple and strong, are gaining ground. Hugo Boss has already made trainers and Lancel bags from the material, which is being marketed by the British firm Ananas Anam that works with farmers’ cooperatives in the Philippines. The German group Wet Green has developed a potentially revolutionary line called Olivenleder, biodegradable leathers tanned with an agent made from olive fibres. It is so safe “you can even eat it”, joked spokesman Thomas Lamparter. For Chantal Malingrey, of Premiere Vision, wholly sustainable fashion “is not yet the norm”. But such is the pace of innovation, she insisted, that the trend is “irreversible”. — AFP

Paris Fashion Week



Lifestyle | Fashion



Models present creations by Manish Arora during the Spring-Summer 2019 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show in Paris yesterday. — AFP photos



Models present creations by Rochas during the Spring-Summer 2019 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show in Paris.



A bright, lively minestrone can be made with a slow cooker

Creating anything garden-fresh in a slow cooker is a tall order, but we were willing to try to beat the odds and develop a recipe for a bright, lively tasting minestrone that married a flavorful tomato broth with fresh vegetables, beans, and pasta.

The base of our soup would be our broth, and after microwaving the aromatics we added broth and canned tomato sauce along with carrots and dried beans—both of which could sustain a long stay in a slow cooker.

Sliced zucchini and chopped chard were simply added during the last 20 minutes of cooking, and the precooked pasta was stirred in at the end. Serve with crusty bread to dip into the broth.

GARDEN MINESTRONE

Servings: 6-8

Start to finish: 8 to 10 hours on high

Slow cooker size: 4 to 7 quarts

1 onion, chopped fine

4 garlic cloves, minced

1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon extra-virgin

olive oil, plus extra for serving

1 1/2 teaspoons minced fresh oregano or

1/2 teaspoon dried

1/8 teaspoon red pepper flakes

8 cups chicken or vegetable broth

1 (15-ounce) can tomato sauce

1 cup dried great Northern or cannellini

beans, picked over and rinsed

2 carrots, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch pieces

1/2 cup small pasta, such as ditalini, tubetini, or elbow macaroni

Salt and pepper

1 zucchini, quartered lengthwise and sliced 1/4 inch thick

8 ounces Swiss chard, stemmed and sliced 1/2 inch thick

1/2 cup chopped fresh basil

Grated Parmesan cheese

Preparation

Microwave onion, garlic, 1 tablespoon oil, oregano, and pepper flakes in bowl, stirring occasionally, until onion is softened, about 5 minutes; transfer to slow cooker. Stir in broth, tomato sauce, beans, and carrots. Cover and cook until beans are tender, 8 to 10 hours on high.

Meanwhile, bring 2 quarts water to boil in large saucepan. Add pasta and 1 1/2 teaspoons salt and cook, stirring often, until al dente. Drain pasta, rinse with cold water, then toss with remaining 1 teaspoon oil in bowl; set aside.

Stir zucchini and chard into soup, cover, and cook on high until tender, 20 to 30 minutes. Stir in pasta and let sit until heated through, about 5 minutes. Stir in basil and season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve, passing Parmesan and extra oil separately.

Nutrition information per serving:

224 calories; 46 calories from fat; 5 g fat (1 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 1 mg cholesterol; 601 mg sodium; 34 g carbohydrate; 6 g fiber; 5 g sugar; 11 g protein.



Coconut chicken curry recipe

INGREDIENTS:

2 pound boneless skinless chicken breast cut into small bite size pieces, about 1
1 tablespoon curry powder
1 tablespoon peanut oil
2 pieces heads broccoli separated into bit size
2 cloves garlic minced
1 teaspoon fresh ginger grated
1 can coconut milk
3 tablespoons red curry paste
½ tablespoon cornstarch dissolved in 2 tablespoons cold water

INSTRUCTIONS:

In a medium size pan over medium-high heat, add

peanut oil. Toss the chicken with the curry powder and saute until cooked, about 5-8 minutes. Remove from pan and set aside.

In the same pan add more oil if needed and saute the broccoli, garlic and ginger. After a few minutes, add the coconut milk and let simmer for 5-8 minutes. The broccoli should soften but still be tender-crisp. Add the curry paste to the pan and stir it until it combines with the coconut milk. Slide back in the chicken and any juices. Bring to a slight boil and add the cornstarch. Boil for about a minute, then reduce heat and let cool slightly (about another 2 to three minutes). Sauce will thicken as the mixture cools. Watch it closely, you do not want it to get to thick! Serve over white or brown rice.



Go for the glow: A guide to Mother Nature's light shows

The natural world is full of wonders, but is there anything more mesmerizing than things that glow? Mother Nature adds this touch of whimsy to the environment in many different forms - animals, plants, fungi and celestial phenomena - and in many different places. You just have to know where to look.



Waitomo Caves,
New Zealand



The only way into Komodo National Park is by boat.

No matter where you are, you're probably close to some of these sparklers, so here's a round-up of our favourite places to go for the glow.

Waitomo Caves, New Zealand

One of the most iconic examples of bioluminescence, the otherworldly glowworms of New Zealand's Waitomo Caves make even the most experienced naturalists stop in their tracks. In a striking display, the worms dangle from stalactites reaching down from the caves' ceiling, blanketing the surface in a bright blue glow.

Vieques, Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is home to three bioluminescent bays, the most spectacular of which is Mosquito Bay on Vieques, a small island off the east coast. Mosquito Bay has long held the title of the brightest bioluminescent spot in the world, and for good reason - millions of single-celled organisms called dinoflagellates glow bright blue



Light-emitting mushrooms of Hachijo-jima, Japan

when disturbed, creating a mind-blowing spectacle for those who venture out on the water via kayak. Watch fish jet out from under your boat like shooting stars, and elect for a glass-bottomed kayak to pretend you are in warp drive as you glide across the surface. Note that the phenomenon is notoriously difficult to capture on camera, so just enjoy the magic instead.

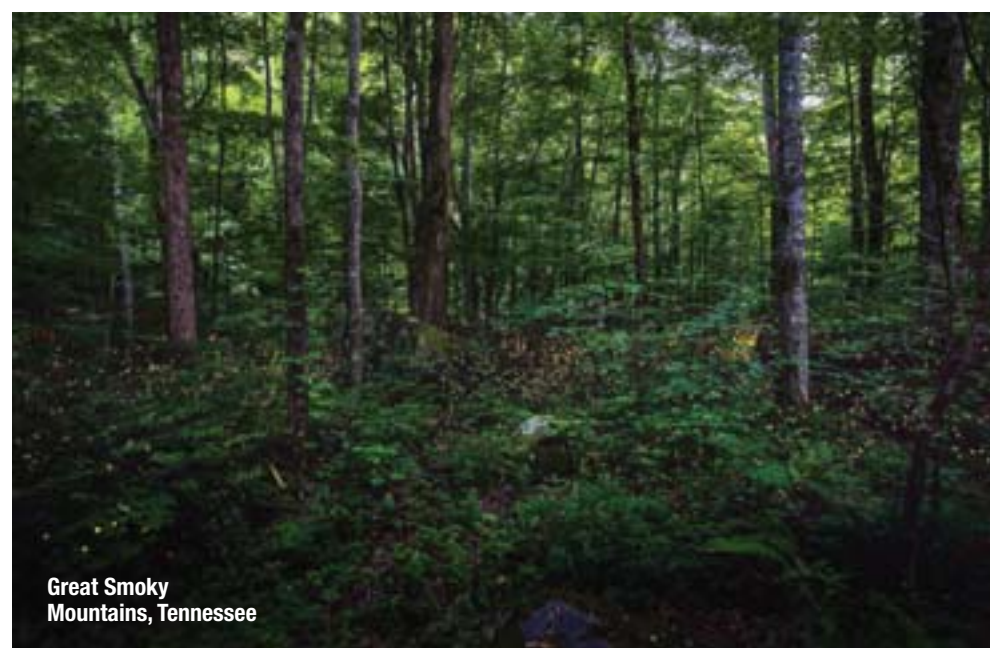
The glow was somewhat dimmed after Hurricane Maria, but the sparkling waters have bounced back to pre-hurricane levels.

Great Smoky Mountains, Tennessee

You can spot fireflies in humid regions around the world. However, the Smoky Mountains are home to 19 different species of them, including the synchronous firefly. As one would expect given the name, these blinking bugs have a little trick up their sleeves - for a two-week period from late May to mid-June, they flick on and off in unison.



Aurora borealis, Kiruna, Swedish Lapland



Great Smoky Mountains, Tennessee

Lifestyle | Travel



Atacama Desert, Chile

Dismals Canyon, Alabama

Tucked away in a rural corner of Northern Alabama you'll find Dismals Canyon, a National Natural Landmark home to the oldest accessible primeval forest east of the Mississippi River (i.e. a forest that has existed without any significant event, such as a fire or storm, affecting its growth). The canyon is a twisting ravine full of majestic flora and an array of wildlife, including the quirkily named Dismalites - glowworms. These tiny worms line the moss-covered rocks of the canyon, and when night falls, they glitter blue in the darkness.

Hachijo-jima, Japan

Glowing animals aren't the only ones to shine - the bioluminescent mushrooms on Japan's island Hachijo-jima make you feel like you are Alice in Wonderland. During the rainy season (which lasts from May to September), over seven different species light up the island's forest floor. Hit the hiking trails or head to the botanical gardens to get a closer look at the fluorescent fungi.

Other glows

While bioluminescence often has us looking at the ground, other glows require you to look to the sky. When nights are clear, turn your gaze upwards for some heavenly light shows that are hard to beat.

Lapland, Sweden

The landscape of Lapland, Sweden is impressive enough during the day, but head outside on a winter night for a psychedelic kaleidoscope of color. The shimmering ribbons of the aurora borealis light up the sky with shades of green, white and purple, and the phenomenon is extra beautiful thanks to the region's dry climate and lack of light pollution.

Atacama Desert, Chile

The Atacama has been a stargazer favorite for years - thanks to the region's arid climate and the constant Pacific winds, the skies here are among the world's clearest.

— www.lonleyplanet.com



Dismals Canyon, Alabama

Comic

WORD SEARCH

Christmas Tree

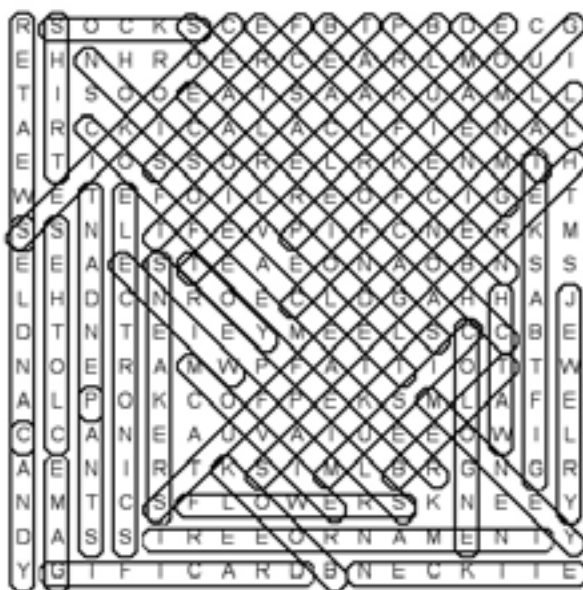
Find and circle all of the Christmas Tree words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 53 letters spell a secret message.

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

- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| ANGEL | GARLAND | REAL | TOPPER |
| ARTIFICIAL | GIFTS | SCENT | TRADITION |
| BRANCHES | GREEN | SETTING UP | TREE FARM |
| CANDY CANES | LARGE | SKIRT | TREE LOT |
| CELEBRATION | LIGHTS | SMALL | TRUNK |
| DECEMBER | NEEDLES | SPRUCE | WATER |
| DECORATE | ORNAMENTS | STAND | YEARLY |
| DECORATIONS | PINE | STAR | |
| FESTIVE | PRESENTS | TAKING DOWN | |
| FRESH CUT | PURCHASE | TINSEL | |

Yesterday's Solution

Christmas Gift Ideas



- | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|----------|----------------|
| BAKING | COOKIES | MOVIE | SNEAKERS |
| BELT | DOLL | MUSIC | SOCKS |
| BOOK | EARRINGS | NECKLACE | STUFFED ANIMAL |
| BRACELET | ELECTRONICS | NECKTIE | SWEATER |
| CANDLES | FLOWERS | PANTS | TELEVISION |
| CANDY | GAME | PENDANT | TOOL SET |
| CHOCOLATES | GIFT BASKET | PERFUME | TOY |
| CLOTHES | GIFT CARD | PLANT | TREE ORNAMENT |
| COFFEE MAKER | HERBAL TEAS | SCARF | WATCH |
| COFFEE MUG | JEWELRY | SHIRT | WINE |
| COLOGNE | MONEY | SLIPPERS | |

The hidden message is: CHRISTMAS CAKE

CROSSWORD 2020



ACROSS

- The rate at which energy is drawn from a source that produces a flow of electricity in a circuit.
- One of the three prairie provinces in central Canada.
- Lacking in light.
- Denoting a quantity consisting of 12 items or units.
- Of or relating to an oracle.
- One of the most common of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
- Water frozen in the solid state.
- Frivolous banter.
- (usually followed by 'of') Released from something onerous (especially an obligation or duty).
- A fine grained mineral having a soft soapy feel and consisting of hydrated magnesium silicate.
- A unit of length equal to 1760 yards.
- Something intended to deceive.
- Any of various spiny trees or shrubs of the genus Acacia.
- Capital and largest city and economic and cultural center of Portugal.
- Being nine more than ninety.
- Indian religious leader who founded Sikhism (1469-1538).
- East Indian tart yellow berrylike fruit.
- Support consisting of a branch or rod that serves as a resting place (especially for a bird).
- The 12th letter of the Greek alphabet.
- One of the 150 lyrical poems and prayers that comprise the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament.
- South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
- An accountant certified by the state.
- United States architect (born in China in 1917).
- Tropical American feather palm having a swollen spiny trunk and edible nuts.
- South American cavy.
- A lyric poem with complex stanza forms.
- The lean flesh of a fish similar to cod.
- A Mid-Atlantic state on the Atlantic.
- A port city of south central Ukraine on an arm of the Black Sea.
- Traditional code of the Japanese samurai which stressed courage and loyalty and self-discipline and simple living.
- Congenital absence of the heart (as in the development of some monsters).
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- Of or relating to the hands.
- Submerged aquatic plant having narrow leaves and small flowers.
- American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
- Extinct order of jawless vertebrates.
- Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on the sea or ships.
- Either of two folds of skin that can be moved to cover or open the eye.
- A great raja.
- Someone who is morally reprehensible.

DOWN

- An opening that permits escape or release.
- Any of various minerals consisting of hydrous silicates of aluminum or potassium etc. that crystallize in forms that allow perfect cleavage into very thin leaves.
- United States comedian and film actor (1880-1946).
- Characteristic of a mob.
- Of or relating to Aram or to its inhabitants or their culture or their language.
- An extreme state of adversity.
- In a cold and icy manner.
- A succession of notes forming a distinctive sequence.
- Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
- Capital and largest city of Iraq.
- A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
- English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
- Any of a group of heavenly spirits under the god Anu.
- Genus of sticky herbs with yellow flowers open in morning or evening but closed in bright light.
- Having three dimensions.
- Sole genus of the family Naiadaceae.
- A radioactive metallic element that is similar to tellurium and bismuth.
- A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
- A mass of ice and snow that permanently covers a large area of land (e.g., the polar regions or a mountain peak).
- God of love and erotic desire.
- A Kwa language spoken by the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria.
- Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
- Greek mythology.
- Having a smooth, gleaming surface.
- Any organic compound containing the group -CONH2.
- Any competition.
- A complex red organic pigment containing iron and other atoms to which oxygen binds.
- A ductile malleable reddish-brown corrosion-resistant diamagnetic metallic element.
- (of persons) Highest in rank or authority or office.
- Large and brightly colored handkerchief.
- A town in east central Missouri.
- Green algae common in freshwater lakes of limestone districts.
- An uproarious party.
- (Old Testament) Jonah did not wish to become a prophet so God caused a great storm to throw him overboard from a ship.
- An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
- The capital and largest city of Yemen.
- Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
- Being the one previously mentioned or spoken of.
- (Islam) The man who leads prayers in a mosque.
- Sound recording consisting of a disc with continuous grooves.
- The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
- (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
- North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
- The month following March and preceding May.
- A person who announces and plays popular recorded music.

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings

OWN MOVIES
ACTION

00:05 The Delta Force
02:10 Kung Fu Yoga
03:55 Captain America: The Winter Soldier
06:10 The Bodyguard
07:40 Deep Rising
09:25 San Andreas Quake
10:55 The Mask Of Zorro
13:15 Star Trek Beyond
15:20 The Admiral: Roaring Currents
17:35 Gun Shy
19:20 Heat
22:10 Under Siege 2
23:55 Training Day

ANIMAL PLANET HD

00:45 North Woods Law
01:40 Monsters Inside Me
02:35 My Cat From Hell
03:25 Whale Wars
04:15 North Woods Law
05:02 Wild Australia
05:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
06:36 Animal Airport
07:00 Animal Airport
07:25 The Animals' Guide To Survival
08:15 Animal Cops Phoenix
09:10 Whale Wars
10:05 North Woods Law
11:00 Wild Australia
11:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
12:50 My Cat From Hell
13:45 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
14:40 North Woods Law
15:35 Monsters Inside Me
16:30 The Animals' Guide To Survival
17:25 Animal Cops Phoenix
18:20 My Cat From Hell
19:15 Extinct Or Alive
21:05 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
22:00 Wildest Middle East
22:55 Monsters Inside Me
23:50 Pit Bulls & Parolees

crime & investigation network

00:00 Homicide Hunter
01:00 Homicide Hunter
01:55 Crimes That Shook Britain
02:50 Jo Frost On Britain's Killer Kids
03:45 Diabolical Women
04:30 Homicide: Hours To Kill
05:15 It Takes A Killer
06:00 Cold Case Files
07:00 It Takes A Killer
07:20 Homicide Hunter
08:50 Homicide: Hours To Kill
09:35 Cold Case Files
10:30 Evil Up Close
11:25 The First 48
12:20 Crimes That Shook Britain
13:15 Jo Frost On Britain's Killer Kids
14:10 Deadly Wives
15:05 Homicide: Hours To Kill
16:00 It Takes A Killer
16:30 It Takes A Killer
17:00 Homicide Hunter
18:00 Homicide Hunter
19:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
20:00 Jo Frost On Britain's Killer Kids
21:00 Deadly Wives
22:00 It Takes A Killer
22:30 It Takes A Killer
23:00 The First 48

COMEDY CENTRAL

00:00 Tosh.0
00:25 Graves
00:55 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
01:20 Nathan For You
01:45 Chris Ramsey Stand Up Central
02:10 Tosh.0

02:31 Graves
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:25 Graves
03:58 Graves
04:30 Takeshis Castle Thailand
04:55 Takeshis Castle Thailand
05:20 I Used To Be Fat
06:10 Disaster Date
06:35 Disaster Date
07:00 Disaster Date
07:25 Lip Sync Battle UK
07:50 Lip Sync Battle UK
08:15 I Used To Be Fat
09:05 Bondi Ink.
10:05 Snack Off
10:30 Snack Off
10:55 House Of Food
11:45 Lip Sync Battle UK
12:10 Disaster Date
12:35 Disaster Date
13:00 Disaster Date
13:25 Impractical Jokers
13:50 Impractical Jokers
14:15 Impractical Jokers
14:40 Key And Peele
15:05 Key And Peele
15:30 Key And Peele
15:55 Key And Peele
16:20 Key And Peele
16:45 Ridiculousness
17:08 Ridiculousness
17:31 Ridiculousness
17:55 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
19:00 Friends
19:25 Friends
19:50 Friends
20:12 Takeshis Castle Thailand
20:35 Takeshis Castle Thailand
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
22:00 Wanda Sykes: Tongue Untied
22:50 Tosh.0
23:15 Tosh.0
23:40 John Oliver's New York Stand Up Show

Discovery Family

00:30 Destroyed In Seconds
00:55 Destroyed In Seconds
01:20 How It's Made
01:45 How It's Made
02:10 My Cat From Hell
03:00 Tanked
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 Space Dealers
05:30 Secret Space Escapes
06:20 How It's Made
06:40 How It's Made
07:00 Destroyed In Seconds
07:25 Destroyed In Seconds
07:50 My Cat From Hell
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 Tanked
10:20 Ultimate Survival
11:10 Destroyed In Seconds
11:35 Destroyed In Seconds
12:00 How It's Made
12:25 How It's Made
12:50 Space Dealers
13:40 Secret Space Escapes
14:30 How It's Made
14:55 How It's Made
15:20 My Cat From Hell
16:10 Ultimate Survival
17:00 My Cat From Hell
17:50 Tanked
18:40 Destroyed In Seconds
19:05 Destroyed In Seconds
19:30 Ultimate Ninja Challenge
20:20 The Carbonaro Effect
20:45 The Carbonaro Effect
21:10 How It's Made
21:35 How It's Made
22:00 Ultimate Survival
22:50 Ultimate Ninja Challenge
23:40 The Carbonaro Effect

ID

00:45 Twisted Sisters
01:40 The Killer Beside Me
02:35 Kiss Of Death
03:30 Murder Comes To Town
04:25 Murder Chose Me
05:20 Murder Calls

06:10 I Almost Got Away With It
07:00 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
07:25 I Am Homicide
08:15 Disappeared
09:10 Pandora's Box: Unleashing Evil
10:05 Murder Calls
11:00 Murder Calls
11:55 I Am Homicide
12:50 I Almost Got Away With It
13:45 Murder Chose Me
14:40 Murder Calls
15:35 Murder Comes To Town
16:30 I Am Homicide
17:25 Disappeared
18:20 I Almost Got Away With It
19:15 Murder Chose Me
20:10 Murder Calls
21:05 Murder In The Heartland
22:00 Murder Among Friends
22:55 Murder By Numbers
23:50 Twisted Sisters

Disney Channel HD

00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
00:50 Evermoor Chronicles
01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:55 Hank Zipzer
03:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
03:20 Hank Zipzer
03:45 Alex & Co.
04:35 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
05:25 Binny And The Ghost
05:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
06:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
06:25 Tangled: The Series
06:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
06:55 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
07:20 Elena Of Avalor
07:45 K.C. Undercover
08:10 Bunk'd
08:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
09:25 Tangled: The Series
10:15 Bizaardvark
11:05 Liv And Maddie
11:55 K.C. Undercover
12:45 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
13:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
14:00 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
14:15 Bunk'd
14:40 K.C. Undercover
15:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
15:10 Kitty Is Not A Cat
15:35 Elena Of Avalor
16:00 Tangled: The Series
16:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
16:50 Raven's Home
17:15 K.C. Undercover
17:40 Raven's Home
18:05 K.C. Undercover
18:30 Bunk'd
18:55 Descendants Wicked World
19:00 Raven's Home
19:25 Liv And Maddie
19:50 K.C. Undercover
20:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
20:20 Tangled: The Series
20:45 Bizaardvark
21:10 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
21:35 Stuck In The Middle
22:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
22:50 Lolirock
23:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:35 Binny And The Ghost

Discovery Channel HD

00:15 Street Outlaws
01:05 Salvage Hunters
01:50 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
02:35 Telescope
03:20 Street Outlaws
04:05 Alaska: Battle On The Bay
04:50 Dirty Jobs
05:35 Storage Hunters
06:00 Beetle Crisis
06:23 Container Wars
06:45 Storage Hunters
07:10 How Do They Do It?
07:35 Alaska: Battle On The Bay
08:20 Beetle Crisis
08:45 Container Wars
09:10 Dirty Jobs
09:55 Salvage Hunters
10:45 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
11:30 Telescope
12:20 Beetle Crisis
12:43 Container Wars
13:05 Storage Hunters
13:30 How Do They Do It?
13:55 Dirty Jobs
14:40 Street Outlaws
15:30 Salvage Hunters
16:15 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
17:05 Telescope
17:50 Extreme Engineering
18:40 Impossible Engineering
19:25 Street Outlaws
21:00 Diesel Brothers
21:50 Street Outlaws: No Prep Kings
23:30 Outback Truckers

Disney Junior

00:10 Minnie's Bow-Toons
00:15 Zou
00:30 Henry Hugglemonster

01:00 PJ Masks
01:50 The Hive
02:00 Zou
02:30 Henry Hugglemonster
03:20 The Hive
03:40 Zou
04:25 The Hive
04:35 The Hive
04:45 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 The Hive
05:45 PJ Masks
07:00 Muppet Babies
07:15 Puppy Dog Pals
07:35 PJ Masks
07:55 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
08:30 Vampirina
09:00 Sofia The First
09:30 Elena Of Avalor
10:00 Puppy Dog Pals
11:00 Muppet Babies
11:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
12:40 PJ Masks
13:55 Muppet Babies Show And Tell
14:00 Claude
14:20 Claude
14:40 Trulli Tales
15:30 Vampirina
16:25 Muppet Babies Show And Tell
16:30 Muppet Babies
17:00 Claude
17:30 Puppy Dog Pals
18:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
18:30 Vampirina
18:45 Vampirina
19:00 PJ Masks
19:15 PJ Masks
19:30 The Lion Guard
20:00 Sofia The First
20:30 Elena Of Avalor
21:00 Puppy Dog Pals
21:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
22:00 Vampirina
22:40 PJ Masks
23:15 The Lion Guard
23:45 Sofia The First

Discovery Channel HD

00:15 Street Outlaws
01:05 Salvage Hunters
01:50 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
02:35 Telescope
03:20 Street Outlaws
04:05 Alaska: Battle On The Bay
04:50 Dirty Jobs
05:35 Storage Hunters
06:00 Beetle Crisis
06:23 Container Wars
06:45 Storage Hunters
07:10 How Do They Do It?
07:35 Alaska: Battle On The Bay
08:20 Beetle Crisis
08:45 Container Wars
09:10 Dirty Jobs
09:55 Salvage Hunters
10:45 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
11:30 Telescope
12:20 Beetle Crisis
12:43 Container Wars
13:05 Storage Hunters
13:30 How Do They Do It?
13:55 Dirty Jobs
14:40 Street Outlaws
15:30 Salvage Hunters
16:15 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
17:05 Telescope
17:50 Extreme Engineering
18:40 Impossible Engineering
19:25 Street Outlaws
21:00 Diesel Brothers
21:50 Street Outlaws: No Prep Kings
23:30 Outback Truckers

OWN SERIES HD

00:05 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
00:30 Boyster
00:55 Boyster
01:20 Counterfeit Cat
01:45 Counterfeit Cat

02:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:00 Boyster
03:20 Boyster
03:45 Dude That's My Ghost
04:35 Counterfeit Cat
05:00 Guardians Of The Galaxy
05:29 Marvel's Avengers Assemble
06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:29 Big Hero 6 The Series
07:00 Milo Murphy's Law
07:29 Big City Greens
08:00 Phineas And Ferb
09:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
10:00 Counterfeit Cat
11:00 Boyster
11:29 Boyster
12:00 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
13:00 Phineas And Ferb
14:00 Disney 11
14:29 Lab Rats
15:00 Right Now Kapow
15:29 Lab Rats
16:00 Supa Strikas
16:29 Milo Murphy's Law
17:00 Big City Greens
17:15 Big City Greens
17:29 Right Now Kapow
18:00 Disney 11
18:29 Lab Rats
19:00 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
19:29 Kickin' It
20:00 Milo Murphy's Law
20:29 Big City Greens
20:45 Big City Greens
21:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
21:29 Star Wars Rebels
22:00 DuckTales
22:25 Big Hero 6 The Series
22:50 Dude That's My Ghost
23:40 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja

E! HD

00:05 Model Squad
01:50 E! News
02:50 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
04:35 WAGs
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
06:55 E! News Middle East
07:10 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
08:10 E! News: Daily Pop
09:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
12:00 E! News Middle East
12:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:00 E! News Middle East
15:15 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Model Squad
19:00 E! News
20:00 Celebrity Style Story
20:30 Ashlee+evan
21:30 Ashlee+evan
22:00 Life Of Kylie
22:30 Life Of Kylie
23:00 E! News Middle East
23:15 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry

OWN MOVIES HD

00:30 Pete's Dragon
02:30 The Little Mermaid: Ariel's Beginning
04:00 George Of The Jungle
06:00 Pete's Dragon
08:00 Toy Story
09:45 Chicken Little
11:15 George Of The Jungle
13:00 Monsters University
15:00 Cars
17:00 The Lone Ranger
19:30 The Parent Trap
21:45 Monsters University
23:45 Cars

OWN SERIES HD

00:35 Supernatural
01:20 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
02:05 The Flash
02:50 Lethal Weapon
03:40 Marvel's Cloak & Dagger

04:25 Marvel's Cloak & Dagger
05:10 The Resident
06:00 The Resident
06:50 Supergirl
07:35 Good Morning America
09:00 The View
10:00 Supernatural
11:00 The Flash
11:45 Supergirl
12:30 The Resident
13:20 The Resident
14:10 Lethal Weapon
15:00 The View
16:00 Live Good Morning America
18:00 Supergirl
19:00 The Flash
20:00 The Resident
21:00 Survivor: David vs Goliath
23:00 WWE Experience

OWN MOVIES HD
COMEDY

01:30 Hostile Hostages
03:30 Love On The Slopes
05:15 Angus Thongs And Perfect Snogging
07:15 Galaxy Quest
09:15 Love On The Slopes
11:00 Angus Thongs And Perfect Snogging
13:00 Galaxy Quest
15:00 Little Loopers
16:45 Hot Rod
18:30 Fan Girl
20:15 Coyote Ugly
22:15 The Legend Of Barney Thomson

OWN MOVIES HD
KIDS

01:00 Operation Arctic
02:35 The Wheelers
04:00 Free Birds
05:25 Dinofroz The Origin
06:55 Quest For A Heart
08:25 The Kids From 62-F
10:20 Bunny Tales
11:40 Swan Princess: Royally Undercover
13:05 Operation Arctic
14:40 The Wheelers
16:05 The Fairy Tales Tree
17:25 Bunny Tales
18:45 The Adventure Club
20:15 A Town Called Panic
21:35 The Fairy Tales Tree
22:55 The Kids From 62-F

OWN MOVIES HD

00:00 The Accused
01:50 Murder Of A Cat
03:35 Tea With Mussolini
05:35 Around The World In 80 Days
07:35 Madhouse
09:20 The Great Wall
11:15 Diary Of A Wimpy Kid: Dog Days
13:00 Dragonheart
14:50 Eagle Eye
16:50 Dude, Where's My Car?
18:25 Armored
20:00 Signs
22:00 The Infiltrator

Discovery Science

00:05 Food Factory USA
00:30 Kings Of Construction
01:20 Mythbusters
02:10 Da Vinci's Machines
03:00 How It's Made
03:24 How It's Made
03:48 Prototype This
04:36 Kings Of Construction
05:24 How Do They Do It?
05:48 Food Factory USA
06:12 Mythbusters
07:00 How Do They Do It?
07:26 How It's Made
07:50 How It's Made
08:14 Kings Of Construction
09:02 Da Vinci's Machines
09:50 How Do They Do It?
10:14 Food Factory USA

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may have heard, "You can't have it all." This is not true for you, Aries. You can "bring home the bacon and cook it up in the pan" and still feel like enjoying a night on the town. Keep your work day stress-free by handling crises with humor. Be sure to take a break today and step out for a breath of fresh air. Save your energy to enjoy time with your friends and family this evening.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are focused and very goal oriented today. It is as if you are on a mission and will let nothing stand in your way. You are motivated and determined to fix all that is around you this not just as you think it should be. You want things your way and refuse to settle for less. This day reveals itself to be a perfect time to spend with a lover or someone close to you as you are feeling a desire to be needed and admired. You will find this will fulfill your needs and leave you with a sense of completion. Your most productive time today will be spent at home.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may find confrontation is right around the corner. Your values don't seem to be the same as someone you find yourself bumping heads with. You may find a lack of respect for this person and they seem to feel the same way about you. Remember, that is why they make chocolate and vanilla. Not everyone's taste is the same and this applies to people's beliefs as well. Sometimes you may find it is best to agree to disagree and today is just one of those days. You may find yourself at a standstill with this person. Do not bother to fight this battle.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You not only feel as if you need to be respected. You demand it and will not settle for anything less. This is an emotional time for you. You have no room in your life for anyone you feel is disrespecting you in any way. You have worked hard and treat others as you want to be treated. You are beginning to discover not all in your circle have your best interest at heart. It may be time to tighten that circle, Cancer. You are able to work with haste and without emotion when it comes to dealing with anyone you feel as wronged you. You desire a life of peace and will settle for nothing less. You are able to use your abundance of common sense to deal with any drama that arises today.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Close relationships are where your focus is placed now. As independent as you seem to appear, you need to feel the love and support of those closest to you. This alone makes your life feel complete. You are beginning to truly feel needed and cared for. You may feel as if a fresh start is what you need. You are beginning to develop new habit patterns. Out with the old and in with the new. Make sure new habits are good ones. These will set the tone for years to come. The new you is the best you.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

There is a problem out there that can be solved with a simple new product. And you are capable of creating that product. Put your inventive mind to work. Look around and see what is needed. Then set about to provide it. The solution will bring you more than financial success. It will provide the satisfaction of knowing you made someone's life easier. You are a kind friend and a good person.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You are always quick to gather all the information possible on new friends and new acquaintances. You have been known to be quite the detective. Today finds you fascinated with gaining all the information and insight you can. But, your focus today is on you! You desire to have a better self-understanding. What exactly led you down the path you took. You have put some thought into this before, but today you are determined to figure it out. Finding yourself is a mission you are on. You not only want to know who you really are but what exactly caused you to be this way, Libra? The answers are held in your heart. Today could be a great day to make amends.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You have learned to appreciate and love yourself and all you stand for. It is rare that you are not your own worst critic but today, through clear eyes, you are able to appreciate who you are and what you have accomplished. You exude self-respect and self-confidence. Those around you sense this and are drawn to you today. You are able to truly identify all in your life that is important and of lasting value. You feel driven and motivated and can offer much assistance to friends and family today, you feel deep connections with your family today and place much value on these relationships. You may find that today is a great day to reach out to someone close to you that you have lost touch with. Reconnect with this someone special. Today is a great day to work towards accomplishing this goal.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You have begun to search for beauty in all that surrounds you. Life takes on a different meaning to you. You seem to see a new depth to the meaning of life. Your ability to analyze your situation and the situations of others are at high point. You are able to really get to the root of all problems that present themselves and provide those around you with solutions. You are able to express yourself and communicate with ease. A long deep conversation with someone may be just what you need to stay grounded and focused. This may be a great time to refrain from spending and beginning focusing your goals on a budget and organizing your finances.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Reach for the stars. You feel as though you are invincible. Today that may be true. If it can go your way, it does. What a wonderful feeling! You are full of optimism and faith. Your self-confidence is at an all-time high. You may desire to make a change in your living situation. Leave this decision for a later date when your head comes down from the clouds.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may be faced with a difficult decision this week. You may feel led to pass up a very profitable career opportunity because it truly conflicts with your morals and values. This is a road to success you may choose to take a detour around. The easy way is not always the right way. You may find in the long run you will reap great reward from doing the right thing.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Expect to feel much admiration and recognition from those close to you today. You may feel support and able to relate to anyone and any situation. You may find yourself to be the center of attention in a social setting today. It seems everyone is able to relate to you and you may find that someone turns to you for help today. Feel flattered that you are trusted with such a delicate situation that your peer is experiencing. Through sharing life experiences of your own you may be able to assist this person and appreciated your own hardships as lessons learned. This is a great time of reflection in your life, Pisces, live, learn, and love.

COUNTRY CODES

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

Health

Too much screen time, too little horseplay for kids

PARIS: Only one in 20 kids in the United States meets guidelines on sleep, exercise and screen time, and nearly a third are outside recommendations for all three, according to a study published yesterday. On average, children aged eight to 11 spent 3.6 hours per day glued to a TV, mobile phone, tablet or computer screen, nearly double the suggested limit of two hours, researchers found.

Too little sleep and excess screen time were clearly linked to a drop off in cognitive skills, such as language ability, memory, and task completion, they reported in *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*. "We found that more than two hours of recreational screen time in children was associated with poorer cognitive development," said lead author Jeremy Walsh, a researcher at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute.

"Based on our findings, pediatricians, parents, educators and policymakers should promote limiting recreation screen time and prioritizing healthy sleep routines during childhood and adolescence." Walsh and his team looked at data-based on detailed questionnaires-for 4,520 children spread across 20 locations in the United States. They also tested the kids for six kinds of cognitive skills, adjusting the results for household income, puberty development and other factors that might affect performance.

The results were measured against the Canadian 24-hour Movement Guidelines for children. For sleep and exercise, the recommendations align with those of the World



PARIS: A file illustration picture shows the logo of social network Facebook displayed on a screen and reflected on a tablet in Paris.—AFP

Health Organization, but Canada is the first country to propose limits for time spent in front of a back-lit screen.

Distraction in the classroom

Nearly 30 percent of children failed to meet any of the recommendations, more than 40 percent met only one, a quarter met two, and only five percent conformed to all three. Half the kids were getting enough sleep, 37 percent remained within the screen-time limits, and only 18 percent met the physical activity recommendation. "The more individual recom-

mendations the child met, the better their cognition," the study concluded, noting that screen time was the most important factor.

In contrast to earlier research, lack of exercise did not correlate with poorer performance on the cognition tests. The strong link between time spent staring at a screen and brain function "potentially reflect the interruption of the stress-recovery cycle needed for growth in children," commented Eduardo Esteban Bustamante, an assistant professor at the University of Illinois' College of Applied Health Sciences who did not take part in the study.

"Each minute spent on screens necessarily displaces a minute from sleep." Scientists and educators have grown increasingly concerned that constant use of mobile phones from an early age may lead to problems ranging from addiction to attention deficit disorder. The vast majority of teachers in a recent survey said that smartphones had become a distraction in the classroom, eroding the ability of students to focus. France urges parents not to allow children under three to watch TV, and American pediatricians also favor a total ban on screen time until at least 18 months.—AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

248 33 199

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DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED

Consultant of General Surgery
Laprosopic and Bariatric Surgery



Academic Certificates – Training

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

Scope of clinical Practice.

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



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Canadian Board of Otolaryngology
Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.
Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons-Canada
A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases

- ◆ Diagnosis/ Treatment of General Ears, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatrics
- ◆ Minimally invasive Endoscopic sinus surgery including Balloon sinuplasty
- ◆ Minimally invasive Microscopic & Endoscopic Ear surgery
- ◆ Diagnosis & treatment of Otolaryngology and Audiology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
- ◆ Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
- ◆ Diagnosis & treatment of snoring & obstructive sleep apnea in clinic without surgery
- ◆ Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders.
- ◆ Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

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DR. FAHAD S BUHAIMED
Consultant Cosmetic Dermatologist & Hair Transplant, NY

ACADEMIC CERTIFICATES:

- ◆ Dermatology board certified.
- ◆ Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- ◆ Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- ◆ Reference reviewer of International Journal of Dermatology.

SPECIALIZED IN:

- ◆ Dermatology & Cosmetic Treatments.
- ◆ Laser Treatments.
- ◆ Hair Transplant & Restoration.
- ◆ Body & Face Contouring.
- ◆ Injectable Fillers & Botox.

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DR KHALED ALMERRI
Consultant interventional Cardiology
Department: Heart & Vascular Center

Specialized in:

- 1- Diagnostic and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty). Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4- Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6- Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring

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Dr Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj
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- ◆ Fellow of the European Board Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the British Laryngological Association
- ◆ Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the European Laryngological Society

Specialized in:

- ◆ Management of benign and malignant vocal cord lesions.
- ◆ Vocal cord augmentation.
- ◆ Treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
- ◆ Adenotonsillectomy using latest techniques.
- ◆ Thyroid surgery.
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- ◆ Treatment of vertigo.

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Scope of Clinical Practice:

- ◆ General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- ◆ Single Port Surgery
- ◆ Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, Including Colorectal Cancer
- ◆ Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- ◆ VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery
- ◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
- ◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass
- ◆ Transanal minimally Invasive surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

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

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Head of Cardiology departmenta
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- Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).

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Wataniya Airways	22 066 536	KLM	22425747
American Airlines	22087425	Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
	22087426	British Airways	22425635
Jet Airways	22924455	Air France	22430224

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 06 - 28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

BY DAY: Hot with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 35 km/h.

STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.
KUWAIT CITY	43 °C	32 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	44 °C	29 °C
ABDALY	44 °C	27 °C
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C
JAHRA	45 °C	30 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	41 °C	28 °C
SALMIYAH	39 °C	33 °C
AHMADI	40 °C	34 °C
NUWAISIB	42 °C	30 °C
WAFRA	44 °C	27 °C
SALMY	43 °C	29 °C

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

SFC. CHART 27/09/2018 1200 UTC

MSL Analysis (hPa)
Valid 1200 UTC 27 SEP 2018

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	09/28	Hot	44 °C	29 °C	NW	10 - 35 km/h
Saturday	09/29	Hot	42 °C	25 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 30 km/h
Sunday	09/30	Hot	42 °C	26 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 28 km/h
Monday	10/01	Hot	41 °C	24 °C	VRB-NW	06 - 26 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:20
Sunrise	05:40
Zuhr	11:39
Asr	15:04
Sunset	17:39
Isha	18:55

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	43 °C
MIN. Temp.	25 °C
MAX. RH	26 %
MIN. RH	07 %
MAX. Wind	N 32 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, Jabin Thomas S/o Thomas John, holder of Indian Passport No. N9722555, R/o Vipunayil J.J. Villa, Manjadi P.O., Thiruvalla, Pathanamthitta Dist., Kerala 689 105 and presently residing at Kuwait do hereby changed my name to Jabin Thomas John with immediate effect. (C 5422) 27-9-2018

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is

1889988

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

Business

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2018

39 Hong Kong banks hike lending rates for first time in 12 years



40 Averting trade war, Japan and US agree to seek pact



41 IMF bumps up Argentina bailout package to \$57 billion



BAHRAIN: In this file photo men work on an oil pump during a sandstorm in the desert oil fields of Sakhir, Bahrain.

Bahrain plans to approve VAT

Govt to submit VAT and pension reform bills

DUBAI: Bahrain plans to get structural reforms through parliament before a November election, including the introduction of value-added tax (VAT) and changes to the pension system, sources familiar with the matter said. The reforms are part of efforts to fix public finances hit hard by the drop in oil prices which also pushed Bahrain's dinar to its lowest in more than a decade. The move paves the way for an integrated program from Bahrain's wealthier neighbors which have said they will support its economic reforms and fiscal stability.

Bahrain will hold a parliamentary election on Nov. 24, the second ballot since 2011 when protesters took to the streets demanding more democracy. The vote comes as Bahrain struggles to cut its deficit and ease public anger over years of austerity. Parliament will hold an extraordinary session in October to approve the two laws, said the sources, who asked for anonymity as they are not authorized to speak to the media. The government communication office declined to comment.

Introducing VAT at a 5 percent rate was part

of a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) agreement in 2018, a big step for governments that have traditionally levied little tax and relied instead on oil revenues. So far, only Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have started implementing VAT, though the International Monetary Fund says all six GCC countries remain committed to it. Bahrain's finance minister said earlier this year the country planned to have completed preparatory work for the tax by the end of this year, without giving a firm date for when it would be launched.

The government is still seeking a deal with parliament on changes to the subsidy system. In August, it rejected a plan that it said would break spending caps. Bahrain's dinar recovered from 17-year lows and its bond prices rebounded in June, after its neighbors pledged to prevent its ballooning public debt from triggering a financial crisis. Fiscal steps already announced by the government would cut the deficit to 11 percent of gross domestic product in 2018 from 14 percent last year, an IMF official said in May.—Reuters

Business

Italy budget uncertainty returns to haunt Europe

Oil prices test four-year high as Iran sanctions loom

LONDON: Europe's share markets and the euro both took a tumble yesterday as a report that Italy's long-awaited budget was facing a delay compounded an already groggy global mood after the third US interest rate rise of the year. Italy's main Milan bourse slumped as much as 2 percent in early trading, with the country's main banks down even more as the country's borrowing costs hit a three-week high in the government bond markets.

Investors have been anxious about Italy's budget which some fear could lead to a blowout of the country's deficit, and put the coalition government on a collision course with the European Union. Italian Deputy Minister Luigi Di Maio confirmed that a cabinet meeting over budget targets was planned for later, dismissing a report in the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper which said it could be delayed.

But it couldn't soothe the markets, especially after the economy ministry was forced to deny its chief Giovanni Tria, an academic who doesn't belong to any one party, had threatened to resign. "It is very fluid and it is changing by the minute it seems," State Street Global Advisers' head of EMEA macro strategy Tim Graf said. "Even if things get resolved positively today, Italy is not a situation that is going to go away," he added, pointing to the still growing popularity of the country's fractious anti-establishment coalition government.

The strains weighed on the rest of Europe too. The STOXX 600 was down 0.5 percent while the euro skidded all the way down past \$1.17 in the currency market. That fall also gave the dollar a boost after it had only managed a lazy gain overnight after the Federal Reserve hiked US interest rates by another 25 basis points to a range of 2 percent to 2.25 percent. The dollar index which measures the greenback against a basket of currencies, was last up 0.4 percent to 94.529.

The index had scaled a 13-month high in mid-August, drawing safe-haven demand as trade tensions buffeted riskier emerging market currencies. The index has since fallen about 2.8 percent though as investors have become more nuanced in their views. The Australian dollar seen as a barometer of global investor risk appetite and Chinese demand for goods, fell 0.4 percent to \$0.7226, its lowest since Sept. 19 and not far off its 2-1/2 year lows of \$0.7085 hit earlier this month. The Fed still foresees another rate hike in December, three more next year, and one increase in 2020.

Oil pressure

In Asia, MSCI's index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan had ended lower. There were, however, pockets of resilience such as South Korea's Kospi, which hit three-month highs, as it resumed trade after a three-day public holiday. Japan's Nikkei briefly touched an eight-month high too



SHANGHAI: Investors monitor stock prices at a securities company in Shanghai.—AFP

signs the United States may not impose further tariffs on Japanese automotive products for now lifted carmakers, though the index eventually ended down 1.0 percent.

Asia had generally fared better than Wall Street, where the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.4 percent and the S&P 500 and Nasdaq had dropped 0.2 and 0.3 percent. The 10-year US Treasuries yield fell to 3.043 percent, from

Tuesday's four-month high of 3.113 percent when traders had been bracing for a more hawkish Fed message than it ended up delivering. The US central bank did drop a description of its policy stance as "accommodative" in its post meeting statement, but Fed Chairman Jerome Powell then downplayed the significance of the change saying in a news conference that policy was still generally accommodative.—Reuters

Saudi Arabia plans to build 'Riviera of the Middle East'

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) announced plans Wednesday for a luxury tourism destination on its northwestern coast, the latest in a series of mega projects as the oil-reliant kingdom seeks to diversify. The project called "Amaala" would be "a natural extension of the Mediterranean Sea, and dubbed the Riviera of the Middle East", the country's top sovereign wealth fund said in a statement released by the information ministry.

The development will feature hotels, private villas, an arts academy and a yacht club, PIF added. It did not reveal any timeframe or the size of the investment, saying only that the "initial funding for the project will be provided by PIF". Saudi Arabia has dazzled investors with plans for a series of "giga projects", funded in part by its sovereign wealth fund, but skeptics question their viability.

The kingdom has already unveiled blueprints to build NEOM, a mega project billed as a regional Silicon Valley, in addition to the Red Sea project, a reef-fringed resort destination—both worth hundreds of billions of dollars. "Amaala will sit alongside NEOM and the Red Sea project as part of the giga-projects investment portfolio, helping to... (support) economic diversification," PIF said.—AFP



KUWAIT: This photo shows an aerial view of Kuwait City.—Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait central bank keeps rates on hold after Fed hike

DUBAI: Kuwait's central bank decided to keep its key discount rate unchanged at 3.0 percent, it said on Wednesday. The decision followed the announcement of a 25 basis point interest rate hike by the US Federal Reserve. In contrast to the other rich Gulf Arab oil exporting states, which peg their currencies to the US dollar and have little room for an independent monetary policy, Kuwait manages its dinar against an undisclosed basket of cur-

rencies in which the dollar plays a major role.

This gives it more room to diverge from US policy if it believes domestic economic conditions warrant that. Three months ago, when the Fed last raised rates, the Kuwait central bank also kept its key rate unchanged. In a statement on Wednesday, central bank governor Mohammad al-Hashel said that instead of raising its discount rate, the bank would use other policy tools to manage the money market, such as issues of bonds and Islamic instruments, acceptance of term deposits from local banks, and direct interventions.

He noted that domestic banking credit was expanding only modestly because of tepid growth in the non-oil areas of the economy. Recent data has shown the central bank is able to maintain a stable margin between rates on dinar and dollar deposits in order to keep the local currency attractive to investors, and also a stable margin between banks' dinar loan and deposit rates, he added.—Reuters

Hong Kong banks hike lending rates for first time in 12 years

Chan urges investors to exercise caution in managing investment

HONG KONG: Three of Hong Kong's biggest banks raised their lending rates yesterday for the first time in 12 years, ending an age of cheap cash that could hit the city's famously red-hot property market. The announcement sparked a government warning about the effects on borrowers in the city, while the de facto central bank warned of "uncertainties." The moves by HSBC, Standard Chartered and Hang Seng Bank came after the Hong Kong Monetary Authority lifted its borrowing costs following an increase by the US Federal Reserve.

The HKMA is required to lift rates in line with the Fed owing to the dollar peg. HSBC and Hang Seng each boosted their lending rate 12.5 basis points to 5.125 percent, while Standard Chartered lifted its rate from 5.25 percent to 5.375 percent. "Today's change in rates marks the start of the normalization cycle for local interest rates and we believe Hong Kong is well prepared for the change," said Diana Cesar, HSBC's chief executive in Hong Kong.

More of the city's commercial banks are expected to hike their prime rates, meaning higher mortgage payments for loans that are linked to it. "The super-low interest rate environment in Hong Kong probably will finish. Going forward, interest rates will go up," said Hong Kong finance secretary Paul Chan. "Higher interest rates will add to the burden of homeowners with mortgages," Chan added, urging investors to "exercise caution in managing their investment and risks".

Prior to the rates hike Chan had written on

his blog that the property market had shown signs of cooling in recent weeks. Shares in Hong Kong property firms turned south yesterday, with Sun Hung Kai Properties, Sino Land and Country Garden all taking a hit.

Growth slowdown

The Federal Reserve raised the benchmark interest rate on Wednesday for the third time this year in a widely anticipated decision, citing the strong US economy and jobs market. After the HKMA raised interest rates to 2.5 percent, its chief executive Norman Chan warned the public to be "on high alert" over increases and to manage associated risks, adding that property and assets would be affected.

"The current global economic conditions and financial environment are full of uncertainties for Hong Kong," he said. Analyst Iris Pang said the small increment should not have a dramatic impact on existing mortgages but further hikes could affect those who have refinanced. "Those rates are really high and a bit of an increment can actually be the last straw," said Pang, greater China economist at ING Wholesale Banking in Hong Kong. It could also discourage those who have not yet jumped on the housing ladder, she added.

Marcos Chan, head of research at real estate services company CBRE for Hong Kong, Southern China and Taiwan, added that the higher burden on households could translate into more cautious consumption patterns for the rest of the year. The local economy "re-



HONG KONG: The local HSBC bank headquarters, background centre right, is seen beside the Standard Chartered bank building, background center, amongst other residential and commercial buildings in Hong Kong.—AFP

mains sound" but could suffer a slowdown in growth from other challenges including the escalating trade war between the US and China, he said. The hike in prime rates had been on the cards.

Despite a string of Fed and HKMA hikes over the past two years, commercial rates had remained low as banks had a vast well of cash in the city's banking system to tap. This kept

the crucial Hong Kong InterBank Rate (HIBOR) subdued, meaning it did not cost banks much to borrow. However, the HKMA has spent billions this year supporting the local currency—as it is required to—after it hit the bottom end of its permitted HK\$7.75–7.85 band against the US dollar. This soaked up that well of money, pushing up the HIBOR and therefore the burden on banks.—AFP

Saudi Arabia's legal revamp offers hope for cautious investors

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's first comprehensive bankruptcy law went into effect last month, one of many reforms to the legal system that economists say may be more important in the long run than high-profile privatizations. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 push to diversify the economy away from oil has grabbed attention for its big-ticket initiatives, such as a \$500 billion business zone and a plan, now shelved, to sell part of the state oil firm.

The legal reforms have attracted less media coverage because they are highly technical, but they are extensive, ranging from new laws to the creation of courts and training of judges, and they have accelerated over the past couple of years. The new bankruptcy law creates a clear way for struggling companies to obtain relief from creditors while they restructure—or for firms to be liquidated—and may free up billions of dollars now frozen in debt disputes.

There are still concerns about the legal system, highlighted by the detentions of top Saudi businessmen and officials in a corruption crackdown last year, but the reforms are changing the playing field for companies. "While the headline setting Vision

2030 continues to be the face of change in Saudi Arabia, the driving force behind it remains the tangible and impactful modifications done to local laws and regulations that drive investment," said Bruce McAlister, a general counsel for industrial conglomerate GE, a top foreign investor.

He cited the bankruptcy law, new laws on government-private sector partnerships, and rules allowing 100 percent foreign ownership of trading firms. "The legal reform process is progressing. It's a work in progress and it will take more time, but the environment is clearly changing," said Grahame Nelson, head of the Riyadh office of Al Tamimi & Co.

New foreign direct investment in Saudi Arabia totaled just \$1.4 billion in 2017, below smaller countries in the region such as Oman. Privately, businessmen have said that in addition to low oil prices, the unpredictable legal system swayed their decisions.

Sharia compliant

For decades, Saudi Arabia did little to develop its commercial law because it depended heavily on state-led investment in the oil industry. Also, the legal system is based on sharia, a set of Islamic principles that stresses the idea of fairness and gives little weight to legal precedent; many foreign firms come from a common law tradition where precedent is important. The reforms don't change the religious basis of the system, but they aim to make commercial matters smoother and more predictable with new institutions and procedures.

For example, a committee of experts will oversee bankruptcy cases. This could eventually speed the resolution of long-running disputes such as a \$22 billion, nine-year-old impasse over debts left by collapsed Saad Group and Ahmad Hamad al-Gosaibi



RIYADH: Saudi men walk outside the General Court in Riyadh.—Reuters

& Bros Co, bankers say. Tim Callen, International Monetary Fund mission chief to Saudi Arabia, said its forecast for non-oil economic growth to accelerate from 1.1 percent last year to over 3 percent early next decade was based partly on the legal reforms. Specialized commercial courts and appeal chambers were established last year, with judges trained to handle specific types of business dispute. In 2016 the Saudi Center for Commercial Arbitration (SCCA) opened, offering the services of about 125 arbitrators working in 11 languages. Hamed Hasan Merah, the centre's chief executive, said it was meeting the biggest Saudi and foreign companies to persuade them to include recourse to SCCA arbitration in their contracts.—Reuters

Business

Averting trade war, Japan and US agree to seek pact

Trump, Abe pledge to refrain from taking measures

UNITED NATIONS: Japan agreed Wednesday to negotiate a trade pact with the United States, easing fears that President Donald Trump would zero in on the US ally for his next tariff offensive. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Trump, meeting on the sidelines of the annual UN General Assembly session, said they would open talks on goods with a view to building freer trade. In a joint statement, Trump and Abe pledged to “refrain from taking measures against the spirit” of their understanding for as long as negotiations go on.

Abe, addressing reporters afterward, said Japan understood that the agreement meant the United States would not take any action under so-called Section 232 — a US legal clause, of which Trump has become fond, that allows Washington to restrict imports due to concerns over national security. “We must not set the hands of the clock backward,” Abe said, calling instead for the two countries to “reinvigorate our mutual trade and investment.”

Abe formed an early bond with Trump after

the real estate tycoon’s unexpected election victory, with the two leaders since chatting more than two dozen times on the telephone, according to officials. But Trump, who became a business celebrity in the 1980s when Japan’s economic miracle looked unstoppable, has grumbled about the US trade deficit with Japan. He recently told *The Wall Street Journal* that while he had good relations with Japan, “Of course, that will end as soon as I tell them how much they have to pay.”

Speaking as he announced the trade negotiations with Abe, Trump said: “Japan is very smart. Great negotiators. And, you know, up until now, they’ve done very well, and they’ll continue to do very well.” Trump this

week slapped \$200 billion of tariffs on China, which also has a large trade surplus with the United States, and on Wednesday he bluntly said that his onetime friendship with Chinese President Xi Jinping could be over.

He has also imposed sweeping tariffs on steel and aluminum even from allies such as the European Union and Canada, citing Section 232.

“

Japan is very smart. Great negotiators

”



NEW YORK; Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, left, meets with US President Donald Trump, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York. — AFP

No US return to Pacific pact

The United States and Japan, the world’s first and third largest economies, together make up about 30 percent of global GDP and have long had trade ties that are both fractious and interconnected. Abe took political risks at home in 2013 by entering negotiations for the

Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP, conceived as a vast bloc across both sides of the Pacific which would help build US influence in Asia in the face of growing Chinese influence. But Trump withdrew from the TPP days after taking office, fulfilling a campaign promise aimed at blue-collar workers. —AFP

US Fed raises benchmark interest rate

WASHINGTON: With the US economy still strong, the Federal Reserve raised the benchmark interest rate on Wednesday for the third time this year but showed no indication it would be more aggressive in efforts to head off inflation. However, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell cautioned trade tensions remained a risk to the outlook, including the potential for rising prices, although he indicated it was too soon to tell what impact it this have on the economy.

On the brighter side, Powell said he did not see any “troubling” vulnerabilities in financial markets, even with stocks near their historic highs in some cases. In a widely anticipated decision, the central bank boosted the lending rate to a range of 2.0 percent to 2.25 percent, a quarter-point increase in the target range. Shortly after the announcement, President Donald Trump once again criticized the Fed for raising rates.

“Unfortunately, they just raised interest rates a little because we are doing so well. I’m not happy about that,” Trump said at a press conference on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. “I would rather pay down debt or do other things,” he added. “So I’m worried about the fact that they seem to like raising interest rates.”

Asked earlier about Trump’s previous



CHICAGO: Traders signal offers in the S&P options pit at the Cboe Global Markets exchange shortly after the Federal Reserve announced it was raising interest rates in Chicago, Illinois. —AFP

criticism of Fed rate hikes which he said could undermine the booming economy, Powell said the central bank did not take “political factors” into consideration. The Fed members “try to set monetary policy to achieve maximum employment in a complex of price stability.... We don’t consider political factors or things like that,” Powell told reporters.

Chorus of concerns

And more moves are on the way with no hint of a pause, although the Fed did not give any sign it was about to become more hawkish and raise rates at a faster pace, as some analysts had suggested. The Fed once again said “further gradual increases”

would allow continued expansion of the economy while keeping inflation around the Fed’s two percent target. Powell said the gradual pace was helping to support the continued economic expansion, even as the benefits have not reached all Americans.

“Many of our country’s economic challenges are beyond the scope of the Fed but my colleagues and I are doing all we can to keep the economy strong, healthy, and moving forward,” Powell said at a news conference following the announcement. The statement on the unanimous decision no longer describes the interest rate level as “accommodative,” but Powell stressed that that was not an indication of a change “in the path of policy.” —AFP

WTO paints gloomier global trade picture

GENEVA: The World Trade Organization yesterday downgraded its global trade forecast for this year and next, pointing to escalating trade tensions around the world. “Escalating trade tensions and tighter credit market conditions in important markets will slow trade growth for the rest of this year and in 2019,” the WTO warned in a statement. “Trade will continue to expand but at a more moderate pace than previously forecast”.

The organization now expects merchandise trade volumes to expand 3.9 percent this year and 3.7 percent in 2019, down from an April forecast of 4.4 percent and 4.0 percent growth, respectively. It warned that it may have to cut its forecasts again because downside risks to its predictions “are considerable and heavily weighted to the downside”.

The WTO’s downgrade comes only days after US President Donald Trump’s tariffs on another \$200 billion of Chinese imports took effect, with Beijing accusing Washington of “economic intimidation”. The latest volley against Beijing brings the amount of goods hit by duties to more than \$250 billion, roughly half of China’s exports to the United States.

“While trade growth remains strong, this downgrade reflects the heightened tensions that we are seeing between major trading partners,” WTO Director General Roberto Azevedo said in the statement. —AFP

Business

IMF bumps up Argentina bailout package to \$57 billion

Program aims to support Argentina's vulnerable people in society

NEW YORK: The International Monetary Fund agreed on Wednesday to boost its crisis loan package aimed at restoring confidence in Argentina's struggling economy by 14 percent to \$57.1 billion. The agreement "will allow our country to leave behind the turbulent path of recent months," said Argentina's Finance Minister Nicolas Dujovne during a press conference with IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Lagarde said the aim of the program was to help Argentina "tackle the challenges it faces" and support the "most vulnerable people in society." Argentina originally secured a \$50 billion loan back in June, when an initial \$15 billion tranche was handed over. However, last month, President Mauricio Macri revealed he had asked for an accelerated disbursement of the remaining \$35 billion, with another \$3 billion not due until November and the remainder over the next three years.

The new deal "front loads IMF financing," the Fund said in a statement, increasing by \$19 billion the amount due to be made available up to the end of 2019: a total of \$36.2 billion, according to Argentina's finance ministry. The ministry said that part of the agreement, which needs to be approved by the IMF's Executive Board, included a commitment to maintain "spending on social assistance... above 1.2 percent of gross domestic product" in order to "protect the most vulnerable sectors."

But the news was met with scorn on the streets of Buenos Aires. "We're getting more in debt and not correcting our mistakes. We're

spending more than we can," said 57-year-old Daniel Pacheco, who works for a telephone company. "Nothing will change because it's the same politicians as always." Pablo Gallo, a 42-year-old lawyer, said "any agreement with the IMF" is a bad idea "for a country that wants independence."

Lagarde praised Argentina for its "strengthened economic plan that is aimed at bolstering confidence and stabilizing the economy." "A central element of the authorities' plan will be to reach budgetary balance by 2019," she added. The announcement of the agreement comes a day after Argentina changed its central bank president. Some analysts claimed outgoing head Luis Caputo was at odds with the IMF over Argentina's monetary strategy, leading to his replacement by Guido Sandleris.

Lagarde said that "persistently high inflation continues to erode the foundation of economic prosperity in Argentina" and to tackle it, the country's "authorities will shift towards a stronger, simpler, and verifiable monetary policy regime." She said Argentina would "contain the supply of money, and keep short-term interest rates at their currently" world-high level of 60 percent, aiming to rapidly bring down inflation, expected to hit 40 percent by the end of the year.

She said the central bank had "agreed to adopt a floating exchange rate regime, without intervention." However, Sandleris said the central bank would set upper and lower limits and maintain "strict control of growth of the monetary base in order to reduce inflation." He said a "new stage" was beginning in which "we're leaving



BUENOS AIRES: Argentinian Central Bank President, Guido Sandleris, right, gestures during a press conference at the Central Bank headquarters in Buenos Aires.—AFP

behind banking interventions and returning to a focus on monetary policy as an anchor."

Loss of confidence

Argentina's economic woes were brought on by a rapid loss of confidence in its peso currency from April. It has lost around 50 percent of its value against the dollar since the start of the year, including 20 percent in a two-day period

in August after Macri announced he was seeking to renegotiate the IMF loan. He has since introduced hugely unpopular austerity measures, including halving the number of government ministries and restoring taxes on grain exports.

Thousands of people took to the streets to protest against the austerity measures on Monday while the country was paralyzed by a general strike on Tuesday.—AFP

Italy's populists in first EU budget test

MILAN: Italy's populist government is set to unveil the outlines of its first budget yesterday, as fears deepen that it could breach EU fiscal rules and worsen the country's already mammoth debt burden. All eyes will be on Western Europe's first anti-establishment leadership to see whether it will defy Brussels—potentially sparking panic on the financial markets—or toe the line. The coalition, expected to present a revised budget for 2018 and its plans for 2019, has been struggling to find a way to both uphold its electoral promises and reassure investors worried about the health of the eurozone's third largest economy. It all revolves around one key figure: the ratio of public deficit to gross domestic product (GDP). A parliamentary source close to the government on Tuesday said it was likely to come in at somewhere between 1.8 percent and

1.9 percent of GDP in 2019, compared to the 0.8 percent forecast by the previous centre-left government. Italy's public debt currently stands at 132 percent of GDP, the biggest in the eurozone after Greece.

Intense negotiations have been under way between the coalition parties—the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) and far-right League—and Economy Minister Giovanni Tria, an independent who is believed to have set an upper limit of 1.6 percent. The cabinet will meet at 1600 GMT yesterday, suggesting the talks will go on into the night.

Mega-vendetta

Five Star leader and deputy prime minister Luigi Di Maio has repeatedly railed against the EU's budgetary restrictions. He initially insisted it could do no harm to go over the 3.0 percent threshold set by Brussels. On Monday, Di Maio said if Paris could play fast and loose, so could Rome: he pointed to France's public sector deficit, expected to rise to 2.8 percent of GDP next year. Was Italy not "a sovereign country just like France" he asked?

By Wednesday the head of the populists said his movement would not vote for the budget if it was not "courageous" enough.—AFP

ECB shortlist three to head its bank supervision arm

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank has shortlisted three candidates to head its bank supervision arm from next year, picking seasoned veterans to oversee a bloated sector weighed down by the legacy of the bloc's debt crisis. The ECB narrowed the field to Irish central bank Deputy Governor Sharon Donnery, European Banking Authority chief Andrea Enria and French financial markets regulator Robert Ophéle, a source familiar with the decision said.

The winner will oversee the euro zone's biggest banks holding over 20 trillion euros' (\$23 trillion) worth of assets but still struggling with low margins, high costs, and a massive pile of soured credit. The ECB will

consult a European Parliament committee before narrowing down the list to a single candidate, who will then require approval from Parliament and the heads of government before taking over from Daniele Nouy at the start of next year. The ECB declined to comment.

Taking over the Single Supervisory Mechanism, one of the EU's newest institutions, the new chief will be tasked with making the sector simpler, more uniform and less risky, eliminating one of the biggest obstacles in completing the banking union. Legacy risks, primarily soured debt, have been the biggest obstacle in gathering the political support for a euro zone wide deposit insurance scheme, a key plank in the banking union that would widen the safety net by more sharing of financial risk.

But Germany has long said that until the sector is cleaned up, it is not willing to take part, fearing that German taxpayers would end up having to foot the bill for reckless lending done in some cases a decade ago.—Reuters

Sports

Tiger ready for first-tee tension and big crowds at Ryder Cup

Woods will probably not be paired with Mickelson

SAINT-QUENTIN-EN-YVELINES: Tiger Woods expects some nervous excitement when he steps on the first tee for the trophy-holders United States against Europe in the Ryder Cup before 7,000 screaming spectators at Le Golf National.

The 14-time major champion snapped a five-year win drought last weekend to cap a successful comeback season from spinal fusion surgery and will be the star attraction when the biennial team showdown tees off Friday morning.

"It's going to be fun. It's going to be an awesome environment," Woods said. "There's a lot of nerves. It's excitement. It's something we don't get to experience in that regard because basically it's the final round of a tournament on the very first hole and every match you tee it up.

"It's a different atmosphere and one that we absolutely love." The huge grandstand will create a crucible for Woods and his American teammates to start En Avant, the opening 419-yard par-4 hole known as Go Ahead in English. Tee shots will be critical to setting up approaches as water comes into play from the start.

"When I first saw that on the first tee, I looked up and felt like I kept looking up and up and up," American Patrick Reed said. "It's going to be an unbelievable atmosphere."

Woods expects the noise to reach a crescendo to rival Celtic Manor in 2010, when crowd noise shook US players. "I don't know what it was acoustically, but they were so close together that it was reverberating. It was so loud," Woods said.

"When you get on the first tee, you could actually feel it. That was fun to be a part of.

"I think this week will be exactly like that, but I think the decibels will be up a little higher." Woods has not won a Ryder Cup match since a 4&3 victory over Italy's Francesco Molinari at Celtic Manor in 2010, going winless in 2012 at Medinah and missing the past two Cups with back issues.

There is already trophy-case hardware for Woods from Le Golf National. In 1994, he won the World Amateur Team Championship as a teen. But Woods has played on only one Ryder Cup winner in seven attempts, that in 1999's Battle of Brookline when the Americans made a record last-day fight-back. He's only 13-17 with three halved overall in Ryder Cup play, with 8 losses in 13 matches each from foursomes and four-ball pairings but a 4-1 with two drawn mark in singles.

"Haven't done well," Woods said. "Looking back on my entire Ryder Cup career, that's not something that I've really enjoyed. "My overall Ryder Cup record, not having won as a player since 1999, is something that hopefully we can change. We haven't won as a US squad here in 25 years on foreign soil, so hopefully that will change this week, as well."

TIGER-PHIL DUO UNLIKELY

That 25-year European win drought hits Woods, 42, and Phil Mickelson, 48, the hardest. "There's only a couple guys that have any kind of scar tissue on playing on away soil, and those guys have won a combined 120-something times,"



SAINT-QUENTIN-EN-YVELINES: US golfer Tiger Woods walks on a green during a practice session ahead of the 42nd Ryder Cup at Le Golf National Course at Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, south-west of Paris yesterday. — AFP

teammate Jordan Spieth said. "We're not worried."

Woods will probably not be paired with Mickelson, even though he's the only teammate he has been matched with before in the Ryder Cup. The duo lost twice with little chemistry in 2004 and while relations appear cordial, it's not a risk US captain Jim Furyk likes.

"I won't ever say it wouldn't happen," Furyk

said. "But it's probably not too likely." Still, their teammates know how much a road victory would mean to Woods and Mickelson. "It would be a dream to be a part of that," said two-time Masters champion Bubba Watson. "Their legendary careers, to be with them and be a part of that, I'm pretty sure Tiger and Phil would start crying if they did win. And I'll probably cry, too." —AFP

Hamilton seeks to tighten title grip with 5th consecutive Russia win

SOCHI: Defending champions Lewis Hamilton and Mercedes will seek to tighten their grip on this year's Formula One world championship with a fifth triumph in five years at the Russian Grand Prix. No other team has tasted a 'vodka-laced' victory since the event began at the former winter Olympic Games venue in 2014, Hamilton winning then and in 2015, Nico Rosberg in 2016 and Valtteri Bottas last year.

And with a 40-point lead on Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel in the title race, four-time champion Hamilton looks set to go into the final six races of the season in confident fashion after registering four wins in his last five outings.

Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff, however, has warned against complacency as they enter the championship's most critical spell. Hamilton's dazzling triumph in Singapore, where his pole lap was widely regarded as one of the greatest of all time, may have lifted him into a position with a clear advantage, but Wolff has stressed that rivals Ferrari will be a serious threat in every contest.

"Obviously, it's better to have a lead than not to, but there are six races to go and plenty of points to score—so it doesn't give us any comfort," he said. "We will continue to concentrate on every single session, trying to optimise the car in every possible area—



SINGAPORE: File photo shows Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton reacts after winning the pole position during the qualifying session ahead of the Singapore Formula One Grand Prix at the Marina Bay Street Circuit in Singapore. —AFP

and we will go for the race win.

"There is no naive optimism about our situation within the team. "Our mind-set is very positive, we are energised, the factories are buzzing and we're excited for the fight that we will certainly have in the next six races.

"We have a good track record in Sochi, but we know that Ferrari and Red Bull will give it everything to break our winning streak so we must fight as hard as ever." Wolff made it clear also that he will not be surprised to see Bottas recover his best form

at a circuit where he won last year despite slipping out of serious contention in the title race.

"For every racing driver, it's a very difficult situation because everything you dream about and everything you work for is to win the world championship," he said.

'BOTTAS WORK ETHIC'

"When you realise you're not in the hunt anymore, it's very difficult to handle, but Valtteri has shown that he has the speed, the talent and the work ethic to win in a Mercedes.

"He has always been a team player and that is one of his greatest traits. He could have won races this year, but the odds were against him. "But luck isn't a one-way street and I know Valtteri has every ingredient required to win at this level. He needs to work hard and trust that the tables will turn for him."

Vettel, also chasing a fifth drivers' crown, knows he also has to deliver this time after an unexpected struggle to third place in Singapore. "I think Russia has been getting better for us in the last few years," he said.

"It should suit our car too. I don't think we have to fear any of the tracks that are coming up now. "Our car is working pretty much everywhere and that's a strength." Yet Vettel has claimed only one win in five as he has slipped behind an in-form Hamilton since his Singapore sling.

Another victory on a weekend when he could claim his 80th pole and 70th win would leave him Hamilton knowing that he can finish second in all five final races and, even if Vettel wins, still be crowned champion.

Red Bull could be a serious threat to both Ferrari and Mercedes, however, as Renault-bound Daniel Ricciardo and Max Verstappen, who will turn 21 on Sunday, try to make the most of the tight street track that may favour their car's performance. — AFP

Brewers sweep Cardinals, clinch postseason berth

Romo, Rays hold off Yanks in wild 9th

MILWAUKEE: Milwaukee MVP candidate Christian Yelich walked five times and scored twice, and Jhoulys Chacin allowed one run in five innings as the Brewers clinched a postseason berth with a 2-1 win over the host St. Louis Cardinals on Wednesday night. The Brewers swept the three-game series. They remain a half-game behind the Chicago Cubs in the National League Central and hold a 3 1/2-game edge for the first NL wild card over the runner-up from the NL West. Milwaukee's win also assured the Cubs of a playoff spot. The Cardinals were 1 1/2 games back of the Colorado Rockies and the Los Angeles Dodgers in the wild-card hunt, pending the result of the Dodgers' late game at Arizona. Chacin (15-8) allowed one hit and two walks while striking out three. Jeremy Jeffress got the last four outs for his 13th save.

Cubs 7, Pirates 6 (10 innings)

Albert Almora Jr.'s two-out single in the bottom of the 10th inning plated the winning run as Chicago blew a big lead but came back to beat visiting Pittsburgh, shortly after the Cubs clinched a playoff berth. Almora's single followed a four-pitch walk to Ian Happ to lead off the inning against Richard Rodriguez (4-3), a sacrifice bunt by Mike Freeman and a groundout by Victor Caratini that sent pinch runner Terrance Gore to third base. Brandon Kintzler (3-3), the seventh Chicago pitcher, induced a double-play grounder from the one batter he faced to earn the win.

Mets 3, Braves 0

Jacob deGrom finished making his case for the National League Cy Young Award in impressive fashion, earning the win while striking out 10 in eight scoreless innings as New York blanked visiting Atlanta. The Braves, who locked up the NL East on Saturday, entered the game 1 1/2 games ahead of the Dodgers in the race for the second seed in the NL and home-field advantage in the NL Division Series.

DeGrom (10-9) allowed just two hits and walked none in lowering his major-league-best ERA to 1.70. He retired the final 20 batters he faced and whiffed Ozzie Albies in the eighth inning for his 1,000th career strikeout.

Red Sox 19, Orioles 3 (Game 1)

Rafael Devers had a pair of home runs and six RBIs, and Xander Bogaerts drove in four runs to reach the 100-RBI mark as Boston routed visiting Baltimore in the first game of a day-night doubleheader. Mookie Betts joined Jacoby Ellsbury (2011) as the only players in Red Sox history with a 30-homer, 30-steal season when he swiped second base in the second inning. The Red Sox became just the 15th team to win at least 107 games, and the first since the 2001 Seattle Mariners won 116.

Orioles 10, Red Sox 3 (Game 2)

Trey Mancini drove in three runs, two of which came on a tiebreaking single in the seventh inning, and Baltimore defeated Boston for a doubleheader split. Red Sox starter Chris Sale went 4 2/3 innings and gave up three runs on four hits and a walk while striking out eight. He is trying to get ready for the playoffs after being placed on the disabled list twice due to shoulder inflammation issues. Tanner Scott (3-2) earned the victory with 2 2/3 innings of relief, giving up one run and striking out three. Paul Fry got his second save after going the final three innings and retiring all nine batters he faced.

Rays 8, Yankees 7

Tommy Pham broke a third-inning tie with a home run, and Tampa Bay held on through a wild ninth inning to defeat New York at St. Petersburg, Fla. The loss temporarily reduced the Yankees' lead to two games over Oakland in the duel to see who will host the American League wild-card game next week. After the Rays added four runs against the New York bullpen in the eighth to go up 8-3, the Yankees roared back against Sergio Romo in the



ST LOUIS: Paul DeJong #12 of the St. Louis Cardinals catches Mike Moustakas #18 of the Milwaukee Brewers in a run down in the fourth inning at Busch Stadium on Wednesday in St. Louis, Missouri. — AFP

ninth, getting within 8-7 with two on and just one out. But Romo got Tyler Wade to fly out, advancing the potential tying run to third base, before Miguel Andujar fouled out to end the game.

Nationals 9, Marlins 3 (8 innings)

Rookie Victor Robles homered and drove in five runs to lead host Washington to a rain-shortened win over Miami. The game was called in the top of the eighth inning after a 51-minute rain delay. In perhaps his final home game for the Nationals, former National League MVP Bryce Harper went 0-for-4. He is batting .244 this season with 34 home runs and 100 RBIs.

Blue Jays 3, Astros 1

Randal Grichuk hit a two-run home run, Reese McGuire added a solo shot for his first career major league homer, and Toronto defeated visiting Houston. The Blue Jays salvaged the finale of the three-game series in their final home game of the season. It was also the final home game for manager John Gibbons, who will not return next season. Joe Biagini (4-7) picked up the win, allowing one hit and one walk in 1 1/3 innings. Former Astros closer Ken Giles earned his 25th save of the season and 13th with Toronto with a perfect ninth.

Royals 6, Reds 1

Rookie Heath Fillmyer pitched into the eighth inning and recorded his first major league hit an RBI as Kansas City claimed victory at Cincinnati. Fillmyer (4-2) allowed one run on four hits and two walks while striking out nine over 7 1/3 innings as the Royals completed a two-game sweep of the Reds. The 24-year-old right-hander added an RBI double in just his fourth career at-bat. Fillmyer retired 11 Reds in a row between the second and fifth innings. — Reuters



BOSTON: Mitch Moreland #18 of the Boston Red Sox celebrates with Rafael Devers #11 after scoring a run against the Baltimore Orioles during the fifth inning at Fenway Park on Wednesday in Boston, Massachusetts. — AFP

Sports

Australia name two Test vice-captains for first time

Countering Yasir is Australia's 'number one' priority: Siddle

SYDNEY: Australia have for the first time named two Test cricket vice-captains—all-rounder Mitchell Marsh and fast bowler Josh Hazlewood—as they look to move on from a major cheating scandal.

The pair were chosen to back up captain Tim Paine via an unprecedented vote by team members and a final decision made by a panel that included coach Justin Langer and selector Trevor Hohns, Cricket Australia said.

"We believe the new leadership model will best support the captain," Hohns said of the decision to have more than one Test vice-captain for the first time. "It is a successful model used across various sporting codes around the world.

"Our vision is to create great cricketers and great people, and we are extremely fortunate to have such terrific young men," Hohns said. Marsh, aged 26, will act as sole vice-captain behind Paine during the two-Test series against Pakistan in Dubai beginning on October 7 because Hazlewood, aged 27, is sidelined by injury.

It will be Australia's first Test tour since the ball-tampering scandal in Cape Town which led to one-year suspensions being imposed on captain Steve Smith and his deputy, David Warner, who was also banned from ever holding another leadership position.

Hohns indicated the decision to name vice-captains was in part to avoid naming a single person being seen as a likely successor to Paine,

who took over from Smith following the scandal when sandpaper was used to alter the condition of the ball.

"It was not a process designed to find the next Australian Test captain, but to find two vice-captains who will support and help drive the team's goals and objectives," he said. Since the South Africa debacle, Cricket Australia has launched a number of internal reviews aimed at creating a more respectful culture and moving away from the win-at-all-costs mentality blamed for the explosive ball-tampering row.

Meanwhile, surviving the wiles of Pakistan spinner Yasir Shah is Australia's "number one plan" in the upcoming test series in the United Arab Emirates, fast bowler Peter Siddle has said. Yasir played a key role in Australia's unravelling during the last UAE tour in 2014, when the legspinner took 12 wickets at an average of 17.25 to drive the hosts to a thumping 2-0 win in the two-test series.

Four years later, a raw Australia squad has returned to the Gulf state without two of their best batsmen in the suspended Steve Smith and David Warner, and would appear vulnerable to another spinbowling assault from Sarfraz Ahmed's team.

Looking to counter Yasir and 19-year-old prodigy Shadab Khan, Australia have re-hired spin bowling consultant Sridharan Sriram and flown in two Indian wrist spinners, including



File photo shows Mitchell Marsh celebrates maiden Test ton.

Pardeep Sahu, who has played for Indian Premier League side Kings XI Punjab.

Siddle said the tourists had spent plenty of time in the Dubai heat working out ways to deal with legspin and Yasir, specifically. "He's (Yasir) going to play a big part," said the vet-

eran paceman. "Spin bowling in this series is going to play a massive part. "I think it's going to be a tough contest. He bowled well against us last series over here. He took a lot of wickets, so I think it's going to be number one plan to keep him out. —Agencies

Injured Shakib to miss Bangladesh's Asia Cup final

DHAKA: Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has returned home from the United Arab Emirates due to injury and will miss today's Asia Cup final against India in Dubai, a team official said. Shakib also missed Wednesday's virtual semi-final against Pakistan after he complained of a fresh pain in an injured finger.

Bangladesh beat Pakistan by 37 runs to move to the final of the Asia Cup for the third time in the last four editions. "The condition of his finger really turned bad. It got swollen. He was even unable to hold the bat," manager Khaled Mahmud told AFP from Dubai.

"We felt he immediately needs a surgery. He will soon travel to the USA to visit a doctor," he added. A Bangladesh Cricket Board official confirmed Shakib arrived back in Dhaka at midnight on Wednesday. Thirty-one-year-old Shakib hurt his left little finger during the one-day international series against Sri Lanka in January and missed the subsequent Test and Twenty20 series.

He returned to the team for the Nidahas Trophy in Sri Lanka in March and has continued playing since then. He wanted to have a surgery before the Asia Cup for a complete recovery from the injury, but the BCB insisted on him playing in the Asia Cup.

The all-rounder played the team's first four matches of the tournament. He scored 49 runs and picked up seven wickets. — AFP

Sarfraz loses sleep after Pakistan bows out of Asia Cup

DUBAI: Disappointed Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed has revealed he lost sleep for six days during his team's flop at the Asia Cup. Pakistan lost their must-win game against Bangladesh by 37 runs in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday, meaning they failed to qualify for today's final in Dubai.

Bangladesh will face defending champions India in the final. Pakistan lost both their games against arch rivals India by eight and nine wickets—while narrowly beating Afghanistan by three wickets.

Sarfraz said the pressure of captaincy and not scoring runs led to some disturbed nights. "Look, the pressures of captaincy are always there," said Sarfraz. "Pakistani captains, whoever they are, always have pressure.

"Obviously when you aren't performing and the team is losing then there is more pressure. The truth is that if I say I haven't slept for the last six nights nobody will believe me, but... this is part of life and it will go on."

Sarfraz, who was appointed captain for all three formats last year, urged the authorities not to take any hasty decisions. "I will say again we don't need to press the panic button. We need to back the players who have been doing well in the recent past," said Sarfraz, who managed just 68 runs in four matches.

"My performance isn't good so the team lost. The team lost because of me. I should've performed as a captain but I didn't and we lost because of that."

Sarfraz, who has been playing all three formats since the World Cup 2015, said it was up to the selectors to decide



DUBAI: Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed looks on after Bangladesh won by 37 runs during the one day international (ODI) Asia Cup cricket match between Bangladesh and Pakistan at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday. — AFP

whether he should be rested. "This is not my job, this is the job of the selection committee and the PCB. Let them decide. I gave you an answer, it is not my job. My job is to play, I will play. I will keep playing."

Sarfraz said with next year's World Cup still eight months away, there was time to correct mistakes. "World Cup is far (away) and we have to play so many series," said Sarfraz. Before that Pakistan play 20 one-day internationals against New Zealand, South Africa, Australia and England.

"We have to look at the various mistakes we committed. Our middle order comes on the new ball and that is why it struggled. We should not lose early wickets so we should work on that. "It is alarming that we lost confidence during the Asia Cup. —AFP

Kuwait's women in blue

KFA to announce national women's football team



Fatima Hayat, Chairman and Board Member of Women's Committee at KFA. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Noura Al-Sabah, Vice-Chairman of the Women's Committee of KFA.



By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The women's committee of Kuwait Football Association (KFA) will announce tomorrow the official women's national team, which is expected to start playing from late November or mid-January. During a forum titled "It's Time for the Women in Blue" on Tuesday at KFA's headquarters, chairperson and board member of the women's committee Fatima Hayat said this is the first step to achieve the dream of Kuwaiti girls to wear the blue jersey.

With the support of the board of directors,

Hayat is working to develop a clear and realistic plan that can be applied to develop women's football and choose a technical committee with a clear goal of forming a football team. She announced that tomorrow will see the selection of the best players to join the Kuwaiti women's national team.

Noura Al-Sabah, vice-chairperson of the women's committee of KFA, expressed her happiness to see the national women's team becoming a reality. "We started to implement the plan to succeed and prove ourselves as players, and we will be able to represent Kuwait internationally," she said. She noted that the committee

contracted Futsal coach Shehrazad Muzaffar a few days ago to lead the women's football team, along with football coach Ali Al-Dhahi and athletic trainer Dalal Al-Rowaished, pointing out that the committee will organize an awareness and media campaign to educate the public on the importance of women's participation in sports and football.

"The football program will include a youth training center for national teams, hiring coaches and administrative personnel and organizing grassroots festivals. Also, we will organize boot camps for both the U-15 and U-17 ladies teams

and hold regional friendly matches. We aim to host and participate in the AFC Futsal 2020 championship," Noura added. "Our next steps are visiting the Bahrain FA and participate in a Futsal coaching course (AFC Level 1). Our supporting partners are FIFA, AFC and the Public Authority for Sport," she revealed.

The forum discussed the future of women's football in Kuwait in the next four years and how to participate in the first official women's football league. The event was attended by all members of the women's committee and a number of football players and coaches.

After Li Na, star Wang leads rise of China's women

WUHAN: China's tennis women are starting to get results to match their potential and are ready to follow in the footsteps of former great Li Na, according to rising star Wang Qiang. Wang has been in hot form in recent months, winning her first WTA Tour 250 title at the Jiangxi Open in Nanchang in July.

She won her second at the Guangzhou Open last week and on Wednesday, roared on by adoring crowds, became the first home-grown player to reach the quarter-finals of the Wuhan Open as she extended her win-loss streak on Chinese soil this year to 13-1.

"I'm really happy to be competing in China, getting a lot of support from fans," she said after beating Australia's Daria Gavrilova in straight sets to reach the last eight. The 26-year-old's run of success also included winning an Asian Games gold medal in Indonesia in August. And this week Wang upset world number seven Karolina Pliskova in the second round.

Wang, who recently became China's number one, promised there was more to come from her country's women, who bear the bur-

den of following Li, Asia's first Grand Slam winner and a trailblazer for tennis in the world's most populous nation.

"After the emergence of Li Na, I think we are on the rise," said the world number 34. "You see young players. At a tournament (of this level)... you see great performances. I think in the near future, in international tournaments, we'll see more Chinese players."

Li, who triumphed at Roland Garros in 2011 and won the Australian Open in 2014 before retiring later that year, is one of Wang's idols. "She is a goal. She's a role model for many athletes, especially Chinese players," said Wang, who trained in Wuhan when she was a child, and planned to become a teacher if a career in tennis did not work out.

"If I can play as well as she did, I will have a very perfect life." Several promising talents have emerged in China, but none has come even close to matching the success of Li. But Wang, who grabbed headlines at the French Open this year with her straight-sets demolition of Venus Williams, says she is growing in confidence after a successful 2018, and playing in front of home crowds in recent months has helped boost her game.

"In terms of technique, in the past year I think I've been doing quite similar (things) but I'm really more confident," said Wang, whose family paid for her to train in Japan during her formative years, instead of sticking with China's state-run sports system. "I believe in myself. That's the most important element." — AFP

Madrid to host new-format Davis Cup in 2019-2020

MADRID: Madrid has been chosen to host the first two new-format Davis Cup finals in 2019 and 2020, the organisers of the venerable men's team tennis event said yesterday. Under a format proposed by the Kosmos group, headed by Barcelona footballer Gerard Pique, and adopted by the International Tennis Federation (ITF) in August, the competition will bring together 18 nations in one place for a week at the end of the tennis season.

"We are delighted to be bringing the 2019 Davis Cup... finals to Madrid," ITF president David Haggerty said in a statement. "The city is a fitting location to stage the highest quality tennis and great entertainment for thousands of fans from all over the world," he added. The revamped finals are scheduled to take place at La Caja Magica, the current venue for the Madrid Open, in 2019.

For 2020 organisers still must decide be-

tween holding the event either at the same location or at the WiZink Center. Kosmos, an investment group led by Pique with Japanese and Chinese support, will spend \$3 billion over 25 years on the revamped 118-year-old Davis Cup.

The current Davis Cup format is a knockout event played February, July, September and November at venues around the globe, with best-of-five match ties following Grand Slam events until the final round.

Many top players have skipped the event in recent years to ease their schedule. The four 2018 semi-finalists—France, Croatia, Spain and the United States—qualify directly. Twelve more places will be decided in qualifiers on Feb 1-2 next year.

That left two spots for wildcards selected by the organisers and they have chosen Argentina and Britain. Under the reform the finals will take place in November featuring 18 teams: 12 winners from 24-team home and away qualifying ties in February, the previous year's four semi-finalists and two wildcard nations. Argentina and Britain have been picked as the wildcards for the 2019 edition, organisers announced Wednesday.

Round-robin groups of three will send six group winners and two runners-up into knockout round playoffs. The finals would feature two singles matches and one doubles match each day, all cut to best-of-three sets. —AFP

Sports

Juventus extend Serie A streak, Roma ends five-match winless run

‘This is a new beginning for us, a new season has started’

MILAN: Paulo Dybala and Blaise Matuidi scored early as Juventus extended their perfect start to their Serie A title defence to six games on Wednesday with a 2-0 win over Bologna, as Roma ended their losing streak with a 4-0 success over promoted Frosinone.

The reigning champions have a maximum 18 points, three ahead of Napoli who beat Parma 3-0, with the top two set to go head-to-head in Turin tomorrow. “We made some mistakes at the end of the match and we were sometimes vulnerable,” said Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri.

“On Saturday it’s a head-to-head with Napoli and it’ll certainly be a great game. I don’t have a line-up in my head right now, as today in training we’ll see everyone together and decide.”

Lazio are third, a further three points adrift, after their fourth win on the trot 2-1 against Udinese ahead of this weekend’s Roman derby against Roma.

Roma, meanwhile, eased the pressure on under-fire coach Eusebio Di Francesco achieving their first three points since their season-opener against Torino over a month ago.

“This is a new beginning for us, a new season has started,” said Di Francesco. In Turin, Dybala got a rare start up front alongside superstar Cristiano Ronaldo and lashed home his first goal of the season after 12 minutes in the Allianz Stadium.

The Argentine had initially teed up Matuidi but Lukasz Skorupski cleared the Frenchman’s effort before Dybala acrobatically turned the ball in himself. Five minutes later World Cup winner Matuidi got his chance to add a second following a Ronaldo cross, with the Portuguese forward having a shot cleared off the near post by Skorupski.

Ronaldo—who missed out on the FIFA’s best player of the year award this week—fired just wide five minutes from the whistle when he picked up Dybala’s through ball. It was the first of three games in Turin within the space of a week for Juventus, who after Napoli at the weekend, host Swiss club Young Boys in the Champions League next week, after winning their opener against Valencia.

Carlo Ancelotti rotated his squad completely with nine changes ahead of the weekend game in Turin and hosting Liverpool in the Champions League. And it paid off with a third straight league win with Lorenzo Insigne opening after four minutes in Naples with a second-half brace from Polish forward Arkadiusz Milik keeping the pressure on Juventus.

“We were very fresh because I changed them all, and the initial rhythm determined the final result,” said Ancelotti.

‘STARTING POINT’

Lazio, meanwhile, continued their promising



TURIN: Bologna’s Polish goalkeeper Lukasz Skorupski jumps for the ball with Juventus’ Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (C) during the Italian Serie A football match between Juventus and Bologna on Wednesday at the Allianz Stadium in Turin. —AFP

start with Francesco Acerbi and Joaquin Correa scoring in the space of five minutes just after the hour mark. Bram Nuytinck pulled one back in Udine with an overhead kick ten minutes from time.

Simone Inzaghi’s side, who lost their opening

two games to Juventus and Napoli, can head confidently into the Roman derby against Roma. In the Stadio Olimpico, Turkish winger Cengiz Under set the tone after just two minutes for Roma with a sensational run from his own half to lash into the goal from a distance. —AFP

VAR to be used in Champions League from next season and at Euro 2020

NYON: Video Assistant Referees will be used in the Champions League from the 2019-20 season and will also be introduced at the 2020 European Championship, UEFA said yesterday. European football’s governing body revealed a decision had been taken at a meeting of their executive committee to bring in the technology, which will be used from the play-off round preceding the group stage of the Champions League.

UEFA’s move follows the use of VAR at the FIFA World Cup in Russia, when it was deemed largely to be a success. VAR will also be used in the Europa League, but not until the 2020-21 season and only from the group stage, and in the finals of the new international Nations League competition, although only from 2021.

Before that, UEFA will introduce VAR for the first time at next August’s Super Cup in Istanbul, between the winners of this season’s Champions League and Europa League.

“We’re confident that introducing VAR in August 2019 will give us enough time to put in place a robust system and to train match officials to ensure an efficient, successful implementation of VAR in the UEFA Champions League, the world’s flagship club competition,” UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin said.

UEFA were meeting at their Swiss headquarters ahead of the announcement later of the winning bid to host Euro 2024, with Germany and Turkey competing for the right to organise the tournament.

VAR has been introduced in the top divisions in Spain and France this season, with those leagues following on from the German Bundesliga and Italian Serie A, although the English Premier League has been more cautious and it has not yet been widely brought in across the continent.

Ceferin himself had resisted calls to bring VAR into Europe’s elite club competition, telling journalists in Monaco last month that “VAR is not completely clear for now, but we also know that there is no way back anymore, technology will come sooner or later”.

Up until recently, UEFA had not discounted the possibility of introducing VAR in the Champions League from the latter stages this season, or at least for the final, to be played in Madrid on June 1, next year. But they will now wait until next season.

Ceferin has acknowledged that VAR “worked quite well” at the World Cup, although UEFA’s biggest concern has been how they can effectively run the system in a competition spanning an entire continent.

Giorgio Marchetti, the organisation’s deputy general secretary, recently admitted that VAR was “obviously not impossible but very complex, and requires a lot of planning”.

That, in particular, explains why they will wait an extra year before bringing in VAR in the Europa League, a larger competition than the Champions League and one which tends to include a wider array of countries. Euro 2020, meanwhile, will be played at 12 different venues across the continent, with the semi-finals and final at Wembley. —AFP

Celtic join Rangers in League Cup semi-finals

GLASGOW: Celtic bounced back from a difficult few days to reach the semi-finals of the Scottish League Cup thanks to a 1-0 win at St. Johnstone on Wednesday. Steven Gerrard’s Rangers also cruised into the last four with a 4-0 rout of second division Ayr United, while Premiership leaders Hearts came from behind to beat Motherwell 4-2.

Celtic will face Hearts in the semi-finals, while Rangers take on Aberdeen on October 28. Leigh Griffiths grabbed the only goal for the holders in Perth, who had defender Dedryck Boyata sent-off in stoppage time, to maintain manager Brendan Rodgers’s perfect record in domestic Cup competitions as Celtic boss.

“Psychologically, it’s a good win for us,” said Rodgers, who has won all six domestic trophies on offer in his first two seasons in charge. “We’ve enjoyed the last couple of years at Hampden and let’s hope we enjoy it this year as well.”

Rodgers has come in for criticism in recent days after Celtic made their worst league start in 20 years with a 2-1 defeat at Kilmarnock on Sunday. The former Liverpool manager revealed before kick-off he had turned down the opportunity to move to an unnamed Chinese club in the summer to concentrate on his job with the Scottish champions.

But Rodgers again had to watch his side labour again before Griffiths’s strike seven minutes from time despite dominating possession. The Scotland striker swept home the rebound after James Forrest’s header was blocked and ran off to celebrate with his manager on the touchline in a sign of support.

Gerrard is experiencing no such strife at Ibrox as Rangers made have now racked up 13 goals in three home wins in 10 days. Defender Nikola Katic headed home the opener from a corner before Glenn Middleton got the first of his double on the night. —AFP

Sports

Germany beat Turkey for right to host Euro 2024

Germany receives 12 of the 17 votes with four for Turkey

NYON: Germany will host the Euro 2024 soccer tournament after comfortably beating the only other bidders Turkey in a two-horse contest yesterday.

Germany, which previously staged the event as West Germany in 1988 and successfully held the 2006 World Cup, won the vote among UEFA's executive committee after a four-year campaign which, for the first time, featured human rights as one of the specific bid criteria.

Germany received 12 of the 17 votes with four for Turkey and one abstention.

The decision, announced by UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin, was a bitter disappointment for Turkey who have yet to stage a major football tournament and also failed with bids to host the event in 2008, 2012 and 2016.

"The procedure was transparent, the vote was democratic. Every democratic decision is the right decision," Ceferin said. "I know that Germany will be fantastic hosts and that we will see a wonderful tournament both on and off the pitch."

The tournament, featuring 24 teams, will revert to its conventional format of being held in a single host country in 2024. The Euro 2020 tournament will be staged in cities around the continent to celebrate its 60th anniversary.

The vote was a big boost for the troubled German FA which has had to deal with a poor World Cup performance, falling ticket sales for interna-

tional matches and midfielder Mesut Ozil's decision to quit the German team, citing "racism and disrespect" over his Turkish roots.

"We have amazing stadiums, fans who love football, first and foremost we have people who love celebrating with other Europeans," said former Germany captain Philipp Lahm, an ambassador for the German bid. "We will organise a huge football party in Germany."

Germany plans to stage the tournament in 10 cities - Berlin, Munich, Dortmund, Gelsenkirchen, Stuttgart, Hamburg, Duesseldorf, Cologne, Leipzig and Frankfurt. "We saw in 2006 in Germany how people came together and it was a big party. We will do the best to feel the same in six years," Germany coach Joachim Loew told reporters, who remained in his job despite his team's unhappy World Cup campaign in Russia.

"It will be a great motivation for our young players because they can see that in six years' time there will be a tournament at home."

The decision came at a bad time for Turkey which, after years of breakneck growth, is in crisis, its heavy foreign debt load increased by the Turkish lira's 40 percent slide this year. Turkey's human rights record has also been under scrutiny since an attempted coup in July, 2016. UEFA said in its evaluation of the two bids, published before the vote, that Turkey's "lack of an action plan in the area of human rights is a matter of concern." —Reuters



NYON: Head of Germany's bid to host the Euro 2024 Philipp Lahm (L) and former German international football player Celia Sasic pose with the UEFA trophy after the announcement of Germany elected to host the Euro 2024 football tournament in Nyon yesterday. — AFP

Barca and Madrid endure surprise La Liga defeats

MADRID: Barcelona conceded twice in 68 seconds and Real Madrid were three down at half-time as La Liga's two title favourites were each stunned by surprise defeats on Wednesday night. Barca's 2-1 loss to relegation fighters Leganes was the greater shock but Madrid's beating was more emphatic, blown away 3-0 by Sevilla after a torrid 39 minutes at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan.

For both, it was their first defeat of the season and for both, defensive fragility was the key factor, which will be a major concern with the second round of Champions League games to come next week.

By the end, Atletico Madrid, who had cruised to victory over Huesca on Tuesday and play Real tomorrow, were the biggest winners. After a stuttering start, Diego Simeone's side will jump above Real with a win at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Sevilla can be a formidable opponent on their own patch but few expected Leganes to inflict what was only Barcelona's second league defeat in 17 months. "We are in a very difficult moment that was unexpected," Barca coach Ernesto Valverde said.

Gerard Pique committed the decisive error, his fluffed clearance allowing Oscar Rodriguez to score Leganes' second goal in two incredible

minutes at Estadio Municipal de Butarque. Nabil El Zhar had nodded in an equaliser moments before and by the end Philippe Coutinho's sumptuous early volley was reduced to little more than a footnote.

After drawing at home to Girona on Sunday, albeit with 10 men, Valverde's selection also came under scrutiny, after he opted to rotate for the second time in three days. Against Girona, it was Coutinho, Ivan Rakitic and Samuel Umtiti on the bench and just as they all had to be called upon in the second half at the Camp Nou, so were Luis Suarez and Jordi Alba this time.

"Of course the coach is responsible, a losing coach always feels responsible," Valverde said. "But obviously it is easy now to talk about the rotations - in the end, matches are analysed on results - but you can't win the league with only eleven players."

Barcelona face Athletic Bilbao on Saturday and then Tottenham at Wembley in the Champions League four days later but one point from two of La Liga's lesser opponents is a concern. So is the form of Pique, who was also at fault against Girona and will almost certainly start against Spurs, with Umtiti suspended.

"You have to judge the whole team, not individuals," Sergio Busquets said. "There are no excuses. We have to concede fewer goals and be more solid. Today the league isn't lost but we might miss these three points at the end of the season." Real Madrid, who were just kicking off as Leganes closed out, could have pulled three points clear at the top but instead were three down at half-time for the first time in a league game since 2003, also against Sevilla. —AFP

Hazard caps Chelsea win, Spurs survive shoot-out

LONDON: Eden Hazard's majestic solo strike capped a thrilling Chelsea fightback in their 2-1 win at Liverpool, while Tottenham survived a penalty shoot-out to beat Watford in the League Cup third round on Wednesday.

Arsenal advanced to the last 16 with a 3-1 win over Championship side Brentford, while West Ham demolished fourth-tier Macclesfield in an 8-0 rout that ranked as their biggest victory for 35 years. But it was the drama at Anfield that stole the spotlight as Chelsea became the first team to stop Liverpool winning this season.

Jürgen Klopp's side had won seven consecutive matches in all competitions and the Premier League leaders were on course for number eight when Daniel Sturridge's brilliant effort put them ahead in the second half. But Emerson Palmieri bagged Chelsea's late equaliser before Belgium star Hazard danced through the Liverpool defence to notch the

winner with five minutes left.

It was an impressive comeback from Maurizio Sarri's men, giving them valuable momentum ahead of Saturday's more significant Premier League clash between the teams at Stamford Bridge. Chelsea are currently in third place, two points behind Liverpool after an unbeaten start to the season. "It's a fantastic goal. Not only the beauty of it but for the time he scored it," Chelsea assistant boss Gianfranco Zola said of Hazard.

"Not only is he one of the best in the Premier League, but he is one of the best in the world. He's remarkable," Klopp added: "I think the first goal is offside. They watched it and didn't think it was offside. We have to take it."

"This is good preparation for tomorrow but we have to defend better." Sturridge gave Liverpool the lead in spectacular fashion after 58 minutes. Naby Keita's shot was pushed out by Willy Caballero and Sturridge threw himself into an audacious scissor kick that flashed into the net for his third goal of the season.

Chelsea equalised in the 79th minute as Italy defender Emerson tapped in after Simon Mignolet could only parry Ross Barkley's powerful header. That goal needed VAR to confirm there were no Chelsea players offside, but there was no doubt about the visitors' 85th minute winner. —AFP



NYON: German Football Association (DFB) president Reinhard Grindel poses with the UEFA Euro trophy after it was announced that Germany was elected to host the Euro 2024 football tournament during a ceremony at the headquarters of the European football's governing body in Nyon yesterday. — AFP

Germany beat Turkey for right to host Euro 2024

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