



Due to the Isra wal Miraj holiday, Kuwait Times will not publish the print edition of the Friday Times this week. Please follow our digital media platforms for breaking news and reporting.



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Kuwait returns to strong growth, account surplus

IMF concludes 2019 Article IV consultation with Kuwait



KUWAIT: Seaweed is seen along Shuwaiikh beach yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: According to the International Monetary Fund, Kuwait's growth has resumed and the current account has rebounded thanks to higher oil prices. Hydrocarbon output rose by 1.2 percent in 2018 after contracting a year earlier. Buoyed by a rebound in confidence and government spending, non-oil growth has accelerated to 2.5 percent.

After the first deficit in more than two decades in 2016, the current account shifted back into surplus in 2017 and reached an estimated surplus of 12.7 percent of GDP in 2018. Inflation fell to a multiyear low of 0.7 percent due to falling housing rents, easing food prices and a strengthening dinar, reported the IMF after concluding the 2019 Article IV consultation with Kuwait on March 25, 2019.

While the overall fiscal balance has improved, financing needs remain large. Higher oil revenues and investment income boosted the overall balance. Fiscal financing needs - overall balance not counting the compulsory transfer of a portion of earnings to the Future Generations Fund (FGF) and excluding investment income - remain large. Delays in the passage of a new debt law have rendered the government unable to issue debt since Oct 2017. As a result, it has had to draw on the General Reserve Fund assets for financing.

The banking sector reports sound indicators, and credit is recovering from a slow start in 2018. The system-wide capital adequacy ratio reached 18 percent in

Sept 2018, and liquidity ratios were comfortably within regulatory requirements. Profits rose and asset quality improved, with NPLs net of specific provisions falling to a historical low. The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) raised the repo rate, a benchmark for deposits, several times but has kept the policy lending rate at 3 percent since March 2018.

As a result, bank lending interest rates have risen by less than deposit rates. Coupled with ample liquidity - a by-product of deposit growth and government debt redemption in 2018 - this is supporting a credit recovery. Private sector loans grew 4.1 percent year-on-year in December 2018 on the back of household, construction, and oil sector borrowing.

IMF Executive Directors noted that growth is expected to strengthen and the underlying fiscal position to gradually improve over the medium term. Given the volatility of oil prices and the exhaustible nature of oil resources, Directors underscored the need for timely and well-sequenced fiscal and structural reforms to reduce Kuwait's dependence on oil, boost government saving, and create more private sector jobs.

Directors called for deeper fiscal reforms to ensure adequate savings for future generations. They encouraged the authorities to tackle spending rigidities and increase non-oil revenue while boosting capital outlays to improve infrastructure and raise potential growth.

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News in brief

Amir orders urgent aid to Iran

KUWAIT: The Ministerial Council's Secretary General Abdullah Al-Roudhan announced yesterday that on HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's commands, the council decided to send urgent aid to flood victims in Iran. The council tasked Kuwait Red Crescent Society and the foreign ministry to organize the aid process as soon as possible, also expressing condolences to the victims' families. The death toll from major floods swamping much of Iran over the past 15 days has risen to 62, the head of the Iranian Legal Medicine Organization told local media yesterday. — KUNA

Kuwait recognizes Mormon Church

KUWAIT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announced yesterday that it has received official recognition from Kuwait. "We are grateful to the government of Kuwait and in particular to His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of Kuwait, for his exemplary leadership in allowing freedom of worship in the State of Kuwait, in particular for the expatriate workforce," said Bishop Terry Harradine, leader of the Kuwait congregation. Nearly 300 Mormons live and work in Kuwait; they come from many countries around the world.

WhatsApp group chat change

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook Inc yesterday changed the privacy settings on its WhatsApp messaging platform, allowing users to decide who can add them to chat groups, as it tries to revamp its image after growing privacy concerns among users. In a blog post, WhatsApp, which has about 1.5 billion users, said a user inviting another to a group will be prompted to send a private invite through an individual chat, giving the recipient the choice of joining the group. The request will expire in three days. The setting was rolled out yesterday for some users and will be available worldwide in the coming weeks. — Reuters

Saudi King Salman visits Bahrain

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's King Salman visited Bahrain, a key ally and recipient of a \$10 billion Gulf bailout, yesterday to discuss bilateral relations and regional developments. The visit comes a day after Manama formalized an agreement with Kuwait made last year for financial aid to support the Bahraini economy as part of an assistance package with other Gulf neighbors. King Salman met Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, as well as the country's crown prince and prime minister. Saudi state news agency SPA said the two kings discussed bilateral relations and "prospects for cooperation and coordination in various fields". — Reuters

MP warns govt, says expats are taking jobs of Kuwaitis

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei yesterday threatened to file to grill ministers or the prime minister for failing to find jobs for Kuwaitis, especially hundreds of petroleum engineers who remain jobless. The lawmaker called on the government to speed up replacement of expatriates in government jobs with nationals, saying "we need expatriate expertise but this should not be at the expense of Kuwaitis".

MPs have stepped up pressure on the government to create more jobs for Kuwaitis in the public and private sectors, with most of them targeting expatriates, accus-

ing them of taking jobs that should have gone to citizens. Tabtabaei blamed the government for letting Kuwaiti students opt for certain specializations not needed by the government and the private sector, and then making them jobless. He also blamed expatriates, saying "expats are taking the jobs of our people".

He said that he has sent a series of questions to the government asking about the number of expats appointed in the government on a daily basis or on special contracts and whose numbers do not figure in the number of regular employees. Tabtabaei said the government must ease employment requirements for petroleum engineers to allow them to be employed in the government.

Pro-government MP Khaled Al-Shatti yesterday criticized the government for appointing what he called "hawkish" members of the opposition in good jobs, giving them preference over loyalists. He said if the government wanted to appoint people from the opposition, it should have appointed more "peaceful" members and not those who had "conspired" against the government.



Omar Al-Tabtabaei

Brunei introduces sharia laws

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: Brunei yesterday introduced new sharia laws, including death by stoning for adultery and gay sex, despite a storm of global criticism from politicians, celebrities and rights groups. The tough penal code in the tiny country on tropical Borneo island - ruled by the all-powerful Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah - fully came into force following years of delays. The laws, which also include amputation of hands and feet for thieves, make Brunei the first place in East or Southeast Asia to have a sharia penal code at the national level, joining several mostly Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia.

Rape and robbery are also punishable

by death under the code and many of the new laws, such as capital punishment for insulting Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), apply to non-Muslims as well as Muslims. The decision to push ahead with the punishments has sparked alarm around the world. In a public address to mark a special date in the Muslim calendar, the sultan called for stronger Islamic teachings but did not mention the new penal code.

"I want to see Islamic teachings in this country grow stronger," he said in the nationally televised speech at a convention center near the capital Bandar Seri Begawan. The sultan, who has been on the throne for over five decades, also insisted

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BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah delivers a speech yesterday. — AFP

Najib in dock over 1MDB scam; yacht sold for \$126m

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's disgraced ex-leader Najib Razak pleaded not guilty to all charges against him as he went on trial yesterday over a multibillion-dollar fraud, almost a year after his shock election loss. The 65-year-old faced the first of several trials over his alleged involvement in the looting of sovereign wealth fund 1MDB, a state investment vehicle established to develop the economy of the Southeast Asian nation.

The former premier and his cronies are accused of plundering billions of dollars from the fund and spending it on everything from high-end real estate to artworks and a luxury yacht. He had been tipped to win another term in office easily last year and extend his coalition's six-decade stranglehold on power, only to be soundly defeated by his former boss, Mahathir

Mohamad, who rode a wave of public anger over 1MDB to the premiership.

In the months that followed, once-dormant investigations into the controversy were relaunched and Najib was hit with dozens of corruption charges linked to the plundering of the fund. A small crowd of supporters was waiting for Najib as he arrived at the Kuala Lumpur court ahead of his trial, and he prayed with them for a few minutes before entering the building to shouts of "Long Live Najib".

Looking relaxed in the dock, he denied seven corruption and money-laundering charges related to the alleged theft of 42 million ringgit (\$10.3 million) from SRC International, a former 1MDB unit. It is just a fraction of the hundreds of millions of dollars that he allegedly stole. Opening the prosecution, Attorney-General Tommy Thomas told the High Court it

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Najib Razak

Egypt Red Sea province to ban single-use plastic

HURGHADA, Egypt: Egypt's Red Sea Governorate is to introduce a ban on single-use plastics that are destroying marine life, the province's top official said yesterday. The ban, set to take effect in June, covers items including disposable plastic bags, cutlery and cups, and aims to protect the area's unique sea life, governor Ahmed Abdallah said. "We want to limit this phenomenon to preserve our maritime environment," he told AFP.

The world currently produces more than 300 million tons of plastic annually, and scientists estimate there are at least five trillion pieces of the stuff floating in our oceans.

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Local

Receptions of Crown Prince and PM



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. —KUNA photos



HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad received First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad received Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday at Bayan Palace. HH also received First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, HH the Prime Minister received, in the presence of Health Minister Sheikh Dr Bassel Hmoud Al-Sabah, Chairman and CEO of Ali

Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Trading Company Faisal Ali Al-Mutawa, accompanied by Chairman of Gustave Roussy Institute of Oncology Alexander Eggermont and delegation accompanying him on the occasion of their visit to Kuwait at Bayan Palace yesterday. The meeting was attended by Head of the Diwan of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Eltimad Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health Dr Mustafa Redha and Ambassador of the French Republic to the State of Kuwait Marie Masdupuy. —KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister received Chairman of Gustave Roussy Institute of Oncology Alexander Eggermont.



Kuwait's Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser among the honored Kuwaitis.

Defense Minister calls to support growth plans

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah called for backing development plans to keep pace with global progress on Tuesday. Sheikh Nasser made the statement during a ceremony held at Basic Education College theater to honor some Kuwaitis under his patronage.

The ceremony was held by the association of members of Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET). Sheikh Nasser stressed the need to support achievements by Kuwait's elite to move towards the country's desired future. He lauded efforts made by these people in different fields that enriched Kuwait's history, saying that the Kuwaiti society would never forget these efforts.

Meanwhile, honorary president of PAAET Fahad Al-Mejel said this ceremony embodies constructive cooperation between the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). He hoped for continuing this collaboration to benefit Kuwait and its citizens. The association achieves its effective societal role in organizing such a festival for the third year to honor some of Kuwait's faithful people who made many efforts to their country in varied fields, he said.

The association was keen to hold the ceremony based on its faith in implementing the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, he not-



KUWAIT: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah while honoring former international player Fathi Kameel. — KUNA

ed. It was a clear message towards the new generation that Kuwait does not forget its sincere citizens, he affirmed. Head of the association Wael Al-Mutawa said the civil society is a partner in Kuwait's 2035 vision. He praised the ruling family's role in support-

ing the civil society, noting that NGOs law was issued before the country's institution. The association honored 12 people who devoted their lives to serve their country and raise its status amongst nations in different domains. —KUNA

Romania, Kuwait seek enhanced cooperation

VIENNA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Romania Talal Al-Hajri said yesterday that there is a real desire on the part of the Romanian government to strengthen bilateral relations with Kuwait and strengthen cooperation in various fields. Speaking to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after a meeting with Vice Prime Minister, Minister of the Environment Gratiela Gavrilescu, Al-Hajri said the Romanian government is keen to cooperate with Kuwait in the field of preserving marine and land environments and addressing the problem of air pollutants.

He added that Kuwait and Romania attach great importance to environmental issues and support all efforts of cooperation in this field, pointing out Kuwait's interest in preserving and protecting the environment and facing global warming, desertification and other vital issues. Romania is implementing a strategic plan consistent with the goals of sustainable development adopted by the United Nations.

The plan includes developed educational programs to maintain a healthy lifestyle and a balanced environment. It also provides an electronic application on mobiles that will help users to monitor any environmental disorders. Romania has recently increased taxes on vehicles and allocated their proceeds to fund environmental protection projects. Kuwait has signed and maintained several international environmental conventions and treaties, including the Vienna Convention, the Montreal Protocol, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1994 and the Kyoto Protocol in 2005. —KUNA



VIENNA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Romania Talal Al-Hajri meets with Vice Prime Minister, Minister of the Environment Gratiela Gavrilescu. — KUNA

Kuwait acclaims any initiative to strengthen Arab solidarity: Info Min



KUWAIT: Minister of Information Mohammad Al-Jabri honors Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), represented by Deputy Director-General for the Editorial Sector and Editor-in-Chief Saad Al-Ali.

KUWAIT: Minister of Information, Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri said yesterday that Kuwait welcomes any Arab initiative to bolster solidarity among peoples of the nation. Kuwait acclaims such an initiative because it advocates joint Arab action in various spheres, said the minister, addressing inauguration of a scientific distinctiveness forum, organized by "Itamiuz Consulting for Sport" foundation, in partnership with the World Fund for Development and Planning in Kuwait, Dr Abdulmohsen Al-Azmi, the head of the participating delegations, said Kuwait has always been a gathering venue for Arab brothers, "with its hand extended" for developing sports in Arab countries. — KUNA

Minister Al-Jabri has underscored significance of the forum as a platform for interaction among all sports'

stakeholders in the Arab world — namely the youth who account to two thirds of the nation. Meanwhile, Abdullah Al-Ghesab, the forum chair, has indicated that the forum is designed to educate attendees about relevant international documents and regulations. The head of the World Fund for Development and Planning in Kuwait, Dr Abdulmohsen Al-Azmi, the head of the participating delegations, said Kuwait has always been a gathering venue for Arab brothers, "with its hand extended" for developing sports in Arab countries. — KUNA

Bahraini, Kuwaiti officials discuss bilateral relations

MANAMA: Bahraini Minister of Cabinet Affairs Mohammad Al-Mutawa affirmed the depth of brotherly relations with Kuwait, which are based on solid foundations and common destiny. Al-Mutawa received the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah, where they discussed the distinguished relations between the two countries and the means of devel-

oping them in various fields, Bahraini News Agency (BNA) said. The Bahraini minister said that the bilateral cooperation between the two countries reflects the firm and mutual desire to reach high levels of ties. For his part, Sheikh Azzam praised the strong ties between the two countries in various fields. He stressed the keenness of Kuwait to expand the cooperation with the Kingdom at all levels. — KUNA



MANAMA: Bahraini Minister of Cabinet Affairs Mohammad Al-Mutawa receives the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait FM denounces policies encouraging Islamophobia at UN

‘My country has the honor of sponsoring this draft and fully backing it’

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Tuesday condemned the national policies that promote Islamophobia and hatred among people with different beliefs. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled leads a delegation to a UN General Assembly session on a draft resolution “Combating terrorism and other acts of violence based on religion or belief,” in the wake of the terrorist attacks on Muslim worshippers in Christchurch, New Zealand, on March 15.

Addressing the session, he said the draft text to condemn the shootings on the two mosques of Al-Noor and Linwood in Christchurch, which claimed 51 lives of worshippers, is to send a message of solidarity with the families of the victims and the injured, as well as the government and people of friendly New Zealand.

“I would like to seize this opportunity to appreciate the unprecedented measures adopted by the government of New Zealand in the wake of the deadly attacks; these measures reflect unparalleled tolerance and civilized approach to addressing the horrible tragedy, thus alleviating the suffering of the victims’ families,” he said. “I’d like also to thank the government of the friendly Republic of Turkey for taking the initiative and presenting the draft text before us now.

“My country has the honor of sponsoring this draft and fully backing it,” Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled stated. “The phenomenon of xenophobia, Islamophobia, hate speech, discrimination and violence, pose of the most serious menace to secure communities. Many countries of the world warned repeatedly against the growing threat of this phenomenon,” he said, citing the recent terrorist attacks in different parts of the world.

The situation become even worse when coupled with nationalist sentiments and propaganda for nation-

al policies and laws that encourage xenophobia, marginalization and discrimination against minorities, he explained. The UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as related conventions and treaties, urge respect for the basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are entitled without any discrimination based on faith, race, gender or language. Besides, these values and basic principles are enshrined in all resolutions adopted by the UN bodies in this regard, he went on.

‘Cowardly attack’

“The State of Kuwait, out of commitment to combating extremism and terrorism and capitalizing on its UN Security Council membership, worked with sisterly Indonesia for launching a press statement by the Council on March 15 to denounce in the strongest terms the heinous and cowardly terrorist attack in Christchurch.

“In their statement, the members of the Security Council reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.” They underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these acts of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice.

“They urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with the Government of the New Zealand and all other relevant authorities in this regard,” he reminded. In this connection, he recalled the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, saying this occasion serves as a lever to promote tolerance, solidarity and coexistence among people with different cultures and in the face of menaces of extremism, nationalism and



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah addressing UN General Assembly session. — KUNA

discrimination that destabilize many parts of the world.

The Kuwaiti minister urged the UN member states to shoulder their responsibilities for protecting the human rights and basic liberties of religious and ethnic minorities. He also called on all countries to lay out awareness policies and strategies on the national, regional and international for promotion of the culture of peace and coexistence in collaboration with the concerned civil society organizations and mass media.

“In this vein, we welcome the General Assembly adoption of the resolution on ‘Combating terrorism and other acts of violence based on religion or belief’ as a materialization of the solidarity against terrorism and extremism,” he said. Stressing the need to avoid

stigmatizing a specific religion, culture or race by any association with terrorism, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said Islam is a noble holy faith that highlights the values of peace, tolerance and coexistence.

In conclusion, he renewed sincere condolences to the families of the victims of the Christchurch shootings and prayed for Allah to lodge the martyrs in paradise. Kuwait delegation to the UN General Assembly and UNSC meetings includes Assistant Foreign Minister for the Minister's office Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi and Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Nasser Al-Hayyen. —KUNA



KUWAIT: File photos show some of the local rescue teams helping people with their stranded cars after the heavy rains last November. — KUNA photos

Kuwaiti rescue squads brave peril to save lives

KUWAIT: Working closely with numerous government bodies, a group of Kuwaiti hands-on volunteers have emerged as national heroes for their efforts to save lives and protect properties across the country. These rescue teams of Kuwaiti youngsters operate round-the-clock, dealing with herculean tasks including locating missing persons and protecting marine and land environments.

In interviews with KUNA yesterday, several team members agreed that the volunteers' primary mission is to serve the nation at all costs with the Kuwaiti people's best interests at heart. The 75-member strong team is officially registered with the ministry of state for youth affairs, according to team leader Salem Al-Hamada, who highlighted the close rapport the squad has established with



government bodies.

The rescue teams often deal with perilous situations including helping avert traffic fatalities, said the secretary of another national volunteer squad, Abdulwahab Al-Jafar. Expressing his gratitude for the teams' altruistic intentions, Kuwait Fire Service

Directorate's public relations officer Khalil Al-Amir hailed the youngsters as heroes for their unflinching determination to save lives. He urged the nation's youth to join such teams in a country with a profound penchant for philanthropy, which will propel Kuwait further towards international recognition. — KUNA

Public Works Ministry refutes claims of contracts awarded to suspended companies

KUWAIT: Official Spokesman of the Ministry of Public Works and Director of Planning Department Eman Al-Omar yesterday refuted news reports over awarding the ministry's road contracts to a suspended company after changing its name. Al-Omar told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the Ministry of Public Works and the General Authority for Roads and Transportation have contracts with a number of companies that were concluded before the decision of the Council of Ministers not to allow companies and engineering offices to participate in any new projects before they are cleared.

The ongoing road works were being carried out through contracts in force or those still in the contractual

or ten-year guarantee period rather than new ones, she noted. Al-Omar said that these works are under the supervision of the engineers of the Ministry and the Roads Authority around the clock according to teams prepared for the task.

She stressed that the Ministry and the Roads Authority are committed to the decision of the Cabinet and to circulate the Central Agency for Public Tenders regarding the non-signing of any new contracts with any company that did not disclose its clearance. The government had banned all companies and architectural firms that designated and implemented roads damaged by the heavy rainfall that lashed the country last November. — KUNA

Kuwait private sector partner in developing health system

KUWAIT: The Private sector is a strategic partner of government in implementing plans and strategies to offer outstanding healthy and medical services, said Health Minister yesterday. Dr Bassel Al-Sabah made the statement to KUNA on the sidelines of inaugurating Wara Hospital in the Avenues mall. He added that the private sector can benefit from facilitations offered by the ministry in developing its healthcare system.

Meanwhile, head of the hospital Ghanima Al-Omar said the opening of this hospital gives the private sector in Kuwait new momentum for joining the health sector. She noted Wara achieves

hopes of those searching for world-class services as they used to travel abroad for getting developed medical checkups. All these services have become available in Kuwait as Wara includes the best talents and offers full healthcare to patients, she said.

The hospital is specialized more in rare surgeries like backbone and physiotherapy as well as outpatient and urologic surgeries. All the hospital's sections are well equipped and include a multitude of Kuwaiti doctors who have board certification. The facility's staff has global experiences, from Germany to the US, to help Kuwaitis in their duties, she stated. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Immoral behaviors are hindering national efforts to keep the environment of Kuwait clean and safe. Moreover, attitudes such as negligence and carelessness are represented by littering and dumping wastes in several areas, especially after the camping season. — KUNA

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: 14-year-old Ali Mufaddal took this picture with his mobile. He lives in Sharq and captured this photo from his balcony.

Eighth GCC universities and higher educational institutes games begins



KUWAIT: The opening ceremony of the eighth GCC universities and higher education institutions games. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: The eighth games of GCC universities and higher education institutions kicked off Tuesday evening with participation of around 730 athletes and administrators representing 16 educational institutions. The event will last for a week and will include competitions in eight games.

Jassem Al-Ansari, Deputy Director General of Applied Education and Research at the Public Authority for

Applied Education and Training (PAAET), said hosting the games, which bring together Gulf citizens from higher education institutions, is a source of pride for to PAAET as it embodies the closer relations between the GCC countries. Al-Ansari added, in a speech at the opening ceremony, that the tournament is an opportunity for GCC citizens to meet in beautiful sports competition events.

Al-Ansari praised patronage of His Highness the

Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and the support of the General Secretariat of GCC. For his part, the Chairman of the Organizing Committee for the event Dr Hussain Al-Mukaimi said that success of the competition lies in the presence of Gulf students, administrators, and faculty members in Kuwait, and expressed his deep thanks to all universities for their keenness to participate in this sports forum.

Al-Mukaimi told reporters that the Organizing Committee had completed its preparations for the competitions, which include football, volleyball, athletics, swimming, tennis, table tennis, cross-country running, and futsal. The first event of the tournament took place during in a futsal match between PAAET and Saudi Al-Jouf University, which ended with Kuwait winning 4-0. — KUNA

Dasman Diabetes Institute organizes a health awareness outreach

KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), which was founded by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) recently organized a health awareness outreach at Kuwait Investment Company (KIC) to promote awareness about diabetes and its related complications to all the staff. A specialized multifaceted team from

the Institute was present at the outreach to provide consultations, checkups and glucose testing. Organizing such outreach events stems from the Institute's mission to address the diabetes epidemic in Kuwait through focused diabetes, research, integrated prevention, training, education and treatment.



Amricani Cultural Centre launches Mirror of Nature Expo

KUWAIT: The Amricani Cultural Centre in Kuwait on Tuesday launched an exhibition of Al-Sabah collection organized by a group of children with a theme (Mirror of Nature... full cycle). The exhibition was attended by Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Director General of Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah (DAI) Sheikh Hessa Salem Al-Sabah and Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture and Literature (NCCAL) Ali Al-Youha.

NCAAL Assistant Secretary-General for Culture Dr Issa Al-Ansari said that the National Council is proud to support and sponsor this exhibition, noting the importance of supporting these kinds of events. Director of Children program in DAI Maha Al-Issa noted that this exhibition is the product of six months of continuous work with children, where they met every day in the art workshops.

She pointed out that the idea of the exhibition was based on the children's wide imagination, where they chose pieces of archeological elements similar to nature

such as the sun, stars and planets. The children participated in the presentation of their work, which they carefully chose pieces out of the 4,000 different pieces of the collection of Al-Sabah archaeological, which were the solar system and the life cycle of stars and the cycle of the seasons and others. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah inaugurates (Mirror of Nature... full cycle) exhibition. — KUNA

Local

Fire in Mina Abdullah refinery under control, KNPC sets up probe panel

Fire broke out in a kerosene production unit

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) announced yesterday that it had completely put out the fire that broke out in a kerosene production unit in Mina Abdullah's refinery early yesterday. The company's fire department put out the blaze as soon as it occurred at 11:34 pm and no workers were injured in the incident, KNPC's Deputy CEO for Administrative and Commercial Affairs and Spokesman Bassem Al-Essa told KUNA. He added that KNPC is evaluating the damage caused by the fire and has also launched an investigation into the incident.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) has formed an ad hoc committee to look into the causes of an already quenched kerosene unit fire at Mina Abdullah Refinery. The fire has not affected kerosene supplies or the refinery's units. The kerosene unit has a daily production capacity of 40,000 barrels and its main job is to extract impurities like sulfur, nitrogen, olefin compounds and jet kerosene in order to match relevant local and global requirements. There is a kerosene treatment unit at Al-Ahmadi Refinery, having similar tasks to Abdullah Refinery's unit. It has a production capacity of 20,000 barrels per day.

Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) produces 6.5 million tons of all types of kerosene per annum. KNPC's Deputy CEO for Administrative and Commercial Affairs and Spokesman Bassem Al-Essa said in a statement to KUNA that it had completely put out the fire that broke out at the kerosene production unit. Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) CEO Hashem Hashem, also speaking to KUNA, suggested that the blaze was caused by a technical problem. —KUNA



Phone store employee accused of rape

KUWAIT: An Indian woman accused an Egyptian working in a phone store of tricking and raping her. She told police that the Egyptian told her there was a room for rent with other Asians. He took her after work to the flat, where he raped her. The Egyptian said she went with him willingly and he did not trick her. Both are being questioned.

Fingerprint machine burnt

Police authorities received a call from an official at Sabah Al-Ahmad medical center after a health ministry employee burned the two attendance fingerprint machines there, but when they arrived at the center, he was already gone. Detectives were able to arrest the man and he confessed to committing the act, saying he was very angry following a dispute with a center official. He will be charged with deliberate damage of public property. Meanwhile, a report was sent to his workplace so administrative action can be taken towards him.

Co-op fight

A fight broke out between two Kuwaitis near a co-op in Nahdha. Both men sustained injuries and were taken to Farwaniya Hospital. A police source said the fight was due to staring at each other. Both were then referred to Sulaibiya police station to face legal action.

Civil dispute

An indebted Kuwaiti became angry at the civil implementation department and assaulted a sergeant after a dispute occurred between them as he was arrested. The sergeant sustained several bruises on his body. Other policemen controlled the man, and he was charged with assaulting a public employee on duty.

Poison liquor

Sabah Al-Ahmad police station investigator ordered the arrest of a man after his condition improves for questioning for consuming liquor that may have been poisoned. The intoxicated man was taken to Adan Hospital in critical condition. — Al-Anbaa

Al-Mutawa receives medal of Legion d'Honneur, Chevalier from French president

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Faisal Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa, Chairman and CEO of Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Commercial Co (AAW), was awarded the Legion d'Honneur, Chevalier (Legion of Honor, Grade Knight) by the French Republic in recognition of his leadership in philanthropic and cross-sector business activities.

The award ceremony was held at the French ambassador's residence in Jabriya Monday night, where well-wishers included US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman and other diplomats. French Ambassador to Kuwait Marie Masdupuy decorated Mutawa with the highest honor, a medal established in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte and retained by all French governments since.

Mutawa thanked French President Emmanuel Macron for the honor given to him. "I am humbled and honored by this gesture of awarding me this medal. To the great people of France, the whole world is indebted to you for the Renaissance that we are all enjoying in these modern times," he said. He also mentioned several known French philosophers and thinkers that have shaped not only French enlightenment, but the whole world. "The world has learned from them and

others to use reason and logical thinking. They have also emphasized individualism and skepticism and have enlightened us to challenge traditional religious views," he added.

The French envoy said awarding this well-deserved medal to Mutawa is in appreciation and recognition of his continuous efforts in growing trade and commercial ties between Kuwait and France. She said Mutawa is well known for his philanthropic activities in Kuwait and other countries, especially pertaining to youth empowerment and cancer treatment centers. "Faisal Al-Mutawa is an exceptional character and personality. He is old, yes, however he grew old gracefully and it means gold. When you meet him, you will be infected with his energy and enthusiasm. He is young in spirit, action and efficiency," she said.

Masdupuy added Mutawa is known to many in Kuwait as an outstanding person. "He's a very unique individual who belongs to a Kuwaiti merchant clan. He took over several businesses of the Al-Mutawa family - from medical to several others. He introduced many French companies and brands in Kuwait and other areas of the Middle East," she mentioned. "Thank you for supporting French interests in Kuwait," she concluded.



KUWAIT: Within its special responsibility activities, The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently sponsored the 2nd DGCA Sports Championship 2019 held under auspices of DGCA chief, Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud. CBK had provided golden sponsorships and support to various NGOs to help them achieve sustainable development.

Girl kidnapped in Abu Al-Hassaniya

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A man driving a sedan and wearing a police uniform kidnapped a girl in Abu Al-Hassaniya, according to a statement by the girl's father. The father said he attempted to stop the car by opening the door but was almost run over in the process. He gave police the license plate number of the sedan, but they have not been able to find it after searching the area. Police are investigating.

Thieves arrested
Interior Ministry Relations and Security Information Department said the thieves from the video clip showing a mugging of an Asian man at a pedestrian crossing bridge in Abu Futaira have been arrested by Jahra detectives. The two suspects said they have committed seven thefts, and were identified by their victims. Both were sent to concerned authorities.

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International

THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 2019



WikiLeaks' Assange:
Transparency icon or
enemy of the state?

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Indian Hindu groups quietly put controversial temple plan on backburner



KOLKATA: Supporters of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) cheer as they listen to the speech of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a campaign rally ahead of the national elections in Kolkata yesterday. — AFP

Facebook, Twitter sucked into info war

Indian and Pakistani cyber warriors battle online

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani social media campaigner Hanzala Tayyab leads about 300 ultra-nationalist cyber warriors fighting an internet war with arch-foe India, in a battle that is increasingly sucking in global tech giants such as Twitter and Facebook. Tayyab, 24, spends his days on Facebook and encrypted WhatsApp chatrooms organizing members of his Pakistan Cyber Force group to promote anti-India content and make it go viral, including on Twitter where he has more than 50,000 followers.

That ranges from highlighting alleged Indian human rights abuses to lionizing insurgents battling Indian security forces in Kashmir, a disputed Himalayan region at the heart of historic tensions between Pakistan and India. Tayyab's job became harder on Monday when the Pakistan Cyber Force's Facebook account was taken down, one of 103 Pakistani accounts the social media giant said it had deleted because of "inauthentic behavior" and spamming.

Some Indian nationalist accounts have also been suspended in recent weeks. Portraying himself as an online combatant defending Pakistan from India's attempts to destabilize his country, Tayyab plans to continue playing his role in the broader information war being fought between the nuclear-armed foes.

"We are countering the Indian narrative through

social media, we are countering the enemies of Pakistan," Tayyab told Reuters in the capital Islamabad. With a combined population of 1.5 billion, India and Pakistan are hot growth markets for Facebook and Twitter, say analysts. But with many rival ultra-nationalist and extremist groups in the region using Facebook and Twitter platforms to advance their political agenda, both companies face accusations of bias whenever they suspend accounts.

Facebook has been buffeted by controversies across the globe in recent years, including for not stopping the use of fake accounts to try to sway public opinion in the 2016 US Presidential election and Britain's vote to leave the European Union, and for not acting to stamp out hate speech on its platform that was fuelling ethnic violence in Myanmar.

Four Facebook and more than 20 Twitter accounts belonging to members of the Pakistan Cyber Force have been shuttered in the past two months, according to Tayyab, who is still angry at Twitter for shutting

down his previous personal account in 2016. A Twitter spokeswoman said: "We believe in impartiality and do not take any actions based on political viewpoints."

A Facebook spokesperson told Reuters the company did not remove the Pakistani accounts because of Indian government pressure, but because people behind them coordinated with one another and used fake accounts to misrepresent themselves. "When we disrupt these networks for coordinated inauthentic behavior, it's because of their deceptive behavior and not because of the content they're sharing, or the ideology or political leanings of the people behind them," Facebook said.

Flare-up

Pakistan and India flirted with war in February, when they carried out aerial bombing missions against each other's territory for the first time since the 1971 war and fought a brief dogfight over the Kashmir skies. That flare-up was accompanied by a fierce propaganda war on social media. This online battle of political and ideo-

logical narratives is one that Pakistan's military believes it must win at all costs, analysts say. Military spokesmen often warn unconventional "fifth generation warfare" is being waged against Pakistan. Facebook said on Monday the 103 accounts removed were part of a network linked to employees of the Pakistani military's public relations arm. Tayyab denies the Pakistan Cyber Force is linked to Pakistan's military, saying the group is made up of volunteers.

But analysts say such cyber armies work directly either for Pakistan's military or civilian state organizations, acting as de facto proxies or militias in the online battlefields. "These groups who are being resourced and organized are actually a kind of a line of defense for this fifth generation warfare," said Shahzad Ahmed, from Pakistani digital rights group Bytes for All. Pakistan's military did not respond to a Reuters request for comment.

In India, similar nationalist groups are popping up and pushing to purge and punish those who they perceive to be critical of India - or supportive of Pakistan - on social media. One such group, Clean the Nation, says its actions have resulted in more than 50 people who had posted what it called anti-India comments and remarks critical of India's armed forces being arrested or suspended from work or education.—Reuters



Cyber Force's account, pages taken down

Brunei: A tropical sultanate with oil wealth, sharia law

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: Brunei, a tiny sultanate on tropical Borneo island, found itself the target of worldwide condemnation yesterday after implementing an Islamic penal code that critics have labeled "barbaric". It includes punishments such as stoning to death for gay sex and adultery, and the severing of limbs for theft. It remains to be seen whether the sleepy country will carry out the harshest punishments given Brunei has long had capital punishment, but has not executed anyone for decades. Here are some facts about the country, which is ruled by the all-powerful Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah:

Long history

The coastal sultanate, surrounded by Malaysia, was at its peak in the 15th century when it had an empire controlling large swathes of Borneo. It declined as European powers extended their colonial rule across Asia, and in 1888 became a British protectorate. However, it was not subsumed into the new states that were formed during the colonial era and after World War II—as many sultanates in the region were. The country gained full independence from Britain in 1984, and saw its economy grow at a rapid pace as it reaped the benefits of its abundant oil and gas reserves.

Economic woes

Brunei's per capita GDP remains among the highest in the world due to its rich energy reserves. The government and government-linked institutions provide most employment, and its approximately 400,000 citizens enjoy generous state benefits. But as the oil price collapsed a few years ago, energy-dependent Brunei



BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: A newlywed couple has their photographs taken at the Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin mosque in Bandar Seri Begawan. — AFP

was plunged into a lengthy recession. The government has announced plans to diversify the economy, but analysts warn they have still not done enough and there is a risk they may not be able to provide the same sort of secure employment for young people as for previous generations.

Vast wealth and excesses

The sultan is one of the world's richest men and tales of the royal family's extravagant lifestyles are the stuff of legend. He is reported to have a vast collection of luxury vehicles and his official residence—a vast pile that sits on a riverbank—is one of the world's largest palaces, with about 1,800 rooms. His playboy younger brother Prince Jefri Bolkiah has, however, attracted the most attention. He had a spectacular falling-out with Hassanal over allegations he embezzled billions during his time as finance minister in the 1990s.

Shift towards hardline Islam

The new sharia penal code is the latest sign that Brunei, where about 80 percent of the population is Muslim, is shifting towards hardline Islam. The sultan announced the code in 2013 and the first phase came into effect the following year. Fines or jail terms were introduced for offences including indecent behavior, failure to attend Friday prayers and out-of-wedlock pregnancies. The code was fully implemented yesterday, bringing into force the far harsher punishments, such as death by stoning for a number of offences. —AFP

China's Xi sends congratulations on Arab Summit

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday sent a congratulatory message to Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi, the rotating president of the Council of the Arab League (AL), on the 30th Arab League Summit in Tunis. In his message, Xi praised the AL's efforts to promote peace, stability and development in the Middle East. He also noted that the AL has been advocating political solutions to pressing issues and contributing to the unification and self-improvement of the Arab world.

Xi emphasized that China and the Arab states share a deep-running tradition of friendship. During the eighth ministerial meeting of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum held in Beijing last July, the two sides agreed to establish a future-oriented strategic partnership of comprehensive cooperation and common development, which was a new starting point for Sino-Arab cooperation.

China is willing to work with the AL to enhance strategic mutual trust, promote practical cooperation, strengthen people-to-people exchanges and implement the Declaration of Action on Sino-Arab Belt and Road Cooperation, said Xi. By doing so, the two sides will build a brighter future for the Sino-Arab strategic partnership and contribute more to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, Xi added. — Xinhua

International

Palestinians pray for fish as Israel opens deeper waters

Mediators seek to ease economy after border violence

GAZA: As their rickety motorboats pattered out into deep Mediterranean waters for the first time in almost two decades, the Palestinian fishermen prayed for deep-water mackerel and tuna to supplement Gaza's usual shallows fare of sardines, shrimp and crab. This week, as part of Egyptian-mediated efforts to ease the plight of 2 million residents of the blockaded Gaza Strip, Israel has extended the area where it permits Palestinians to fish. "Such a distance has been off-limits. And hopefully there are lots of fish to bring back," said 69-year-old fisherman Ahmed al-Amoudi.

Israel keeps a naval cordon on Gaza, part of a blockade it and neighboring Egypt say is necessary to prevent arms smuggling by the Hamas Islamists that rule the coastal territory. Since 2000, Israel has limited Palestinian fishing waters to just 6-9 miles from the Gaza coast. But on Monday it broadened the limit to 12-5 miles out. "This step is part of the civilian policy aimed at preventing a humanitarian deterioration in the Gaza Strip and reflects the policy of distinguishing between terror and the uninvolved populace," an Israeli official said.

Palestinians saw the move as an Israeli concession to a year of protests at the border, combined with several surges of cross-border fighting which have prompted mediation by Egypt, the United Nations and Qatar on ways to help Gaza's economy. "Thanks to God and then to the 'March of Return', which opened up the sea for us," Al-Amoudi said, referring to the weekly demonstrations at the frontier, which demand a lifting of the blockade and the right for Palestinians to return to homes their families fled or were forced from when Israel was founded.

April to June are peak Gaza fishing season. The sec-

tor accounts for less than 5 percent of the enclave's GDP and supports some 50,000 people, a fraction of the 2 million population. But the fishing has value beyond the numbers, as one of the few viable industries in Gaza, where more than half the population is unemployed and nearly 80 percent receive some form of aid, according to the World Bank.

With Gaza's land borders tightly controlled by neighboring Israel and Egypt, the sea's horizon provides many Palestinians with a glimpse of hoped-for freedoms of movement in the future. The fishermen still have it hard, with fuel and spare parts for their boats scarce. They say that Israel has also barred the importation to Gaza of wire cables that would allow them to line nets for plumbing the depths. But fisherman Wael Abu Mohammed was still cautiously upbeat. "With 15 miles now we will be comfortable, if there are no problems with the Israelis," the father of 10 said. "We hope for the best." The past year has been the deadliest in Gaza since the last war between Hamas and Israel five years ago, with nearly 200 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces at the border demonstrations. One Israeli soldier was killed. United Nations investigators say Israel has used excessive force. Israel says it has no choice but to use deadly force to protect the border from militants and infiltrators.

The Israeli navy has in the past fired on Palestinian boats that strayed from the fishing zones, sometimes impounding the vessels and detaining their occupants. In addition to smuggling, Israel worries about seaborne attacks. In the 2014 Gaza war, Hamas frogmen swam from Gaza to storm an Israeli coastal base. The Israeli official



GAZA: Fishermen arrive with their catch at the seafront of Gaza City, in the Palestinian enclave yesterday. — AFP

said that maintaining the expanded zone for Gaza fishermen "depends on (them) honoring the agreements" and

that any attempt to venture beyond it "will be handled accordingly by the (Israeli) security services". — Reuters

The Sudanese cartoonist reaching out to the world

COPENHAGEN: From his self-imposed exile in Denmark, political cartoonist Khalid Albaih sees himself as an "ambassador" for his native Sudan, with biting sketches that aim to unify rather than alienate. His criticism of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, in power for three decades, has made it impossible for him to live in his homeland.

Albaih's social and political commentaries - often simple drawings in block colours and with clean lines - convey scathing criticisms of authoritarianism. But they also express solidarity and hope for a better future. "I see my role as that of an ambassador, because I try to tell the world what's happening in Sudan," says Albaih, who cuts a gentle yet looming figure at 1.96 meters. "Because of my social media following I can reach more people and I can translate what's happening," he tells AFP.

He is perhaps most well-known internationally for his cartoon of Colin Kaepernick, the former NFL quarterback who started a 2016 kneeling protest against racial inequality and social injustice during the US national anthem played prior to games. The cartoon features Kaepernick on one knee, his afro drawn in the shape of a large clenched fist. American film-

maker Spike Lee wore a tee-shirt featuring the drawing, helping it to go viral.

'Start a conversation'

With small, round glasses and a neatly trimmed beard, the 38-year-old Albaih speaks softly in an interview with AFP in the Copenhagen city library where he often works. He left Sudan at the beginning of his teens and has not lived there since. After spending more than 25 years living in Doha and briefly in the United States, he arrived in the Danish capital with his wife and children in October 2017. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranks Sudan 174th out of 180 countries in its World Press Freedom Index. Sudan's powerful National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) regularly confiscates entire print runs of newspapers that carry articles it

deems inappropriate, especially those critical of authorities.

Albaih ended up in Copenhagen thanks to the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN), which offers shelter to artists and writers persecuted, or at risk of persecution, in their home countries. He posts his cartoons on social media, with nearly 25,000 followers on Twitter, slightly fewer on Instagram and almost 85,000 on his Facebook page "Khartoon" - a play on the words cartoon and the Sudanese capital, Khartoum. "I do these artworks because I want to start a conversation," he says.

Reaching out

His aim, he adds, is to "reach the other side". "We are trying to reach the governments, we are trying to reach the EU, we are trying to reach the American people to tell

them what's happening." To attract as many viewers as possible from all walks of life, he alternates his topics, sometimes covering top world news before moving on to something more regional. Each cartoon is accompanied by a short caption in English. "I could do something about America and I get everybody's attention... and then, I do something that they've never heard about, like the protests in Sudan," he says.

The deadly protests began in the African country in December, in response to a government decision to cut a vital bread subsidy. They quickly escalated into nationwide demonstrations calling on Bashir to resign in the biggest challenge to his rule. In February, the veteran leader imposed a state of emergency to quell the demonstrations, which have since been largely confined to the capital. — AFP

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Geneva	138	618
London	168	603
New York	235	930
Washington, D.C.	300	1,080

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International

'Black and gay' woman elected Chicago mayor in historic vote

Lightfoot beat a career politician Preckwinkle

CHICAGO: Chicago on Tuesday became the biggest US city to elect a black woman its mayor, as voters put their faith in an openly-gay political novice to tackle difficult problems of economic inequality and gun violence. Lori Lightfoot, a 56-year-old former federal prosecutor and practicing lawyer who has never before held elected office, won the Midwestern city's mayoral race in a lopsided victory.

She beat out Toni Preckwinkle, a career politician who is also black, by a wide margin of 74 to 26 percent with most ballots counted. "We were up against powerful interests," Lightfoot said in a victory speech, with her wife and young daughter by her side. "Today, you did more than make history, you created a movement for change," she told a cheering crowd. Lightfoot will become Chicago's first openly gay mayor as well as the first African American woman to hold the post. Since 1837, Chicago voters have elected only one black mayor and one female mayor.

Her ascendancy to the top of Chicago government was a stunning development in a city where insider deals and entrenched party politics held sway for decades. "It is a city-wide rejection of the Chicago political establishment at the mayoral level," Evan McKenzie, political science professor at the University of Illinois in Chicago, told AFP. Preckwinkle, the chief executive of Cook County in which Chicago is located, has for decades held various local elected offices, which analysts said hurt her in an election in which voters were looking to shake up city hall.

Among the top issues were high levels of gun violence that claims more lives than in other major American cities, and years of political corruption in the Democratic

stronghold. The initial field in the mayoral race consisted of 14 contenders, but Lightfoot managed an upset-sidelining moderates and establishment figures by promising to clean up city government and reduce economic inequality. She and Preckwinkle were the final two left competing in Tuesday's run-off election.

'New ideas'

Voters left little doubt they wanted the next mayor to tackle the major issues vexing the city of 2.7 million people-including economic disparities and gun violence. "The message is that (voters) want new ideas and cleaner government," McKenzie said. Community groups have for years complained about disparities in living conditions among the sprawling city's diverse communities. Gun violence, fueled by gangs and the drug trade, plagues economically-depressed neighborhoods in the South and West, which are majority African American. The downtown business district, and areas to the north and along the city's famed lake shore, have enjoyed an economic boom even as more than 550 people were murdered last year alone.

Reforming the police department, which has a sordid history of abusive tactics, and city hall, which is mired in a federal corruption probe of one of its members, were priorities for voters, McKenzie said. Lightfoot headed a panel investigating the city's policing problems and held a number of appointed positions in city government. She has promised to increase affordable housing, fight homelessness and crime, and boost oversight of the police department. "We can and will finally put the interests of our people, all of our people, ahead of the interests of a



CHICAGO: Chicago mayor elect Lori Lightfoot speaks during a night party in Chicago, Illinois. In a historic first, a gay African American woman was elected mayor of America's third largest city. — AFP

powerful few," Lightfoot said Tuesday night.

Laquan McDonald

Lightfoot will replace outgoing mayor Rahm Emanuel—once a rising star in the Democratic Party and former president Barack Obama's first White House chief of staff. The powerful Emanuel sustained political damage for his handling of murder of black teenager Laquan McDonald and declined to run for a third term. Lightfoot emphasized during her campaign that she was among the few early candidates to declare her candidacy before Emanuel decided not to run again. McDonald was a 17-year-old

boy shot dead by police in a 2014 encounter caught on police dash cam video.

The video-showing officer Jason Van Dyke firing 16 bullets into the knife-wielding teen even after he fell to the ground—was not released for more than a year. Emanuel faced accusations of an attempted cover-up. He fired the police chief and brought in a reformer who instituted changes, worked to rebuild public trust, and reduced gun violence. But as Van Dyke was about to go on trial for murder in September, Emanuel announced he would not run for re-election. Van Dyke was convicted and sentenced to nearly seven years in prison. — AFP

News in brief

Palestinian shot dead

NABLUS: A Palestinian attempted to stab an Israeli in the occupied West Bank yesterday before being shot dead, Israeli and Palestinian officials said. The Israeli army said a Palestinian tried to carry out a stabbing attack near a military checkpoint close to Nablus in the northern West Bank, after which "a civilian fired and neutralized the assailant". The Palestinian health ministry later confirmed he had died, though his identity was not released. Palestinian official news agency Wafa said the man who fired the shot was a settler, though the army declined to confirm or deny this. Wafa quoted eyewitnesses as saying the Palestinian man was a truck driver. A series of Palestinian lone wolf attacks broke out in the West Bank in late 2015. The situation has since calmed, but sporadic attacks continue. — AFP

Knife attacker kills two

BEIJING: A knife-wielding man killed two people and injured two others at a primary school in central China yesterday, the latest such attack to hit the country in recent years. Two injured primary school students have been sent to hospital with no danger to their lives, the government of Ningyuan county in Hunan province said in a statement. Authorities did not state the identities or age of those killed. Police detained a 31-year-old male suspect, surnamed Zheng, from the town of Baijiapingzhen, where the primary school is located, the statement added. China has experienced a spate of knife attacks against schoolchildren in recent years, forcing authorities to increase security. In October, a woman attacked and injured 14 children with a knife at a kindergarten in China's southwestern Sichuan province. — AFP

Russia opposes US plan

MOSCOW: A US proposal to send more NATO ships to the Black Sea to ensure safe passage for Ukrainian vessels and deter Russia is viewed "negatively" in Moscow, the Kremlin said yesterday. Washington has been working on a package to boost surveillance and send more NATO ships to the Black Sea after a naval confrontation between Moscow and Kiev last year, the US ambassador to NATO said. The measure was expected to be discussed during talks by NATO foreign ministers in Washington today. Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Kremlin viewed such a proposal "negatively". "We do not understand what they mean by this. The situation with the Kerch Strait and navigation there is well known," he told reporters. Russian deputy foreign minister Alexander Grushko told Russian news agencies the plan would only lead to "increased military risks" in the region. — AFP

Iran braces as raging floods set to spread

TEHRAN: Iranian emergency services were bracing for widespread flooding yesterday with mass evacuations planned as extensive rainfalls in regions neighboring Khuzestan converge on the oil-rich southwestern province. "The water moving south from Ilam and Lorestan provinces will enter Khuzestan... many villages there will be submerged," said Ali Asghar Peivandi, the head of Iran's Red Crescent.

"With the possibility of dams overflowing, we have made preparations to accommodate 100,000 people," he told state television. Khuzestan has an extensive range of dams but officials said water was flowing into them at a fast rate. In some cases water levels were only 70 centimeters (around 27 inches) lower than the dam crests, they reported. "Our dams are more than 95 percent full," Khuzestan governor Gholamreza Shariati told state TV.

Water was released from dams as an emergency measure to prevent them from breaking, leading to fears the outflow may

cause havoc in cities, towns and villages downstream. Iran has been hit by flooding across most of the country for the past two weeks. The northeast of Iran was swamped on March 19 before the west and southwest of the country were inundated on March 25, killing a total 45 people. This week the deluge hit the west and southwest, with at least four deaths already reported even though emergency services have only begun reaching regions cut off by floods.

"Seventy-eight intercity roads have been blocked, as many as 2,199 rural roads and 84 bridges have been washed away," said Behnam Saeeadi, spokesman for the National Disaster Management Organization. "Across 15 provinces, 141 rivers burst their banks and around 400 land slides were reported," he told state TV. The main rail links between Tehran and the south and north of the country was disrupted as landslides and water swept away tracks.

The government said the flooding had damaged nearly 12,000 kilometers (7,500 miles) of roads, or 36 percent of the country's entire network. Rescue efforts overnight were hindered by the inability of Iran's ageing and limited rescue helicopter fleet to fly at night. US sanctions stop Iran from purchasing helicopters, prompting Foreign Minister Javad Zarif to accuse the



POLDOKHTAR, Iran: This picture shows a general view of the flooded city of Poldokhtar in the Lorestan province. — AFP

United States of impeding aid efforts.

The sanctions were "impeding aid efforts by #IranianRedcrescent to all communities devastated by unprecedented floods," Zarif tweeted. "Blocked equipment includes relief choppers, this isn't just economic warfare; it's economic

TERRORISM," he wrote. The military has been called in to help the emergency services cope. Drones surveyed flooded regions looking for survivors as choppers and amphibious armored personnel carriers were used to evacuate stricken residents. — AFP

Venezuela's Guaido stripped of immunity, can face prosecution

CARACAS: Venezuelan lawmakers loyal to President Nicolas Maduro stripped opposition leader Juan Guaido's immunity Tuesday - and authorized the high court to criminally prosecute him for proclaiming himself the crisis-hit country's ruler. Guaido - whose claim is recognized by over 50 countries - had earlier expressed fears of being abducted by government agents following a request by the Supreme Court to the Constituent Assembly to lift his parliamentary immunity.

Critics of the controversial two-year-old body say it was created to rubber-stamp Maduro's decisions and sideline the opposition-controlled National Assembly. The Constituent Assembly's president, Diosdado Cabello, announced pro-Maduro lawmakers had unanimously authorized the Supreme Court to prosecute Guaido, leaving him also liable to be charged for breaching a January 29 government ban on leaving the country. The court had been investigating Guaido for usurping Maduro's powers by declaring himself interim president on January 23 - a move which rapidly gained interna-

tional support. "The people are determined and nothing is going to stop us," said a defiant Guaido in response. "There is no turning back in this process." Guaido recognizes neither the court nor the Constituent Assembly and insisted the decision was invalid.

Travel ban

The court ruling, issued Monday, cited Guaido's violation of a ban on his travel outside Venezuela when he visited Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Paraguay from late February to early March. The move came after Venezuela's auditor general's office announced last week that it had stripped Guaido of the right to hold public office for 15 years, a decision he rejected as invalid. Parallel to the political battle, the country has been hit by a series of devastating blackouts that have left millions without water, prompting the government to replace the country's energy minister and institute power rationing in a bid to address the outages.

Three major blackouts hit Venezuela in March, worsening already dire living and economic conditions in the country, and prompting authorities to take steps aimed at curbing the outages. Maduro - whose government has blamed "terrorists" for alleged attacks that have damaged the country's main hydroelectric power plant - announced that he was appointing Igor Gavidia Leon to replace retired general Luis Motta Dominguez as energy minister. — AFP



CARACAS: The president of the Venezuelan National Constituent Assembly Diosdado Cabello (center), Assembly member Gladys Requena (right) and Assembly first vice-president Tania Diaz raise their hands during a session in Caracas. — AFP

WikiLeaks' Assange: Transparency icon or enemy of the state?

LONDON: A heroic campaigner for openness, or an enemy of the US state trying to avoid justice: after a decade in the limelight, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange remains an evasive and polarizing figure. The 47-year-old Australian is again in the headlines after Ecuadoran President Lenin Moreno said he had "repeatedly violated" the conditions of his asylum at the country's embassy in London.

Assange, who won fame as the frontman of the whistleblowing website as it exposed government secrets worldwide, has lived in the embassy since seeking refuge there in 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden. He was applauded by transparency and anti-war campaigners for revealing the death of civilians, torture and clandestine military operations with the release of 500,000 US documents on the Iraq and Afghan wars.

But the United States and its allies accused him of risking lives by revealing information on sources, intelligence techniques and key infrastructure sites, with internal documents showing the US military considered him an "enemy". Human rights groups and newspapers that once worked with Assange to edit and publish the war logs were also horrified when WikiLeaks dumped the documents unredacted online, including the names of informants.

He was arrested in Britain in December 2010 on allegations of sexual assault and rape in Sweden, claims he strongly denied, saying they were politically motivated. Before the claims were dropped in 2017, Assange expressed fears that any extradition to Sweden could see his eventual transfer to the United States to face trial for the leaks. — AFP

International

Indian Hindu groups quietly put the temple plan on backburner

Modi's BJP seeks to partly switch focus to issues with Pakistan

NEW DELHI: Millions of Hindus will wake up at the crack of dawn this Saturday, five days before the start of India's general election, and march to nearby temples to chant a sacred hymn and renew a pledge to build a temple on the ruins of a 16th-century mosque. Hardline Hindu allies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) say they will mobilize more than 10 million people on April 6 - the start of the Hindu New Year - to shore up support for the contentious plan to build a temple in the northern town of Ayodhya.

But while the event will keep the focus on a core demand of India's Hindu nationalists, it will not overtly be part of the BJP's election campaign, signaling a softer approach by the ruling party, multiple sources familiar with discussions said. The commitment to construct a grand temple in Ayodhya to the Hindu god-king Ram has been part of the BJP's election manifesto since the 1990s and has helped the party garner Hindu votes in state and federal elections since then.

However, the BJP and its allies are concerned that focusing on the temple issue could be too hot to handle, especially since it is now the party in power. It could worsen communal tensions and trigger religious riots in the country, said a senior BJP leader. "We cannot underestimate the power of Hindu fringe groups, and it's best not to ignite these issues," said a BJP leader who is overseeing the party's election strategy.

The BJP leader and two other senior party members, two federal ministers and four members of hardline Hindu groups, who didn't wish to be identified due to

the sensitivity of the issue, said they reached a consensus to fold the temple issue into a broader religious and cultural discourse, without being too vocal about it. Following a meeting between senior religious leaders and BJP politicians in January, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) or the World Hindu Council, which is leading the movement for building the Ayodhya temple, put its agitation on hold in February.

Details of the meeting have not been published previously. The VHP, which shares ideological ties with the BJP, would renew its demand only after the general election, its leaders said. "While we remain committed to the cause that is so close to the hearts of Hindus, we're unanimous in our view that it's not the right time to amplify the temple issue," said Alok Kumar, international working president of the VHP. "Politicization leads to controversies."

Hindu-Muslim riots

The VHP has distributed pamphlets and issued appeals on social media to participate in a chanting ceremony aimed at renewing the pledge to build the temple on the spot where many Hindus believe Ram was born, where the mosque stood. Sanjay Mayukh, a BJP spokesman in New Delhi, declined comment on the

April 6 event being organized by the VHP. "We wish them (VHP) a success and we will celebrate the Hindu New Year too," said Mayukh.

A militant Hindu mob tore down the mosque in 1992, sparking riots that killed about 2,000 people in one of the worst instances of sectarian violence in India since independence in 1947. The mosque, built by a Muslim ruler in 1528, has been one of the prime causes of conflict between India's majority Hindus and minority Muslims, who constitute 14 percent of the country's 1.3 billion people. India's Supreme Court is now in control of the site in Uttar Pradesh state and has been weighing petitions from both communities on what should be built there.

In March, the country's top court appointed an arbitration panel to mediate in the dispute. It's verdict is yet to come. BJP election candidates confirmed they are avoiding the temple issue in their campaigns. Former government minister and BJP lawmaker Sanjeev Baliyan, who is contesting the election from a constituency in Uttar Pradesh, said he has instructed supporters to "refrain from using the Ayodhya issue in any political rally."

At least 65 people were killed in clashes between Hindus and Muslims in Baliyan's constituency in 2013. "The danger of any religious tension spilling out of our

control would change the election mood. Best to keep religious issues away from politics for now," he said. Instead, Baliyan said, his campaign would focus on the BJP's achievements during its last five years in power and national security issues.

Most pollsters expect the BJP to emerge to win the highest number of seats in the election after recent military exchanges between India and arch enemy Pakistan led to a wave of nationalist fervor that has helped Modi. But the pollsters say the BJP is unlikely to repeat its sweeping victory of 2014 because of the government's inability to provide jobs to the millions of youngsters coming into the job market each year and depressed rural incomes.

The BJP is also under fire from small business owners, traditional supporters of the party, who say they have suffered because of a rocky start to the Goods and Services Tax, India's biggest tax reform, and Modi's shock move to ban high-value banknotes in 2016. The big question may be whether the BJP gets enough seats in the 544-member lower house of parliament to govern without having to form a coalition with other parties.

India begins voting on April 11 and the staggered election is scheduled to end on May 19. Results will be declared on May 23. Ambuj Nigam, the leader of the Vishwa Hindu Dal, a Hindu hardline Hindu group that came into existence in 2018, said the demand for a temple would again gain momentum after the general election. "We have put all our controversial works on hold," said Nigam. "But as soon as election results are out, we will bring Hindu nationalism back to the forefront." — Reuters



Hindus backing Modi tone down religious fervor

Sharia law around across the globe

HONG KONG: Brunei yesterday introduced harsh new sharia laws - including death by stoning for adultery and gay sex - despite a storm of global criticism from rights groups. Although most Muslim nations incorporate elements of sharia law in their legal systems, very few carry out the harsher punishments - known as hudud - which even Muslim scholars disagree on. Here are some facts about sharia law and how it is interpreted around the world:

What is sharia law?

Sharia is a religious law forming part of the Islamic faith derived from the Koran and the hadiths - the words or actions of the prophet Mohammed. The manner of its application in modern times has been a subject of dispute between conservative and liberal Muslims, and it remains a contested topic around the world. Some aspects have been widely accepted - such as how it applies to banking - with even Western companies introducing Islamic finance products to attract Muslim customers. Hudud, which means "boundaries" in Arabic, is the punishment meted out for sins such as adultery, rape, homosexuality, theft and murder. Extreme punishments are rarely carried out as many offences must be proved by a confession or by having been witnessed by several adult Muslim males. Countries which follow extreme sharia law include:

Saudi Arabia

Sharia is the basis for all Saudi law and until fairly recently extreme hudud punishments carried out in public were common. Homosexual acts are not only illegal but punishable by execution - although the usual penalty has been limited to flogging and imprisonment. Beheadings and amputations by sword were usually carried out on Fridays, before midday prayers. In extreme cases, such as the rape of a child, the condemned man is sometimes ordered crucified after execution. The law also allows for literal eye-for-an-eye punishment, known as "qisas", in cases of personal injury. The family of a murder victim can pardon a condemned person - often in exchange for blood money.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan's constitution is based on Islamic law but how that is interpreted has a complex history influenced by local custom and tribal traditions. The Taliban followed a brutal interpretation



BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: Muslim women listen to Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah's speech during an event in Bandar Seri Begawan yesterday. —AFP photos



BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: Children perform ablution before praying at the Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin mosque in Bandar Seri Begawan.

of Sharia law during their rule from 1996-2001. For instance, they confined women to their homes, only allowing them outside with a male escort and hidden beneath a burqa. Hudud punishments were widely practiced all over the country. The militants now control more territory in Afghanistan than any time since 2001, and again are imposing their strict interpretation of Sharia, although they have also recently indicated they could loosen some of their strictest interpretations if they return to power.

Indonesia

Indonesia's conservative Aceh is the only province in the world's biggest Muslim-majority country that imposes Islamic law. Public flogging is common for a range of offenses in the region at the tip of Sumatra island, including gambling, drinking alcohol, adultery and having gay sex. Despite calls for it to end, the practice has wide support among Aceh's mostly Muslim population. Aceh adopted religious law after it was granted special autonomy in 2001, an attempt by the central government to quell a long-running separatist insurgency. While Indonesia has the death penalty, the government last year warned that Aceh's plan to usher in beheading as a punishment for murder was banned under existing national laws.

Sudan

Sudan adopted sharia law in 1983 but since then has implemented it randomly, activists say. Death by stoning remains a judicial punishment but has not been implemented in decades - although activists claim that hundreds of women are flogged every year for "immoral behavior" under the criminal code. In recent weeks several women protesters were sentenced to flogging for participating in protests against President Omar Al-Bashir's rule, but an appeals court overturned the sentence.

Pakistan

In 1979, military dictator Zia ul Haq introduced the widely-criticized Hudood Ordinances, part of a sweeping Islamisation of Pakistan. Sharia courts implementing the laws ran parallel to the mainstream British-influenced Pakistan Penal Code, and covered adultery, false accusations in court, property crimes and prohibition of drugs and alcohol. Women were not allowed to testify in the most severe cases, involving stonings or amputations, and the laws on rape or adultery required four adult Muslim males of good character to testify to the act. In 2006, MPs overwhelmingly approved the Women Protection Law, voting that rape and adultery cases should no longer be heard under the harsh religious system, but in the mainstream courts. Rulings in sharia courts can also now be appealed in the mainstream courts.

Nigeria

Some 12 of Nigeria's 36 states have extended Sharia to criminal matters and courts can order amputations - although few have been carried out. The rest of Nigeria has a mixed legal system of English common and traditional law.

Qatar

Flogging is still used in Qatar as a punishment for alcohol consumption by Muslims or illicit sexual relations. The punishment for adultery is 100 lashes. Adultery is punishable by death when a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man are involved.

The Islamic State

Although not a country, under its "caliphate", declared vanquished on March 23, the Islamic State group ran its own courts and implemented its brutal interpretation of Islam in areas it controlled in Syria and neighboring Iraq. It punished alleged crimes including theft, alcohol consumption, adultery, and homosexuality. The extremist group carried out beheadings, stonings and amputation, and threw men suspected of being homosexual off buildings. — AFP

Rising Thai political star faces fresh legal woes

BANGKOK: The telegenic leader of a Thai political party who rode to prominence during last month's election on a wave of millennial support stands accused of inciting unrest, he said yesterday, calling his latest legal woes "politically motivated" by the junta. Billionaire Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit heads up the youth-oriented Future Forward Party, which came out of nowhere to amass more than six million votes in the March 24 vote, the first since a 2014 coup.

Future Forward has joined an anti-junta coalition with six other parties claiming the right to form a government in the aftermath of the disputed vote whose full results will not be ratified until May 9. But the tycoon said on Facebook he has now been summoned to appear at a Bangkok police station on Saturday to hear incitement charges against him that carry a maximum sentence of seven years.

He wrote on the Facebook page, where he posted the summons, the

move was "an old political game" that he expected to intensify after the party's strong election showing. Speaking to reporters later, Thanathorn hit back at the junta government, which filed the complaint. "It is not the Future Forward Party which causes divisiveness of the people but the military who wants to hold on to power," he said. "I am calling for a restoration of democracy in Thailand... these cases are politically motivated."

Police investigator Charoensit Jongitthi said there were two charges in total that related to Thanathorn's actions in 2015, though he would not elaborate. "That is what I can say for now," he told AFP. Thanathorn is already being investigated under Thailand's Computer Crimes Act for allegedly spreading false information when he criticised the junta in a Facebook Live discussion last year. Future Forward is a key member of the anti-junta political coalition led by Pheu Thai, the party linked to self-exiled premier Thaksin Shinawatra.

The so-called "democratic front" says it has more than a majority of seats in the lower house, but the junta-backed Phalang Pracharat Party won the popular vote. Inconsistent counting, inaccurate figures and more than two million invalidated ballots have fuelled doubt over the poll. The party aligned with the junta put forward 2014 coup leader Prayut Chan-O-Cha as its candidate for prime minister. — AFP

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South Africans cycle through apartheid's spatial divides

Lesego Konupi was just a toddler when he learned to hide under his grandmother's table at the sound of the gunshots that came to define South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle. It was at that same house east of Johannesburg where Konupi was gifted his first bicycle, and where, years later, he and three friends would start a collective that uses bicycles to cross the physical and social boundaries created by apartheid. "On our bicycles, we don't think about the city divides. We just move," said Konupi of Bicycle Stokvel, which takes its name from the South African word for informal savings groups.

Towns and cities remain racially divided more than 20 years after the end of apartheid, when millions of blacks were forcibly removed from white-only urban areas to live in crowded townships and homelands, with buffer zones separating the races. The legacy of apartheid-era city planning is one reason why, 25 years after South Africa's first democratic elections, the country is still considered the most unequal in the world, according to the World Bank.

The idea behind Bicycle Stokvel, said Konupi, is to help young people living in townships overcome the limitations imposed on them by apartheid urban planners through cycling, art and music. Every three months cycling enthusiasts gather for a group ride through Vosloorus township, stopping along the way to discuss the photography or drawings the group's artists have displayed on the walls of taxi ranks and abandoned buildings. The rides, which sometimes grow to about 150 people, are free to join and the group provides bikes for anyone who needs one.

"It is our opportunity to document township life the way we see it, not how others see us," said Konupi, wearing jeans, a shirt and a hat all designed by Vosloorus artists. "Instead of putting alcohol or politics in people's minds, we are pushing new ideas instead." The group hosts 'hangouts' where local musicians, photographers, stylists and cinematographers come together to listen to live music and share ideas and skills. Bicycle Stokvel often stages rides in Johannesburg, where Konupi now lives and works as a photographer.

In 2018 the group cycled to Durban, 550 km from Vosloorus. "The trip made us see that even if you don't have a lot (of money) there are ways of exploring our country and also our continent," said Konupi. This year, they plan on cycling across country borders to Eswatini (formerly known as Swaziland), Mozambique and Botswana.

Safety in numbers

Konupi's mission to bring people together by bike stands out in a country where few people cycle. According to the 2014 National Household Travel Survey, minibus taxis are the main means of transport for 68 percent of households in Gauteng province with private cars, buses and trains making up much of the rest of the city's transport. "There are huge safety concerns for cyclists," said Susan Monyai, head of marketing at the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA). "There are not enough safe spaces for them to lock up their bicycles and it is risky for them to cycle at night."

Bicycle Stokvel often runs up against another relic of apartheid-era city planning: The lack of accessible cycle lanes between townships and the city center. Cyclists have to share the road with cars, buses and minibus taxis in a country with a poor road safety record, despite a modern road network. More than 14,000 people were killed in road accidents in 2017, according to official statistics.

Former Johannesburg mayor Parks Tau had plans to establish more bike lanes throughout the city. But, when voters replaced him with Herman Mashaba from the main opposition party in 2016, funding was cut from the bicycle lane project. "This was a real sad turn of events for the city," Rehana Moosajee, a former member of the mayoral transport committee, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "I understand there are competing priorities, but it is possible to establish safer infrastructure in cheaper ways."

Luyanda Mfeka, a spokeswoman for mayor Mashaba, confirmed that the cycling lanes had been "deprioritized for now". Moosajee, who now runs a training business, pointed to Bicycle Stokvel as an example of how social integration can be achieved through minimal resources. "The stokvel are weaving together community, art, culture and sport to show that we all have an equal right to access the city," she said. For the women in the group, that means finally being able to ride at night. "As a female cyclist, I cannot ride alone," said Maria Kgatitsoe, who was the only woman on the ride to Durban. "But riding alone in a minibus taxi at night is not safe either."

In South Africa, women are murdered at a rate five times higher than the global average, according to the World Health Organization. "I want other women to feel they can do anything in this country," Kgatitsoe added. "That is how I felt when I cycled to Durban." Cycling is one way to reclaim the city from its apartheid past, but the government also needs to look at new forms of urban planning, said Monyai of the JDA. She would like to see more mixed-income housing estates built close to industrial and commercial areas. "Improving pedestrian bridges, walkways and public transport are equally important," she added. — Reuters



People line up with cans and tanks to collect water in the Petare neighborhood of Caracas on April 1, 2019. — AFP

Venezuela rich, poor united in quest for water

Crippling power blackouts are subjecting Venezuelans to a second phase of deprivation - massive water shortages that make no distinction in income or social class, forcing rich and poor alike to wait in long lines for drinking water, while some hoist it from sewers to be able to flush their toilets. On the hill in the Caracas neighborhood of Petare - the country's largest slum home to more than half a million people - hundreds of people line up day and night behind two wells.

They carry anything that can hold water - drums, cans, bottles, buckets. When their turn comes, they take as much as they can. The water is not drinkable, but it will allow them some dignity, to bathe or wash clothes. For the past month, repeated massive blackouts have plunged the country into darkness and disarray. As a result, electric water pumps have shut down, forcing a cut in water supplies.

'No water'

"We have no water, no electricity, the power cuts are terrible. Food is going bad," says 78-year-old Ernestine Velasco as she recites a litany of deprivation in her modest house, located on an unpaved street in the March 24 district. "We are having a bad time. There is no transport, there's nothing." Lack of water is a chronic problem in this teeming corner of Caracas. Though the cost is minimal, the service is non-existent, Velasco says. "Thank God, we have

this," she adds, pointing to the two wells nearby, though "it's chaos, it makes you want to run away."

Locals are waiting for the state water company to restore supplies. Even then, they expect it will only be for a few hours. "We are dry. We don't have a single drop," said Carmen Moncada, tipping over an empty drum. A little further on, in the district of El Valle, a crowd formed around a manhole, drawing up water for their toilets. President Nicolas Maduro has ordered electricity rationing for the next month in a bid to buy his engineers time to fix the problem, which he blames on opposition sabotage designed "to drive the country crazy". The working day has officially been shortened to ease the strain on the grid and allow people to get home before dark. Schools that have been shut since March 26 are expected to reopen on Wednesday, however.

Prohibitive price

In a Caracas park where a water tanker is dispensing supplies, a lawyer from the upscale northern neighborhood of La Castellana arrives to buy the whole tanker-full for his apartment building. The driver of the 1969-era truck, which holds 2,100 gallons (8,000 liters) is quick to name his price: "For La Castellana, it's \$200."

Despite the prohibitive price - Venezuela's minimum wage is just over \$5 - the lawyer doesn't argue. "This is the price we have to pay to stay in Venezuela," said the

42-year-old lawyer, who declined to give his name. He said he would have to collect the money from his remaining neighbors, a third of whom have joined the exodus of 2.7 million Venezuelans the United Nations say have left the country since the economic crisis began in 2015.

One possible solution for the lawyer and his neighbors was to sink a well to tap the aquifer at nearby El Avila hill, but that would cost \$20,000. Right now, the cheaper solution is the tanker. Every day, people fill up from streams running from the hill. William the driver gets his water at a spring in the city's Eastern Park - with government approval - forming a line with other tanker drivers. In return, they must make three free trips on the government's behalf to distribute water in various parts of the capital. The army enforces the agreement.

But in poor areas like March 24, the trucks are slow to arrive, playing on the nerves of locals like Carmen Veliz. She says that in other areas nearby, there has been no water "for months". Such exasperation drove hundreds of people onto the streets Sunday to beat pots and pans in a display of outrage in different parts of the capital. At least three people were injured in clashes with police and pro-government armed "colectivos" sent to tamp down the protests. "What is the government doing? Neither one thing nor the other," says one woman. Referring equally to Maduro's rival Guaido, she adds: "No one comes to help us...they are all useless." — AFP

Row shines harsh light on Kushner

Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner faced little scrutiny on his way to becoming one of America's most powerful people. But now a row over White House security clearances is pushing the president's publicity-shy favorite into unwelcome limelight. Unlike his can't-get-enough-exposure father-in-law, Kushner is a discreet presence. He's virtually a ghost on social media, where he has 77,000 Twitter followers but doesn't tweet.

And in the White House, he may be a fixture at high-level meetings, but he'll rarely speak if the press corps is present, waiting until journalists leave the room. So it was a measure of the White House's need for damage control that Kushner went on the Trump go-to channel Fox News late Monday to dismiss concerns over his security access. "I've been accused of all different types of things, and all of those things have turned out to be false. We've had a lot of crazy accusations," Kushner said on Fox's "The Ingraham Angle."

Controversy over Kushner's access to top secrets has been brewing since the start of the Trump presidency. After all, he was a relatively unknown quantity in Washington - a man with no political or diplomatic experience, or previous vetting, but a ton of potentially tangled business dealings at home and abroad. This week the issue blew up when a veteran White House bureaucrat told Congress that her department had been overruled by higher-ups to grant passes to 25 people initially rejected due to worries over conflicts of interest, foreign influence and personal problems. Among the names that the Democrat-led congressional committee investigating the issue suggests may be on that list: Kushner and his wife Ivanka Trump.

Riches to power

Kushner was just another privileged New York business scion until his father-in-law and fellow real estate dealer unexpectedly won the presidency in 2016. The change of address to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in 2017 catapulted him into the smallest of presidential inner circles. Kushner's title in the Trump administration is a vague "senior advisor". In reality, the youthful-looking 38-year-old, who married Ivanka Trump in 2009, has the president's ear on everything from US drug addiction to selling Saudi Arabia weapons.



Jared Kushner

An Orthodox Jew who is part of what Trump proudly calls the "most pro-Israeli" US government in history, Kushner is also tasked with presenting a new Israeli-Palestinian peace plan. Generations of seasoned US diplomats have already failed there and expectations are low that Kushner's as yet hidden plan will do better. With Ivanka Trump also tagged as an adviser to her father, critics say the White House has sunken into the kind of nepotism few would have thought possible anymore. "Not since JFK - more than 50 years ago - have family members of the president served in policy positions," Mark Carl Rom, associate politics professor at Georgetown University, said. "The Trump presidency is a throwback: he is making America 18th century again."

Everything 'turned to gold'

Naturally, Trump does not see things that way. He seems not only to rely heavily on Kushner but genuinely to like and appreciate him. At a big event Monday celebrating prison reform - an issue Kushner says he was inspired to work on due to seeing his own father serve 14 months behind bars for financial crimes - Trump singled out his son-in-law for lavish praise.

"You know," Trump told the audience in the ornate East Room. "Jared has had a very easy life. He was doing phenomenally in New York and everything he touched has turned to gold. Then, one day, he said, 'I want to come down and I want to have peace in the Middle East. And I want to do criminal justice reform. And I want to do all these wonderful things.' Finally, the punch line: "And his life became extremely complex."

In a presidency defined by all-out fights with the opposition Democrats, accusations of administrative chaos, and the morass of the Russia collusion investigation, Trump is believed to value Kushner and his daughter as among the few people he knows he can always rely on. That's understandable but will depending on family bring Trump more trouble down the road? "The question is: Is their primary loyalty to the constitution of the United States of America, or to their father?" Rom asked. — AFP

S Sudan holds breath as fragile peace faces test

Chol Deng, her husband and five children sit, exhausted, under a tree, having journeyed back to South Sudan five years after fleeing their corpse-strewn hometown Malakal. Encouraged by a six-month lull in fighting as a peace deal holds for the first time since 2015, the family last month joined scores of others warily returning home from Ethiopia and Sudan. "People died, lots of them. People could literally walk on dead bodies across Malakal. That was why we left," Deng told AFP, recounting the family's flight to Sudan in Feb 2014. "I want to know if the country has peace. I want my kids to come back home."

But for now, they will stay in Udier, an opposition-controlled village relatively untouched by war in the Upper Nile region, keeping an eye on a peace deal which appears to have run worryingly aground, analysts and diplomats warn. At some point, they are hoping to return to Malakal, once the country's second city and now a ghost town of flattened, burned homes flanked by a large UN-protected camp where some 30,000 former residents live. "I am always scared. I have seen people dying," Deng said of her fears of fresh fighting. In Udier, like in much of the country, young men with automatic rifles slung over their shoulders can be seen wandering along dirt paths between villages or strolling through the market. Just in case.

Stuck

Observers warn that the latest peace deal is in danger, with a long list of tricky issues to be resolved before a unity government is formed in May. "The two sides stopped fighting. That's the good news. But now they're stuck on nearly everything else," said Alan Boswell, a South Sudan expert with the International Crisis Group (ICG). Speaking to AFP in Juba, UN envoy David Shearer said it was promising to see that opposition members were back in town, for the first time in two years. However "we should be further along ... if momentum slows, frustration sets in, and that might lead to anger."

Observers warn that reuniting archrivals President Salva Kiir and rebel leader and former vice president Riek Machar in government for a third time without resolving these issues could be a recipe for further disaster.



A woman carries her child at a market in Udier town in South Sudan on March 7, 2019. — AFP

It was the pair's running rivalry which kicked-started a civil war in 2013 characterized by brutal violence, rape and UN warnings about "ethnic cleansing". A 2015 peace deal brought Machar back as vice-president, and he returned to Juba with heavy security.

When the deal fell apart in July 2016, the capital was engulfed by a brutal battle between their rival armies. Machar fled on foot with the fighting spreading across the country. But ahead of Machar's planned return in May, there have been no steps taken so far to discuss security control in the capital nor moves to establish a unified army. Speaking to AFP, Cabinet Affairs Minister Martin Elia Lomoro insisted the deal was only one month behind schedule. "These delays will be corrected ... this agreement will not fail. "All we hear (from the international community) is 'oh we are late' ... we are not hearing anybody telling us that 'oh this is the help we have for you.'"

A Herculean task

The government has asked foreign donors to fund much of its \$285 million (252 million euro) budget to implement the deal. This includes gathering troops together in a designated zone and eventually creating a new army. "They haven't even taken the first steps, steps that don't cost anything, announcing how many troops they have and where," said a foreign diplomat in Juba. "It is a real dilemma for donors if you fund cantonment and it becomes an incentive for further recruitment."

Many are also wary about Juba's record for looting state funds in recent years. "The peace agreement calls for much more fiscal transparency. It isn't there. If it was, there would be a lot different reaction from donors," said the diplomat. The other key issue yet to be addressed is the contentious matter of internal boundaries. When it won independence in 2011, the country was divided into 10 states but it has since been subdivided into 32, in what many critics see as a gerrymandering of traditional boundaries by Kiir to shore up his power. — AFP

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S Korea to launch world's first 5G networks

Cost is likely to be a barrier for user uptake initially



SEOUL: An employee demonstrates 5G services on a VR device during a press conference of South Korean telecom operator KT in Seoul. South Korea launches the world's first fully-fledged 5G mobile networks tomorrow, a transformational leap that already has superpowers sparring for control of an innovation expected to dominate the day-to-day lives of billions of people. — AFP

SEOUL: South Korea launches the world's first fully-fledged 5G mobile networks tomorrow, a transformational leap that already has superpowers sparring for control of an innovation that could potentially change the day-to-day lives of billions of people.

The superfast communications heralded by fifth-generation wireless technology will ultimately underpin everything from toasters to telephones: from electric cars to power grids. But while the South has won the race to be first to provide the user experience, that is only one part of a wider battle that has pitted the United States against China and ensnared giants including Huawei.

Hyper-wired South Korea has long had a reputation for technical prowess, and Seoul has made the 5G rollout a priority as it seeks to stimulate stuttering economic growth. The system will bring smartphones near-instantaneous connectivity — 20 times faster than existing 4G-allowing users to download entire movies in less than a second. In the same way that 3G enabled widespread mobile web access and 4G made new applications work ranging from social media to Uber, 5G will herald a new

level of connectivity, empowered by speed. It is crucial for the future development of devices ranging from self-driving vehicles that send data traffic to one another in real time, industrial robots, drones and other elements of the Internet of Things. That makes it a vital part of the infrastructure of tomorrow, and the 5G standard is expected to bring about \$565 billion in global economic benefits by 2034, according to the London-based Global System for Mobile Communications, an industry alliance.

'One million devices'

But the implications have pitted Washington against Beijing in an increasingly bitter standoff. The US has pressed its allies and major economies to avoid 5G solutions from Chinese-owned telecom giant Huawei, citing security risks that technological backdoors could give Beijing access to 5G-connected utilities and other components. But Chinese firms dominate 5G technology. Huawei, the global leader, has registered 1,529 5G patents, according to data analysis firm IPlytics. Combined with manufacturers ZTE and Oppo, plus the China Academy of Telecommunications Technology,

Chinese entities own a total of 3,400 patents, it says — more than a third of the total.

South Korea comes next, with its companies holding 2,051 patents. In contrast, US firms have 1,368 altogether, IPlytics said — 29 fewer than Finland's Nokia alone. All three of South Korea's mobile operators go live with their 5G services tomorrow.

"5G's hyper speed can connect one million devices within a one square kilometre zone simultaneously," KT said in a report. Neither KT nor SK Telecom use Huawei technology in their 5G networks, but it is a supplier to LG UPlus, the three companies told AFP.

On the same day, Samsung Electronics will release the Galaxy S10 5G, the world's first available smartphone using the technology, and rival phonemaker LG follows with the V50s two weeks later.

Cost barrier

More than three million South Koreans will switch to 5G by the end of this year, predicted KT vice-president Lee Pil-jae. Until now, no mobile networks have offered nationwide 5G access. In the US, hotspots in a few

selected cities have offered 5G speeds but over wifi only, while Qatari firm Ooredoo says it offers 5G services in and around Doha-but does not have devices available to use them. US network carrier Verizon will launch fifth-generation services for mobile users in Chicago and Minneapolis next week, with more than 30 cities due to follow this year.

Japan is also expected to roll out a limited deployment in 2019 before full services start in time for next year's Tokyo Olympics. Cost is likely to be a barrier for user uptake initially, analysts say, as the cheapest version of the new Galaxy handset will be priced at 1.39 million won (\$1,200). "While there are many cheap 4G smartphones under \$300, Samsung's 5G phones are well over \$1,000, which could be a major minus point for cost-savvy consumers," a KT representative told AFP.

None of South Korea's three network operators would say how much they have invested in 5G-but Seoul's economy minister Hong Nam-ki put it at least \$2.6 billion this year alone.

"If 5G is fully implemented," he said, "it will greatly improve people's lives". — AFP

UK headed for downturn as Brexit worries hammer services

LONDON: Britain's economy looks likely to shrink over the coming months, after Brexit worries caused the dominant services sector to contract for the first time in nearly three years, a survey showed yesterday.

The IHS Markit/CIPS Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), a survey of services ranging from giant banks to high-street hairdressers, tumbled to 48.9 in March from 51.3 in February, weaker than all forecasts in a Reuters poll of economists. The PMI, a closely watched barometer of the economy's health, is now below 50 and in contractionary territory for the first time since July 2016, immediately after Britons voted to leave the European Union.

"Amid all the noise in Westminster, the latest Markit/CIPS PMI makes it clear the economy is being hit hard," ING economist James Smith said in a note.

Britain's economy has been sluggish since the 2016 Brexit referendum and saw its weakest expansion in six years in 2018, even though unemployment fell to its lowest in more than 40 years. The slowdown in the global economy has also weighed on growth. But until now few surveys have pointed to an outright contraction in the world's fifth-largest economy.

Britain had been due to leave the EU on March 29, but parliament repeatedly opposed the Brexit deal Prime Minister Theresa May had negotiated with Brussels. "There were widespread reports that domestic political uncertainty had constrained demand in March, with clients hoping for clarity about Brexit outcomes before committing to new projects," IHS Markit said.

Late on Tuesday, May said she would seek another Brexit delay to try to reach an agreement with Jeremy Corbyn, the opposition Labor Party leader, a last-ditch gambit to break an impasse over Britain's departure that enraged many in her party. Sterling dipped after the PMI release, to \$1.3156 compared with \$1.3175 beforehand, but it quickly recouped losses as traders focused on the outcome of the talks between May and Corbyn. A broader PMI released this week, including manufacturing and construction data, also fell to its lowest since July 2016. It escaped outright contraction only because firms bought more raw materials to prepare for a potentially disorderly Brexit.

"A stalling of the economy in the first quarter will ... likely turn into a downturn in the second quarter unless demand revives suddenly, which given the recent escalation of Brexit uncertainty, seems highly improbable," IHS Markit said. But some economists cautioned that past PMIs had tended to be too downbeat when economic uncertainty has been high.

"GDP growth probably is holding up a little better than the PMIs imply," said Samuel Tombs at Pantheon Macroeconomics. Unlike in 2016, when demand rebounded rapidly after the initial shock of the referendum result, British businesses have now reported falling orders for the past three months, the longest such run since the depths of a recession in 2009.



LONDON: A pro-EU campaigner wears the Union flag colours as he demonstrates near the Houses of Parliament in central London yesterday. — AFP

Last week, the head of the British Chambers of Commerce said business was angry with politicians for "chasing rainbows" rather than accepting that some Brexit goals were unrealistic.

And in news likely to depress growth this month, carmakers BMW and Peugeot said May's delay to Brexit had come too late for them to cancel stoppages at their British factories, which they had planned

because of fears of parts shortages after Brexit. ING's Smith pointed to further uncertainties, including another extension of the Brexit date. "While this would give firms a temporary reprieve from the 'no deal' risk, we suspect companies will continue to make their preparations for this scenario," he said. "All of this is costly, and we think under the scenario of a long extension, growth would continue to suffer." — Reuters

Business

AL-SHALL MONTHLY ECONOMIC REPORT

Boursa Kuwait's liquidity level remained buoyant in March

Regional markets continued to rally amid positive sentiment

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait's performance in March was more active compared with its performance in February. Traded value, i.e. total liquidity increased alongside all Boursa Kuwait indexes. The Premier Market index gained 9.2 percent, Main Market gained 3 percent and the All-Share Market index (the outcome of the two markets' performance index) increased by 7.4 percent. Also, Al-Shall index gained about 9 percent.

Boursa liquidity during March achieved a higher level than that of February's liquidity. Liquidity scored about KD 817.2 million, rising from KD 438.7 million in February. The average daily trading value in March scored KD 38.9 million versus KD 25.8 million in February, reflecting a 50.8 percent rise above February's average. Liquidity in the first quarter of 2019 (60 working days) scored KD 1.866 billion, with an average daily trading value of KD 31.1 million. This represents a 64.9 percent rise compared with the same average of the fourth quarter of 2018 at KD 18.9 million, and a 150.5 percent rise against the same average for the first quarter of 2018 at KD 12.4 million. It also rose by 84.6 percent when compared with the average of the entire previous year at KD 16.8 million.

Liquidity directions since the beginning of the year indicate that half of the listed companies obtained only 0.9 percent of that liquidity including 50 companies which captured only 0.1 percent of that liquidity, and 6 listed companies without any trades. As for liquid companies, 12 companies whose market value equals 1.1 percent of the listed companies' value obtained nearly 7.9 percent of the Boursa liquidity. This means that major liquidity activity still deprives almost half of the listed companies from liquidity. On the contrary, it strongly favors companies with smaller value. Liquidity distribution among the three markets during March 2019 was as follows:

The Premier Market

It scored KD 704.9 million, 86.3 percent of Boursa liquidity, 50 percent of its companies captured 91.2 percent of its liquidity and 78.7 percent of the entire Boursa liquidity. The other half of its companies captured what is left or 8.8 percent of its liquidity. Its liquidity concentration was high as 5 of its companies obtained 76.3 percent of its liquidity.

The Main Market

It achieved KD 112.3 million, 13.7 percent of Boursa liquidity and 20 percent of its companies obtained 79.6 percent of its liquidity while 80 percent of its companies obtained only 20.4 percent of its liquidity. It is good to recall that its companies' weak liquidity was the primary factor for their classification within the Main Market

which is open for evolution with the rise of liquidity of any of its companies.

Auctions Market

It captured KD 39.5 thousand only, about 0.005 percent of the Boursa liquidity which is within anticipation. The main goal is to give those companies a liquidity regulating outlet even if they are left without any trading except at remote intervals. We may witness a single surge in their trading value every now and then.

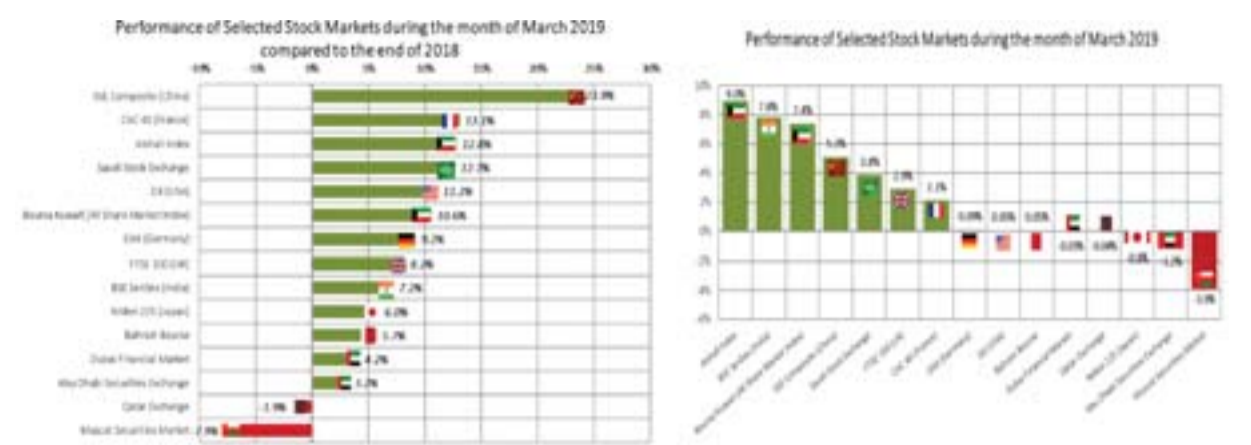
Arms trade

The latest report by "Stockholm International Peace Research Institute" issued on March 19, 2019 contains a comparison for arms quantities trade in the periods 2009-2013 and 2014-2018. The institute concludes that quantities increased by 7.8 percent. The disparity in the figures is that arms imports dropped in all geographical regions except for the Middle East regions where these imports increased by 87 percent although the beginning of the second era witnessed a collapse in oil prices. In the 1970s oil prices registered record levels until the beginnings of the 1980s followed by another collapse in oil prices in the late 1980s. During that period, violent geopolitical events (the 8-year War between Iran and Iraq) occurred which consumed most of the 1970s savings in financing arms deals.

The report estimated the ME share of exported arms quantities during the period 2014-2018 by 35 percent of the world's imports, more than one third. KSA took the lead among importing countries by 192 percent increase from the preceding period. Egypt came third by 206 percent increase from the first period. Israel's imports increased by 354 percent, Qatar by 225 percent and Iraq by 139 percent. But Syria's imports dropped by 87 percent. This means that providing the financial resources, which dropped after oil prices (and some of its production levels) lost about 40 percent of its levels in 2013, started to press hard on the development requirements share. This presents an important justification for the inclination of those countries to support peace efforts.

On the contrary, arms exports to advanced and emerging countries with diverse economies achieve absolute and relative growth in these exports. USA increased its exports in the last period by 29 percent and as such its share of arms exports in the world from 30 percent in the first period above (2009-2013) to 36 percent in the second (2014-2018). About 52 percent of those exports went to the ME. Likewise, France increased its arms exports between the two periods by 43 percent.

Even the almost disarmed Germany increased its exports by 13 percent. China, the fifth biggest arms exporter, increased its arms exports by 2.7 percent. The



report also stated that Russia alone lost about 17 percent of its arms exports between the two periods because India began manufacturing arms and India's imports decreased by 24 percent between the two periods. Moreover, Venezuela for its deteriorating conditions after it has been a main importer from Russia when it obtained financial resources.

What we wanted to indicate is that exporting arms for exporting countries means creating job opportunities and developing technologies that support their competitive positions in the struggle for economic superiority. It also means new job opportunities in preparation for the aftermath of ending struggle in the importing countries under the item of reconstruction. On the contrary, for importing countries it means lost job opportunities due to scarce resources available to finance development. It also means continued drain of their limited financial resources to finance reconstruction stages. A clear example from reality is the end of the 1980s in the last century, an example which should teach us to avoid its repercussions instead of repeating it in the post-2014 era.

Comparative performance of selected stock markets

Performance during March was positive for most stock markets of the sample (14 markets). 9 markets achieved gains while 5 markets achieved losses. In February, 10 markets were gainers and 4 markets were losers. By the end of March, the first quarter of the current year ended by a positive result during which 12 markets achieved gains in comparison with their indexes in the end of the previous year. Only 2 markets achieved losses in the end of the first quarter of 2019. The biggest gainer in March was Boursa Kuwait if we adopt Al-Shall index which gained 9 percent in one month. The All-Share Market index of Boursa Kuwait gained 7.4 percent and came

third after the Indian market which came second during March when its index added 7.8 percent in one month. Its gains lifted its position from the least losing markets in their performance since the beginning of the year to the 8th position among gaining markets by 7.2 percent. The fourth biggest gainer was the Chinese market with 5.1 percent gains, continuing as the biggest winner since the beginning of the year by 23.9 percent gains for its index, followed by the Saudi market by 3.8 percent gains in one month and 12.7 percent gains at the end of the 1st quarter.

The biggest loser in March was Muscat stock market by losing -3.9 percent, deepening its losses to -7.9 percent since the beginning of the year. The second biggest loser was Abu Dhabi market which lost -1.2 percent and moved to the bottom of gaining markets since the beginning of the year by 3.2 percent gains. The third major loser was the Japanese market whose index lost -0.8 percent during March. It ended the month in the 10th position since the beginning of the year by 6 percent gains. Dubai market was the least loser during March by slight loss of about -0.03 percent. The Qatari market came next by -0.04 percent loss.

Weekly performance of Boursa Kuwait

The performance of Boursa Kuwait for last week was more active compared to the previous one (4 working days due to the Al-Israa & Al-Miraj Holiday), where the traded value, traded volume, number of transactions and the general index (Al-Shall index) increased. Al-Shall Index (value weighted) closed at 495.4 points as of last Thursday, showing an increase by 15 points or by 3.1 percent compared with its level last week. While it increased by 66.4 points or by 15.5 percent compared with the end of 2018.

Hungarian trade unions bare teeth in rare strike wave

RACALMAS: "It's like trench warfare in there," said Tamas Szekeley, a Hungarian trade union leader outside Korean-owned tire-maker Hankook's plant, the latest flashpoint in a strike wave that has hit Hungary's automotive sector this year.

"We want decent pay, and respect," 30-year-old production line worker Viktoria Kovacs told AFP at the factory gate, adding that she earns 160,000 forints (around 500 euros, \$560) a month, just over Hungary's minimum wage. Workers at the plant at Racalmas, 75 kilometers (47 miles) south of the capital Budapest, reported that management had threatened to sack striking workers. But after a 10-day stand-off the firm confirmed to AFP that the workers' demand for a double-digit hike in basic pay had been granted.

"People are realizing that trade unions are needed," said Szekeley, head of the Chemical Workers Federation (VDSZ) that organized the strike.

The current unrest was sparked in January by workers at an engine factory of German giant Audi in the western city of Győr. Their week-long stop-

page led to production being ground to a halt at the firm's German headquarters in Ingolstadt-and won them their pay demand.

Since then several other German and Asian automotive companies including Bosch, Continental and Suzuki have agreed terms with staff who threatened similar shutdowns. "It's a more challenging environment for employers now," Wolfgang Stein, head of Bosch's Hungarian unit, admitted to AFP.

Spanners in the works

Such behavior signals a shift for Hungary's trade unions, more usually known for their pliancy and corruption. One ex-leader famously splurged members' fees on lavish furniture for his office, including a 1,000-euro wall clock.

"Before, trade unions were seen as organising aerobics classes and not much more," Zoltan Pogatsa, a political economist, told AFP.

"But a new brand of leader has replaced the corrupt old guard, while fragmented groups have merged into more powerful units," he said. However, unionization rates among Hungarian workers are still some of the lowest in the EU, at around eight percent of workers. But Laszlo Kordas, head of the Hungarian Trade Union Confederation (MASZSZ), says workers are signing up after seeing the recent results. Union mobilisation has also spread beyond the key automotive sector which accounts for more than 20 percent of Hungary's GDP and where workers have tradition-

ally been more organised. Major retailers like Tesco and Spar, Budapest's transport company, and public service employers including the police service have all faced swelling worker discontent since January. Kordas, 50, told AFP a "more combative trade union community" is emerging to take on not just bosses, but Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government as well.

In power since 2010, Orban has pursued a labor-intensive economic model, hinged on luring large multinational firms to Hungary with secretive so-called "strategic partnership agreements" based around low labor costs and juicy tax breaks.

Hungarian unemployment is now among the lowest in Europe, and according to official data wages are growing dynamically. But salary levels have fallen behind those in regional neighbors like Slovakia, a gap that has fuelled the discontent in Hungary. "Why should a Volkswagen Group worker in Slovakia be paid more than his Hungarian counterpart doing the same job with the same technology?" said Kordas.

Meanwhile labor code reforms have squeezed the right to strike and increased the amount of overtime employers can demand from staff, a move that triggered union outrage and large street protests in December. "Lawmakers have ignored us, so we decided no more compromise, and that unless we get double-digit pay-rises, we go to factories and educate workers about strikes," said Kordas.



HANKOOK: Employees on strike outside the plant of Korean-owned tire-maker Hankook in Hungary, where unions have seen a string of successes this year.— AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	305.100
Euro	344.460
Sterling Pound	403.040
Canadian dollar	230.260
Turkish lira	56.190
Swiss Franc	307.410
US Dollar Buying	303.900

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.738
Indian Rupees	4.454
Pakistani Rupees	2.198
Srilankan Rupees	1.743
Nepali Rupees	2.772
Singapore Dollar	226.340
Hongkong Dollar	38.869
Bangladesh Taka	3.605
Philippine Peso	8.855
Thai Baht	9.650
Malaysian ringgit	78.031

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.414
Qatari Riyal	83.853
Omani Riyal	792.982
Bahraini Dinar	810.680
UAE Dirham	83.122

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	20.700
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Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.588
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.225
Tunisian Dinar	105.210
Jordanian Dinar	431.050
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.34
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.423

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.740
Canadian Dollar	229.570
Sterling Pound	402.960
Euro	344.585
Swiss Frank	306.645
Bahrain Dinar	810.415
UAE Dirhams	83.370
Qatari Riyals	84.610
Saudi Riyals	82.160
Jordanian Dinar	431.105
Egyptian Pound	17.622
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.745
Indian Rupees	4.447
Pakistani Rupees	2.162
Bangladesh Taka	3.621
Philippines Peso	8.821
Cyprus pound	18.130
Japanese Yen	3.735
Syrian Pound	1.595
Nepalese Rupees	2.778
Malaysian Ringgit	75.595
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.860

Thai Bhat	10.580
Turkish Lira	54.750
Singapore dollars	225.437

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.393542	0.407442
Czech Korune	0.005271	0.014571
Danish Krone	0.041759	0.046759
Euro	0.334598	0.348298
Georgian Lari	0.112741	0.112741
Hungarian 0.000973	0.001163	
Norwegian Krone	0.031507	0.036707
Romanian Leu	0.054931	0.071781
Russian ruble	0.004660	0.004660
Slovakia	0.009132	0.019132
Swedish Krona	0.028728	0.033728
Swiss Franc	0.299041	0.310041
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.208398	0.220398
New Zealand Dollar	0.200353	0.209853
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.223666	0.232666
US Dollars	0.301000	0.306300
US Dollars Mint	0.301500	0.306300
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003061	0.003862

Chinese Yuan	0.043933	0.047433
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036778	0.039528
Indian Rupee	0.003776	0.004548
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002652	0.002832
Korean Won	0.000258	0.000273
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070975	0.076975
Nepalese Rupee	0.002685	0.003025
Pakistan Rupee	0.001543	0.002313
Philippine Peso	0.005781	0.006081
Singapore Dollar	0.219849	0.229849
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001367	0.001947
Taiwan	0.009778	0.009968
Thai Baht	0.009272	0.009822
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.794713	0.811213
Egyptian Pound	0.017769	0.020369
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000210	0.000270
Jordanian Dinar	0.425422	0.434422
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000152	0.000252
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021451	0.045451
Omani Riyal	0.786149	0.791829
Qatar Riyal	0.079513	0.084453
Saudi Riyal	0.080273	0.081573
Syrian Pound	0.001294	0.001514
Tunisian Dinar	0.096891	0.104891
Turkish Lira	0.048145	0.059645
UAE Dirhams	0.081643	0.083343
Yemeni Riyal	0.000992	0.001072

Business

'Facing 4th charge', Ghosn announces press conference

Prosecutors may press fresh charge against former exec

TOKYO: Tokyo prosecutors are considering pressing a fresh charge against Carlos Ghosn, local media said yesterday, as the former Nissan boss announced on Twitter he would be giving his side of the story. In the latest twist in a rollercoaster of a case, Japanese investigators are reportedly eyeing a possible aggravated breach of trust charge related to at least \$32 million in Nissan funds transferred to a distributor in Oman.

Some of the money is believed to have been used to buy a luxury boat allegedly used by Ghosn and his family, according to a source familiar with the matter. If Tokyo prosecutors were to proceed, it would be the fourth criminal charge against the 65-year-old former high-flying auto executive, who denies all allegations.

Ghosn already faces three charges of financial misconduct over allegations he under-reported his compensation and sought to transfer personal losses to Nissan's books.

Tokyo district prosecutors are discussing the case with more senior colleagues before deciding whether to move ahead, Japanese media said. Shortly after the reports emerged, a verified Twitter account in Ghosn's name said he would be speaking to journalists next week.

"I'm getting ready to tell the truth about what's happening. Press conference on Thursday, April 11," said the tweet, sent early Wednesday afternoon.

A spokeswoman for the executive later confirmed the news conference in a statement to AFP.

'Flight risk'

If prosecutors were to file new charges, it would not

necessarily mean Ghosn returns to the detention center where he spent more than three months before winning bail on March 6, according to a local lawyer. "The prosecutor can hit Ghosn with new charges without sending him back to prison. Prosecutors would need to again justify a detention by saying he was a flight risk and could destroy evidence and the chances seem fairly slim," said the lawyer, who asked to remain anonymous.

The news came after it emerged that lawyers for Renault-Nissan's parent company that Ghosn also led have handed over documents to prosecutors showing millions of euros in payments to the firm's distributors in Oman.

An internal probe by Nissan, which is cooperating with prosecutors, has found Ghosn had approved over \$30 million in payments to a distributor in Oman, a person familiar with the matter confirmed to AFP. Some of this money ended up in personal accounts, or was used for purchases and investments by Ghosn—mainly to buy a yacht and make investments via his son's firm—according to this person.

A spokesperson for Ghosn has already rejected these allegations.

"The payments made by Renault to the distributor in Oman have not been diverted from their commercial objectives and under no circumstances has all or part of such payments benefited Carlos Ghosn or his family," said the representative in a statement. In a bolt from the blue that rocked Japan and the business world, Ghosn was arrested on November 19 after prosecutors stormed his private jet at a Tokyo airport



Former Nissan Chairman Carlos Ghosn (R) leaves his lawyer's office in Tokyo yesterday. Tokyo prosecutors are considering pressing a fresh charge against Carlos Ghosn, local media said yesterday as the former Nissan boss announced on Twitter he would be giving his side of the story.

and took him into custody. He spent more than 100 days in detention with limited access to lawyers before being released on a bail of nearly \$9 million.

Nissan swiftly removed him as chairman and is also expected to remove him from the board at an extraordinary shareholders' meeting slated for Monday. — AFP

Trade war, Brexit could slow Asia's 2019, 2020 growth: ADB

MANILA: Growth in developing Asia could slow for a second straight year in 2019 and lose further momentum in 2020, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said yesterday, warning of rising economic risks from a bitter Sino-US trade war and a potentially disorderly Brexit. Developing Asia, which groups 45 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, is expected to grow 5.7 this year, the ADB said in its Asian Development Outlook report, slowing from a projected 5.9 percent expansion in 2018 and 6.2 percent growth in 2017.

The 2019 forecast represents a slight downgrade from its December forecast of 5.8 percent. For 2020, the region is forecast to grow 5.6 percent, which would be the slowest since 2001. "A drawn out or deteriorating trade conflict between the People's Republic of China and the United States could undermine investment and growth in developing Asia", Yasuyuki Sawada, ADB's chief economist, said in a statement.

The lender also cited uncertainties stemming from US fiscal policy and a possible disorderly Brexit as risks to its outlook because they could slow growth in advanced economies and cloud the outlook for the world's second largest economy. "Though abrupt increases in US interest rates appear to have ceased for the time being, policy makers must remain vigilant in these uncertain times," Sawada said. China's economy will probably grow 6.3 percent this year, the ADB said, unchanged from its December projection, but slower than the country's 6.6 percent



QINGDAO: A US cargo ship berthing at a port in Qingdao in China's eastern Shandong province. — AFP

expansion in 2018 despite recent government stimulus measures including more tax cuts and increased state spending on infrastructure.

Growth in the Chinese mainland is projected to cool further to 6.1 percent in 2020. Beyond trade risks, the ADB said China's growth will also be retrained by restrictions on shadow banking, which is expected to limit credit expansion even as fiscal stimulus provides some offset. "I should emphasize although the government would like to stabilize growth, it wouldn't want to push up the growth rate as in previous years when you saw a big stimulus package, like in the period of 2008-2009," said Jian Zhuang, senior economist at ADB in Beijing. Chinese banks may still remain reluctant to lower lending costs for companies partly on worries of rising risks of corporate defaults in a slowing economy. The central bank could take further

actions, such as cutting the benchmark 1-year lending and deposit rates, the ADB said. China has set its 2019 economic growth target at 6.0 to 6.5 percent. By region, South Asia will remain the fastest growing in Asia Pacific, with the ADB predicting an expansion of 6.8 percent this year - lower than its previous forecast of 7.1 percent - and 6.9 percent next year. From an estimated 7.0 percent growth in 2018, India's economy is projected to expand at a faster pace of 7.2 percent in 2019 and 7.3 percent in 2020, the ADB said, as lower policy rates and income support to farmers boost domestic demand.

This year's growth forecast for Southeast Asia was trimmed to 4.9 percent from an earlier estimate of 5.1 percent, as the Manila-based lender expect Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines and Thailand to grow slower than previously thought. Next year, Southeast Asia is predicted to grow 5.0 percent. — Reuters

Emirates NBD to buy Turkey's Denizbank for \$2.8bn in revised deal

DUBAI: Dubai's Emirates NBD said yesterday it will buy Turkey's Denizbank from Russia's Sberbank at a roughly 20 percent discount to a previously agreed price, after a steep fall in the Turkish lira.

Under a new agreement reached with state-owned Sberbank, Dubai's largest lender said it will buy Turkey's fifth largest private bank for 15.48 billion lira (\$2.8 billion), compared to the 14.6 billion lira announced in May. Although the deal's lira value is higher, the dollar value when it was announced in May was put at the equivalent of \$3.2 billion, about \$400 million more than the new price.

The lira has tumbled over concerns about the Turkish central bank's independence and Ankara's worsening ties with Washington. The Denizbank deal comes against a backdrop of Turkey's strained relations with Gulf states since Ankara stood by Qatar after the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and others accused Doha of supporting terrorism, a charge it denies.

The transaction will help Emirates NBD diversify its business and establish itself as a leading bank in the region, the bank's vice chairman Hesham Abdulla al-

Qassim said in May. For Russia's biggest bank by assets, the sale of Sberbank's largest asset outside Russia is part of a shift back to its home market. It bought Denizbank in 2012 for about \$3.5 billion when it wanted to establish a presence abroad. For Emirates NBD, the revised deal represents a discount of roughly 20 percent, a spokesman for the bank told Reuters, without providing further details.

Sberbank said it expected to receive \$5 billion from the sale of Denizbank, including capital and debt.

Emirates NBD shares were up 6 percent at 1000 GMT after hitting their highest level since 2008 earlier in the session, while Sberbank was up 1.5 percent and Denizbank rose 3 percent.

The sale price is based on Denizbank's capital plus 5 percent, according to international financial reporting standards, Sberbank said. The bank added that it expected the deal to be closed by the end of the second quarter of 2019. "The negotiations are completed between the parties and the process of regulatory approvals are still going on. I do not know how long it would take but I hope it will finalize as soon as possible," Denizbank's chief executive Hakan Ates told reporters in Istanbul.

He said Emirates NBD will help Denizbank in gaining easier access to capital markets.

Denizbank's equity amounted to 15.51 billion lira as of December 31, Emirates NBD said in a bourse statement, adding that the deal is expected to close by the end of the second quarter, subject to regulatory approval. — Reuters

Wall Street rises on trade hopes, chip stocks at record highs

NEW YORK: New York's main stock indexes rose yesterday, extending a strong start to the quarter as a rally in chipmakers added to optimism over trade talks between the United States and China.

White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow said on Tuesday that the two countries "expect to make more headway" in trade talks this week, leading to hopes of a resolution to their months-long trade war.

"The trade talks supposedly getting closer to an agreement, are definitely giving a positive lift to Asian and US markets," said Robert Pavlik, chief investment strategist and senior portfolio manager at SlateStone Wealth LLC in New York. "The market believes that's a good sign and it will be carried throughout the rest of the day." Chipmakers, which get a large part of their revenue from China, boosted the main US indexes. Advanced Micro Devices Inc jumped 9.1 percent, becoming the top gainer on the S&P 500. Micron Technology Inc gained 4.5 percent and Intel Corp rose 1.9 percent.

Nomura Instinet started coverage of AMD and Intel with "buy" ratings, according to a report, and the brokerage expects a rebound in chip sales from 2020 to 2025 after a 10 percent decline

this year. The Philadelphia Semiconductor index rose 2.3 percent to hit a record high, adding to its 24 percent gain this year on hopes of a trade deal and recovering global demand for chips.

Global growth slowdown fears receded after a report which showed China's services sector rose to a 14-month high in March, following upbeat manufacturing data from China and the United States earlier in the week.

Stocks gave up some gains after the Institute for Supply Management came out with its March U.S. services sector PMI, which was below estimates, and was at its lowest since August 2017.

Earlier, the ADP National Employment Report showed US private employers added 129,000 jobs in March, below economists' estimates. At 10:14 am ET, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 3.78 points, or 0.01 percent, at 26,182.91, the S&P 500 was up 7.38 points, or 0.26 percent, at 2,874.62 and the Nasdaq Composite was up 49.53 points, or 0.63 percent, at 7,898.21.

The gains put the S&P 500 less than 2 percent away from a record high hit in September as a dovish Federal Reserve and trade hopes set the stage for a strong start to the quarter. Seven of the 11 major S&P sectors were higher, with the technology index's 0.6 percent rise providing the biggest boost. Checking gains on the Dow, Boeing Co dropped 1.1 percent after brokerage Baird said it expects Wall Street to lower earnings estimates "considerably" after the company reports delivery numbers next week. The numbers could reflect the 737-MAX groundings following the Ethiopian crash, Baird said. — Reuters

US services sector cools in March as labor dries up

WASHINGTON: The dominant US services sector cooled unexpectedly in March as companies struggled to find qualified workers while production and orders both fell sharply, a private survey showed yesterday.

The decline from a strong February showed growth in the sector had matched its slowest pace for the past 12 months amid rising costs, according to the Institute for Supply Management, which said companies generally remained upbeat.

ISM's non-manufacturing index fell 3.6 points to a reading of 56.1, a deeper slowdown than economists had expected. Any reading above 50 indicates growth. Anthony Nieves, chair of ISM's survey committee for the non-manufacturing sector, told reporters the earlier February reading had seemed above trend.

"The question was whether it would be sustainable and that proved not to be the case," Nieves said, adding that there were no signs of recession any time soon. Business activity fell 7.3 percent to a reading of 57.4, its biggest one-month drop in about a decade, while new orders fell 6.2 points.

Prices also rose, putting pressure on service providers, but the employment



SAN FRANCISCO: In this file photo, a now-hiring sign is posted at a restaurant in San Francisco, California. Hiring in the US private sector slowed for the second month in a row in March, hitting its slowest pace in 18 months, survey data showed yesterday. — AFP

index gained.

Sixteen industries reported growth while two — education services and retail trade — said they contracted. With unemployment hovering at 50-year lows, survey respondents said they struggled to find enough people to hire. Hotels, restaurants, transportation and warehousing as well as public administration all complained of scarce labor.

"Locally as construction grows, a shortage of available workers for the industry is occurring for future projects," said a respondent in transportation and warehousing.

Prices for aluminum and steel products, diesel, gasoline, labor, paper and pharmaceuticals all rose, survey respondents said. But prices for bacon fell.

"All these numbers currently are in a state of flux," said Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics. In a note to clients, he wrote that consumption was cooling from last year's unsustainable levels, which were powered by the December 2017 tax cuts and a late-2018 dip in fuel prices. Rising incomes later this year should see the index rise again, Shepherdson said. — AFP

Business

KFH to attend session on 'sukuk listing in global financial markets'

Bank to participate in AAOIFI annual conference in Bahrain

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House Group (KFH-Group) is participating in the (AAOIFI) 17th Sharia Boards conference as a main sponsor. The conference will be held in the Kingdom of Bahrain on the 7th and 8th of this April. The event is set to bring together several global financial industry experts to address key issues supporting and hindering growth in the sector and the development of the Islamic financial services.

Discussions will also center on Importance of Regulatory Requirement of Mandatory Adoption of Sharia Standards by Islamic Financial Institutions (IFIs).

Executive Manager Money Market at KFH, Mohammad Al-Duwailah will participate in the 5th session to be held on the second day of the conference under the title "Sukuk Listing in Global Financial Markets and Compatibility of Listing Requirements with Sharia Structures".

The session will discuss several topics such as: Nature of global financial markets in which Sukuk are listed, Sukuk listing under respective category of financial securities on global financial markets, the effect of listing requirements in the global financial markets on the Sharia structures of Sukuk, and Basis of listing Sukuk in global financial markets given their own risk profile that sets them apart from conventional bonds.

As KFH is a leading Islamic financial institution and one which has taken Islamic banking, finance and investing to global markets, it is supporting this annual conference dedi-



Mohammad Al-Duwailah

cated to strengthening the prospects and performance of Islamic finance industry. KFH has long taken a pioneering role in the development of Islamic finance and fully supporting the work of AAOIFI in seeing Islamic instruments and capital markets further unify and expand.

KFH has long played an important role in helping drive the kind of advancement and innovation that this annual conference aims to harness and drive forward.

The industry today has achieved significant growth and expansion in the Islamic world and beyond. KFH is keen on joining together with industry leaders to discuss and adopt the right strategies for this next stage of growth.

KFH's mission is to achieve highest levels of excellence and innovation in the field of customer service, while developing common interest for all those concerned with the financial institution. KFH's vision is to spearhead the global development in Islamic financial services, and to upgrade the bank into the level of becoming the most sustainable profitable Islamic bank in the world.



Burgan Bank appoints Hameed Ali Abul as chief private banking officer

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank has appointed Hameed Abul as Chief Private Banking Officer after obtaining the approval of the Central Bank of Kuwait as of March 27, 2019. Hameed Abul is responsible for directing, formulating, overseeing and implementing the overall strategy of the Private Banking Group. He is also responsible for guiding and providing strategic direction and leadership to a profitable growth while ensuring revenue potential is realized in a low risk and cost-effective manner.



Hameed Abul

Raed Al-Haqhaq, Chief Executive Officer of Burgan Bank - Kuwait said: "I would like to congratulate Hameed Abul on his new role as the lead to serve our high-net worth clients. As one of the most well-established wealth management service providers in Kuwait, we wish him luck and look forward to the continued growth of the private banking business under his strategic management."

Hameed Abul, Chief Private Banking Officer said: "I am honored to be handed a very important position of a significantly expanding and prestigious financial service. Operating through a progressive business model that adheres to the execution of the highest standards in services and products. I hope to maintain long term trusted relationships through extraordinary personal commitment to our clients' needs."

Abul has over 25 years of experience working in State Audit Bureau, Commercial Bank of Kuwait, Qatar National Bank and Kuwait & Gulf Link Holding. Abul holds a Bachelor's degree in Accounting & Auditing from Kuwait University, in addition to a post graduate diploma in International Banking from City University, London.

Fortnum & Mason to open first overseas store in Hong Kong

HONG KONG: For three centuries it has been the go-to grocer for Britain's royals and aristocrats but now Fortnum & Mason plans to open its first overseas outlet in the former crown colony of Hong Kong.

The luxury British department store announced on Wednesday that its first foray onto foreign soil would be within a soon-to-open luxury Hong Kong mall in Tsim Sha Tsui, a region of the city popular with well-heeled mainland Chinese shoppers. "We have seen significant appetite for the Fortnum's brand and products in the region," chairman Kate Hobhouse said in a statement announcing the 7,000 square foot (650 square metre) store, which is slated to open in September in a new \$2.6 billion mall development on the Kowloon side of the harbor.

"Our latest expansion in Asia is an important next step for us as we extend our reach further across the world," she added. Britain's luxury retail brands have long courted the power of the yuan-in 2017 Harrods said Chinese visitors had overtaken Brits as their largest spenders.

Faced with the switch to online shopping, many British retailers have reduced their bricks and mortar presence or looked for new opportunities overseas.

Fortnum's products have been available at a handful of rival department stores in Asia, North America and Russia but this is the first time the group will open its own stand-alone shop outside the United Kingdom. Founded in 1707 by a royal footman and his landlord partner, the brand has long been a favored food supplier to royals and blue bloods and the company boasts a long list of idiosyncratic firsts. It claims to have invented the scotch egg in 1738 and in 1886 it became the first store to introduce Brits to a new tinned food by budding American inventor Henry Heinz dubbed "baked beans". — AFP

IMF: All-out US-China trade war could lift Canada, Mexico

WASHINGTON: An all-out trade war would severely damage the US and Chinese economies but could also be a boon to countries like Canada and Mexico, the International Monetary Fund said yesterday.

The world's top two economies themselves would be the biggest losers in the event of a 25 percent hike in duties on all trade in goods, the IMF said in a report released ahead of next week's spring meetings, to be held jointly with the World Bank. Bilateral US-China trade could fall by up to 30 percent in the short-term as a result and by as much as 70 percent later on-taking sizable chunks out of both countries' economies. The 2019 spring meetings fall just as US and Chinese officials say they are in the home-stretch of negotiations to resolve their eight-month trade war, in which Beijing has put tariffs on all its US merchandise imports while Washington has slapped duties on about half of its Chinese imports—more than \$360 billion in two-way goods trade.

Citing success in the talks, US President Donald Trump has suspended plans to raise duties on a \$200 billion tranche of Chinese goods to 25 percent, keeping them at the current 10 percent.

According to a range of models cited by the report, the hypothesis showed annual growth in China could be 1.5 percent lower, while such a scenario could shave as much

Pound rises versus dollar on May's Brexit gamble

LONDON: The British pound rose against the dollar yesterday after Prime Minister Theresa May offered cross-party talks with the leader of the opposition Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, in a political gamble aimed at resolving the Brexit impasse. Sterling won a boost after Conservative leader May declared late Tuesday that she would look for another Brexit delay and softened her position to try and avert a messy no-deal divorce from the European Union next week.

Corbyn has consistently called for Britain to remain in a customs union with the bloc, while the government has so far ruled this out saying Britain should have an independent trade policy after Brexit. "The announcement was win-win for the pound," Oanda analyst Craig Erlam told AFP.

"Not only did May re-affirm her opposition to no deal, she's technically opened the door to a softer Brexit. I say technically because a lot now has to happen for that to be delivered, including the Conservatives and Labor working together towards an uncharacteristic compromise."

However, he added: "If this fails, I struggle to see how she recovers: it very much feels like a last ditch, desperate gamble."

'Last throw of dice'

The move, which followed a long cabinet meeting today, angered Brexit hardliners in May's party as it opens the possibility of Britain seeking closer economic ties with the EU after leaving.

AxiTrader analyst James Hughes meanwhile questioned why May had waited this long to hold discussions with Corbyn. "This feels very much like the last throw of the dice, with the argument being that cross-party talks should have been the first throw of



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City. — AFP

the dice," Hughes told AFP.

"The deadlock, political infighting and MPs' inability to make a decision has led to both the process and the country to a certain degree becoming a laughing stock."

"Continuous votes on outcomes that the majority know will be rejected by the EU anyway are wasting time, and it's only now that we are taking the prospect of no deal seriously enough."

However, sterling's gains were capped Wednesday by gloomy survey showing that Britain's vital services sector shrank in March for the first time in almost three years, with activity slammed by Brexit turmoil and flat economic growth.

The purchasing managers' index (PMI) for services fell from 51.3 in February to 48.9 in March, according to IHS Markit, which compiles the data. That was the lowest level since July 2016, which was one month after Britons voted in favor of leaving the European Union.

'Detrimental impact of Brexit'

The figure below 50 indicates that the service sector, which accounts for some 80 percent of British gross domestic product, is in contraction. "Despite the new market optimism surrounding the Brexit



WASHINGTON: International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Christine Lagarde speaks at the US Chamber of Commerce in Washington, DC. — AFP

as 0.6 percent off growth in the United States. "The effect on China is typically larger across all models, as exports to the United States represent a larger share of the Chinese economy (than vice versa)," the report said.

Under the scenario explored by the IMF, Canada and Mexico could ultimately benefit as they export more to the United States, making up for the shortfall in US imports from China. And according to one model, these shifting export relations among countries would mean that, while the US trade deficit with China would fall somewhat, there would be "no economically significant change" in either country's overall trade balance.

A separate statistical model showed China would ultimately cease to be "the number one exporter of electronics and machinery to the United States," as Canada, Mexico and other Asian countries picked up the slack. — AFP

Zimbabwe FM slams profiteering price hikes as new currency falls

HARARE: Zimbabwe's finance minister yesterday accused local businesses of profiteering for linking price increases of basic goods to exchange rate movements of a new transitional currency.

Since the RTGS dollar was introduced in February, prices of staples including sugar, cooking oil and rice have risen as much as 60 percent, squeezing already hard-pressed consumers and fuelling resentment against President Emmerson Mnangagwa's government. The RTGS launched at 2.5 to the U.S. dollar on Feb 22 and now trades at around 4.3 on the black market. Price changes should be determined by inflation trends, minister Mthuli Ncube said, adding that month-on-month inflation was slowing.

"It is actually bad economics to link price increases to the exchange rate. That's not how you do it, it is profiteering," Mthuli told reporters. The southern African nation dumped its hyperinflation-hit local currency in 2009 and replaced it with the US dollar, which has been in short supply since 2016. That has in turn driven shortages of fuel, medicines and other goods, hobbling the economy.

In February Zimbabwe scrapped a 1:1 peg between the dollar and the bond notes and electronic dollars it introduced to compensate for the hard currency shortage, merging the surrogate currencies into the RTGS dollar. On the official market, the RTGS weakened to 3.03 per US dollar yesterday, according to central bank data.

But some retailers in major cities have pegged their prices using the higher black market exchange rate, as well as offering discounts on US dollar purchases. Ncube, who was announcing a \$400 million wage deal for public sector workers, said the treasury was monitoring price hikes but would not be drawn on whether it would impose controls.

Although trade in the RTGS is restricted, economists expect the currency to come under more pressure when Zimbabwe starts importing grain as a consequence of a devastating drought this year, likely triggering more inflation. The year-on-year inflation rate climbed to 59.39 percent in February. Ncube has previously said annual inflation will fall to below 10 percent by year-end. — Reuters

Ireland defers property tax review to keep lid on housing costs

DUBLIN: Ireland will defer a revaluation of its national property tax by a year and extend controls on residential rents in areas where they are growing rapidly until 2021 in a bid to keep a lid on rising housing costs. Irish house prices have almost doubled since the government introduced a tax based on the market value of residential properties in 2013, and it postponed an initial revaluation by three years in 2016 to ensure bills remained frozen.

By opting to move that date out further to November 2020, the government likely pushed it beyond the next parliamentary election, with an agreement keeping the minority administration in power due to expire early next year. But Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe said he was determined to retain and reform the tax, and that following consultation with parliament hoped the changes in its application would result in manageable increases, for a minority of taxpayers.

"It's here, it's here to stay, but moments of change like this have been difficult elsewhere and I want to be sure we get this change right," Donohoe told reporters yesterday, referencing a property tax in the United Kingdom which is still based on values in 1990s.

While house prices are 18 percent below the peak hit at the height of a property bubble just over a decade ago, rents have long surpassed their previous high and in Dublin are 25 percent up on levels seen in the Celtic Tiger boom years of the 2000s. — Reuters

What's On



GUST hosts 30 high schools in open day on campus

Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) welcomed students from over 30 different high schools from around Kuwait in an open day organized by the Recruitment Department at the university. The visitors, which consisted of both male and female students, got to explore the university and partake in several activities on the campus over two days.

Dean of Student Affairs Dr Raghad Al Kazemi said, "It is always a great sight when we have a group of enthusiastic high school students on our campus. We take this opportunity every year very seriously as it provides a chance to help them determine the right career paths for them, and find out more about the programs they are interested in. We provide them with the opportunity to talk to our faculty, interact with students

attending the classes in order to get a better idea of how well it matches their own interests, and to explore the kinds of options and experiences they can expect."

The students started their visit with welcoming speeches from the university's President, Professor Walid Bouhamra, and the Dean of Student Affairs Dr Raghad Al Kazemi, which were then followed by a screening of an introductory short film about GUST. The students also got a chance to enjoy and engage in activities, which included music performances and Japanese calligraphy art, around the campus set up by the Anime Club, and were treated with giveaways, coffee, snacks, and a tour around campus. The tour started at the A M Al Refai Library, followed by the bookstore, the Art and

Music Department, radio and TV studios, gym, swimming pool, and amphitheater.

Students were then able to meet and converse with various university department personnel, including the Office of Student Life, One Stop Center, College of Business Administration, College of Arts and Sciences, Athletics Department, and the Admissions and Registration department, to ask specific questions pertaining to their individual needs. The Annual Open Day is the third to be organized by GUST, and is just one of many ways that the university openly and actively engages with high school students. Throughout the year, GUST participates in all of the major educational exhibitions, and hosts events that further connect the university with prospective students.



Within its social responsibility activities, the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently presented a financial contribution to support IPA's soccer team, the winner of the second place in the ministries soccer tournament. The contribution cheque was presented to IPA director, Abdul Kareem Taqi by, Hanadi Al-Hunaidi from CBK's individual banking services sector.

NBK sponsors LOYAC's activities

National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues its support to LOYAC and sponsors its activities for the year 2019 as part of its commitment toward corporate social responsibility. NBK Assistant General Manager, Manal Al Mattar visited LOYAC's Managing Director and Vice Chairperson Fadia Al Marzooq. "NBK's sponsorship is part of its ongoing drive to fulfill its corporate social responsibilities", said Al Mattar. "NBK endeavors to shoulder its social responsibilities and share with the various private and public sector institutions and departments the burdens and responsibilities of broader national efforts towards social advancement".

Al Mattar added "NBK's sponsorship and support comes in line with the bank's customary and ongoing spirit of corporate citizenship as well as the vital role it plays in supporting youth." NBK's

Sponsorship to LOYAC for the year 2019 included its platinum sponsorship for "KON". KON is a social entrepreneurship program co-created with Babson College in Boston, one of the leading institutions in the world for Entrepreneurship Education. The program targets youth between the ages of 12 - 16. Also, the sponsorship includes cultural trips to China and Cambodia for youth aged between 14 and these trips are designed to build the leadership skills in youth's personalities, introduce them to different cultures, raise awareness towards volunteering and donating.

NBK continues to promote a range of philanthropic missions and social welfare programs as part of the humanitarian dimension of its corporate social responsibility to assert its leadership in supporting Kuwait's social development, standing as a model in serving all aspects of the community.

LOYAC is a nonprofit organization that runs several programs for the youth to develop their professional skills, enhance their personal growth and help them find their sense of purpose by extending themselves to others.



LAPA staged Jumanji play

Within the activities of the first international theatre organized by LOYAC's Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA) in collaboration with the NCCAL, Al-Salam theatre company recently performed its Jumanji play at Kuwait National Museum stage. The play's plot mimics the famous game Jumanji where five students from the year 2019 enter the game and meet someone who had been trapped in it for long and start endeavoring to get out going through various mysteries and adventures.

The actors cast include Mohammed Abdul Aziz Al-Musallam, Mohammed Dashti, Adnan Kamal, Khaled Al-Ali, Hameed Al-Saffar, Waleed Al-Sager, Ahmed Yousif, Feras Al-Salem, Musaed Al-Saeed, Abdullah Mahdi, Ibrahim Al-Marri and Waleed Al-Failakawi. It was written by Adnan Kamal and directed by Mohammed Al-Musallam.



Ahmadi Governorate organizes Spring Festival 2019

Under auspices and with the attendance of Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawwaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Ahmadi governorate recently organized its first Spring Festival 2019 at Ahmadi Park with participation from

various public, private and voluntary bodies. Speaking on the occasion, Al-Sabah expressed his joy that the festival could turn into an initiative to support and encourage family tourism.

On her part, the small projects exhibition supervisor, Hanan Al-Ali hailed the governor's sponsorship and his constant support to Kuwaiti youth adding that around 70 entrepreneurs took part in the exhibition. KOC's administrative affairs manager, Najla Mubarak Al-Kandary also expressed her joy for taking part in the festival noting that KOC is keen on bringing smiles to family members' faces.



Health & Science

Wara hospital holds opening reception at Vox Cinema, Avenues

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Wara hospital held a reception to celebrate the opening of the hospital. The reception took place in Avenues, Vox Cinema, on Tuesday. On the sideline of the event, CEO of Wara Hospital, Dr Ghanima Al-Omer, said: "This event is to host the lunch of Wara private hospital which is a general hospital that specialized in the super strategically specialty in Kuwait." She expressed her pride that the hospital is first of its kind to be owned and operated by Kuwaiti physicians, not by investors.

"The doctors who own this hospital are working for the hand by hand with their colleagues. We are proud that we are among fewest hospitals in Kuwait been operating by a majority of Kuwaiti doctors. Also, we hired professionals from Germany, US and all around the globe to cover the surgical and medical specialties that not been covered by the Kuwaiti doctors," she added.

Omer noted "Wara Hospital started the soft opening a few months ago, but today is the official launch, we are working 24 hours, 7 days a week to serve the surgical and medical emergency. WARA Hospital has 65 state-of-the-art and 5 operating rooms operated by expert surgeons." The event was attended by VIP doctors, officials, and media. The reception followed by a movie that been screened to show the hospital's facilities.



CEO of Wara Hospital, Dr. Ghanima Al-Omer

She explained that the dental department includes a medical staff of 8 Kuwaiti doctors, all of them hold the American Board, adding "the hospital specializes in rare surgeries such as spinal surgery, natural medicine and day-to-day operations. There are specialists in the department of the digestive system and a full medical team to treat infertility in addition to an embryologist who oversees the department as he is the only specialist in this field in Kuwait."

Omer pointed out that Wara hospital has the latest technologies, such as a one-shot radiograph device to produce a complete image of the patient from head to toe, and it is the only machine in Kuwait and the third in the Middle East and the Gulf where the device's inventor is a Nobel winner. "We also have the only "Tesla 3" device in Kuwait and the Middle East, in addition to the presence of the medical gym next to the built-in swimming pool for patients to exercise," she said.



Children in S Asia hardest hit by air pollution

HONG KONG: Air pollution will shorten the life expectancy of children born today by an average of 20 months and will have the greatest impact in south Asia, according to a study published yesterday. The State of Global Air report, published by the US-based Health Effects Institute and the University of British Columbia, says air pollution is the fifth leading cause of early death worldwide—responsible for more deaths than malaria, road accidents, malnutrition or alcohol.

However it warns "the loss of life expectancy is not borne equally", with children in South Asia set to have their lives cut short by 30 months because of a combination of outdoor air pollution and dirty indoor air. In East Asia the study says air pollution will shorten children's lives by an estimated 23 months—compared with around 20 weeks for children in developed parts of Asia Pacific and North America.

The report, which uses data up to the end of 2017, estimates that if air pollution levels were brought within World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines Bangladesh

life expectancy would see the highest expected gain, at nearly 1.3 years. India, Nigeria, and Pakistan would all see average life expectancy increase by around one year. Despite state reforms to reduce pollution levels, China remains the country with the highest mortality rate due to air pollution, responsible for around 852,000 pollution-related deaths in 2017.

The top five countries with the highest mortality rate due to air pollution were all in Asia: China, India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Bangladesh. In total, the report says 147 million years of healthy life were lost in 2017 globally due to pollution. Exposure to household air pollution—mostly from people burning coal, wood or charcoal to cook or heat their homes—is most common in South Asia, East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly half of the world's population is exposed to household air pollution—including an estimated 846 million people in India and 452 million in China.

A study last October from the World Health Organization found that exposure to toxic air both indoors and out kills some 600,000 children under the age of 15 each year. It found that children are often more vulnerable to the impact of air pollution since they breathe more rapidly than adults, and thus absorb more pollutants at a time when their brains and bodies are still developing. Data from the UN health body said that every day, 93 percent of children under the age of 15 breath dangerously polluted air. — AFP

Camera-toting sharks hunt seals in kelp forests

PARIS: Great white sharks fitted with cameras on their dorsal fins have been filmed for the first time stalking prey in dense kelp forests long thought to be no-go zones for the top-level predators. The thrilling, shark's-eye views show the massive carnivores maneuvering effortlessly through thick kelp fronds suspended in the water like giant bean stalks.

Suddenly one shark-off the coast of South Africa—spots several Cape fur seals, and the chase is on. "The shark drastically increased its activity when it saw the seals, and all sharks raised activity in the presence of kelp," Oliver Jewell, a graduate student at Murdoch University in Western Australia and lead author of a study in Biology Letters, told AFP. Great whites—which can grow up to six metres (20 feet) long and weigh more than 2,500 kilos (5,500 pounds) — gather along the coast of South Africa in winter to feed on seals that congregate on rock formations at the water's edge.

To execute an "open-water ambush," pre-

vious research has shown, the sharks close in on colonies at dawn or dusk, swimming in deep waters below their unsuspecting prey. Invisible to the seals in the dim light, the sharks scan from below for a silhouette. Zeroing in on a victim, a great white "charges up to grab the seal at the surface and breaches clear of the water," Jewell said.

Near Dyer island, where Jewell and his colleagues conducted their field research in 2014, this kind of attack appears to occur less frequently. One reason, they speculated, may be the region's thick kelp forests, long thought to be a natural barrier to sharks and a refuge for seals avoiding their razor-sharp teeth. To find out if that was true, Jewell and his team fitted eight great whites with high-resolution motion sensor tags—the equivalent of underwater Fitbits—with in-built cameras. "We attract the sharks using a line baited with a tuna head or a seal-shaped decoy, and then—when a shark closes in for a look—we use a pole to clamp the tag to the dorsal fin," Jewell explained.

'Mysterious behavior'

"At times, we would have to spend many hours at sea, perched over the side of a boat to deploy these tags," added Taylor Chapple, a professor at Stanford University and team leader. The shark-cams were designed to detach after a couple of days, and rise to the surface where they were picked up. The

researchers were amazed by the footage. Not only did the wide-bodied sharks venture into the kelp beds, they clearly were on the hunt when they did.

On average, the predators spent about 20 percent of their time in the seaweed forests adjacent to a colony with some 50,000 to 60,000 Cape fur seals. More than 28 hours of video data did not record a kill, but it did show one shark closing in on a group of seals darting through the kelp to avoid getting eaten. The sharks showed no hesitation or reduced mobility while gliding through the underwater jungle. "They are able to make some pretty spectacular 180 degree turns," Jewell said. While the object of unrelenting fascination, very little is known about the behavior of great whites.

"We are really only scratching the surface with this study," said co-author Salvador Jorgensen, a senior research scientist at the Monterey Bay Aquarium in central California. "In the future, we hope these cameras will be used to study the sharks' mysterious behavior in the open ocean where they dive repeatedly to great depths." As it turns out, great whites and many other shark species—which have lorded over oceans for 400 million years—are in far greater danger of extinction than their prey. Cape fur seals are listed in the category of "least concern" on the Red List of Threatened Species, while great white sharks are seen as "vulnerable" to extinction. — AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

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WELCOME

Dr. Tammam Abou Ali
Consultant ENT, Head & Neck, Facial Plastic Surgeon

Membership of the royal college of surgeons in UK and Ireland.
10 years work experience in Qatar Hospital, MOH, Kuwait.
As Head of ENT department in Farwaniya Hospital, MOH, Kuwait.
10 years work experience in UK and Ireland.

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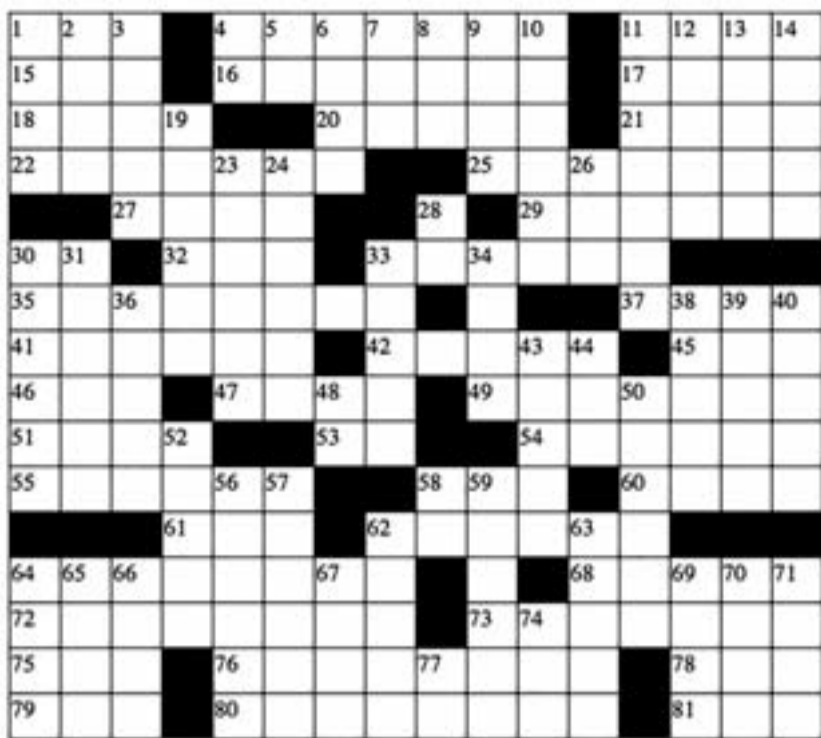
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2175



ACROSS

1. (Scotland) A small loaf or roll of soft bread.
4. Resembling or characteristic of or appropriate to an elegy.
11. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for aviation and spaceflight.
15. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
16. A card game in which cards face up on the table are taken with eligible cards in the hand.
17. Goddess of fertility.
18. Deciduous or evergreen shrubs and shrubby trees of temperate and subtropical North America, South Africa, eastern Asia and northeastern Australia.
20. (Greek mythology) A giant Boeotian hunter who pursued the Pleiades and was eventually slain by Artemis.
21. Ctenophores lacking tentacles.
22. A type of house built in New England.
25. (Greek mythology) A river in Hades across which the souls of the dead were carried by Charon.
27. A theocratic republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
29. Capital and largest city of Cuba.
30. A small digital computer based on a microprocessor and designed to be used by one person at a time.
32. A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
35. Genus of perennial wildflowers of North American plains and prairies.
37. A set of tags and rules (conforming to SGML) for using them in developing hypertext documents.
41. Exultantly proud and joyful.
42. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
45. Grass mowed and cured for use as fodder.
46. A device for creating a current of air by movement of a surface or surfaces.
47. Tropical woody herb with showy yellow flowers and flat pods.
49. Deserving or inciting pity.
51. Norwegian mathematician (1802-1829).
53. A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
54. Echo repeatedly, echo again and again.
55. French soldier said to be fearless and chivalrous (1473-1524).
60. Horny plate covering and protecting part of the dorsal surface of the digits.
61. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
64. East Asian perennial herbs.
68. Treated with oil.
72. A dead axle on a carriage or wagon that has terminal spindles on which the wheel revolve.
73. German bacteriologist who found a 'magic bullet' to cure syphilis and was a pioneer in the study of immunology (1854-1915).
75. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
76. Red Asian weaverbirds often kept as cage birds.
78. The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
79. Late time of life.
80. A great raja.
81. A unit of pain intensity.

DOWN

1. Gymnastic apparatus consisting of two parallel wooden bars supported on uprights.
2. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
3. United States physicist (born in Austria) who proposed the exclusion principle (thus providing a theoretical basis for the periodic table) (1900-1958).
4. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
5. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
6. Type and only genus of the family Escoidae.
7. A change in the electrical properties of the skin in response to stress or anxiety.
8. Being one more than two.
9. Small buffalo of the Celebes having small straight horns.
10. (anatomy) A structure that resembles a shell in shape.
11. An ancient Assyrian city on the River Tigris across from the modern city of Mosul in the northern part of what is now known as Iraq.
12. Earlier a god.
13. The main city of ancient Phoenicia.
14. (Hindu) A manner of sitting (as in the practice of Yoga).
19. (archaic) Strict and severe.
23. Capable of wounding.
24. A member of the Iroquoian people formerly living east of Lake Ontario.
26. Thigh of a hog (usually smoked).
28. A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
31. West Indian tree having racemes of fragrant white flowers and yielding a durable timber and resinous juice.
33. A river that rises in central Germany and flows north to join the Elbe River.
34. Title for the former hereditary monarch of Iran.
36. American jurist who served as Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court.
38. A case or sheath especially a pollen sac or moss capsule.
39. A Bantu language.
40. A clear oily brown solution of cresols in soap.
43. Of or relating to or characteristic of Morocco or its people.
44. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
48. A hemoprotein composed of globin and heme that gives red blood cells their characteristic color.
50. Round flat seed of the lentil plant.
52. A spoon-shaped vessel with a long handle.
56. Desert shrub of Syria and Arabia having small white flowers.
57. Basic principles of the cosmos.
58. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
59. A city in southwestern Switzerland at the western end of Lake Geneva.
62. English monk and scholar (672-735).
63. Belgian architect and leader in art nouveau architecture (1861-1947).
65. The upper angle between an axis and an offshoot such as a branch or leaf-stalk.
66. Wearing or provided with clothing.
67. Not only so, but.
69. A German art song of the 19th century for voice and piano.
70. (prefix) Outside or outer.
71. Tropical woody herb with showy yellow flowers and flat pods.
74. A pilgrimage to Mecca.
77. A colorless and odorless inert gas.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Keep your cool today with family and friends. Think issues through before engaging your mouth. You'll wish you had if you don't. This is a day for analyzing relationships as to whether to keep them or let them go. Be thoughtful about your decision. Though your social group finds you fascinating you may have problems communicating your beliefs. Aries. Your brain works faster than your mouth. Watch your words. With the issues of this day you have a lucky star guiding you in sympathy and understanding for those for which you care.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your knack for knowing just what people want and expect assists you to communicate your desires at work. Work goes easily for you now. You truly know who you are and how you manage to do the things you do. Most don't understand their inner workings as well as you, Taurus. Even though you're almost coldly direct in your words, you make people want to listen and understand. Loved ones draw closer to your magnetic personality. Your love tends to nestle in closer as well. You enjoy the feeling of being needed.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You feel as if you've stuck your head into the sand like an Ostrich. This isn't a time to be energetic nor is it a time for ambition. You'd rather scheme but not in an industrious sense. You just want to get along in an easy manner and exists. You feel as if you're facing reality by being noncommittal. Emotional ideas seem to grow from your manner of thinking although you feel unable to function easily now, Gemini. New habits are part of an effort to change your life without being too difficult. You seem to drag along.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Forceful and powerful feelings make you say what's on your mind. It is harder to keep your mouth shut and allow someone to think you're okay with the situation. Instead you take the tough path. Others find you too blunt to suit them. You don't. One you considered friend may not be. You may find yourself seeking new friends. You discover you socialize with new acquaintances more at this time. Perhaps you've joined a new club or charity so these people and you already have something in common.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Close relationships still mean more than anything else and are mostly what you think about now. Also, you may find yourself giving off airs of introversion without hope that anyone other than those you love can get close to you. People at work feel this and are standoffish themselves. Realize this is partially your fault and let it go. Leo. Believe it or not it might feel good knowing those at work think of your best interest too if you give them a chance. Allow some leeway here. The security of love at home helps you keep your head above water, so to speak. Take refuge, for the moment, in those you love.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This timeframe you're entering has you being very blunt and also impulsive. Generally, your scales make you weigh your decision carefully but you and the stars just popped that right out the window. Make sure any habits you decide to change now by one of those impulsive moves is something you can live with later. Otherwise you'll be having some buyer's remorse for some time to come. Libra although you'll try not to grouse over it. This will take some time to change. Sympathy will come from your lover or a very good friend. Take this thoughtfulness and be happy.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This timeframe you're entering has you being very blunt and also impulsive. Generally, your scales make you weigh your decision carefully but you and the stars just popped that right out the window. Make sure any habits you decide to change now by one of those impulsive moves is something you can live with later. Otherwise you'll be having some buyer's remorse for some time to come. Libra although you'll try not to grouse over it. This will take some time to change. Sympathy will come from your lover or a very good friend. Take this thoughtfulness and be happy.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Others, especially at work, want to help you with anything you ask. Good going. You're leading by example and you feel good. Security on the emotional front comes from knowing that you've made it through the last few days and now you're getting good vibes at work and at home. Feeling like you're starting over, perhaps you should think of making this new work ethic one you utilize for your future. Having those you love comment on your more direct speaking manner, informational without you're being brutal when angered, helps.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Things seem a little better today but you're going to have to work at it to make good emotional decisions. You're becoming more direct in your conversation than you generally are which makes you happier with your choices. That is until you hurt someone for which you care. You're full of powerful feelings which will take you through some time to come. Sagittarius, starting over is what you feel you need now. Whatever the problem, you seem to face it head on which is another thing you're doing better too. Take the time to enjoy some much-needed socialization with friends and to rest.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Getting out for a walk at lunch may help you soothe the urgency you feel for romance in a sexual way. Walk fast. Socializing later may help with the romance part but for the earlier part of the day you find that work is a must. That's okay. You like to work almost as much as you like loving a particular exercise. You've got a fresh start going on in life which you're now noticing more. Putting new items into action creates a better feeling for you at this time. You love being in charge and you are. It's just by talking with others now. They easily follow your lead.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You've got lots of energy and drive. Thank goodness because you're still in the mode you were in yesterday too. An assertive attitude along with directed conversation make you get your thoughts and ideas across to those you're working with now. There is no misgiving about what you intend. The only bad thing about this day is that you may become frustrated by those with whom you're trying to communicate. Aquarius. This phase you're entering is here to stay for a while. Be consistent with what you say and make sure to get your point across with no questions left to ask by those with whom you work. Take time to relax and enjoy your evening.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

At work and in love you want to be in control. That's not always going to happen but at this time you intend to make it so and the universe seems to be helping. Investments may take some of your time at work in studying and learning what works and what doesn't. Powerful feelings come from you at this time leading you to be more impulsive than usual, Pisces. You're all about creating new habits but making sure they're the best ones for you to make before you start. Making love is one of the behaviors you want to take top priority, both for the fun of it and for the ability to make another feel better.

Wordsearch Puzzle

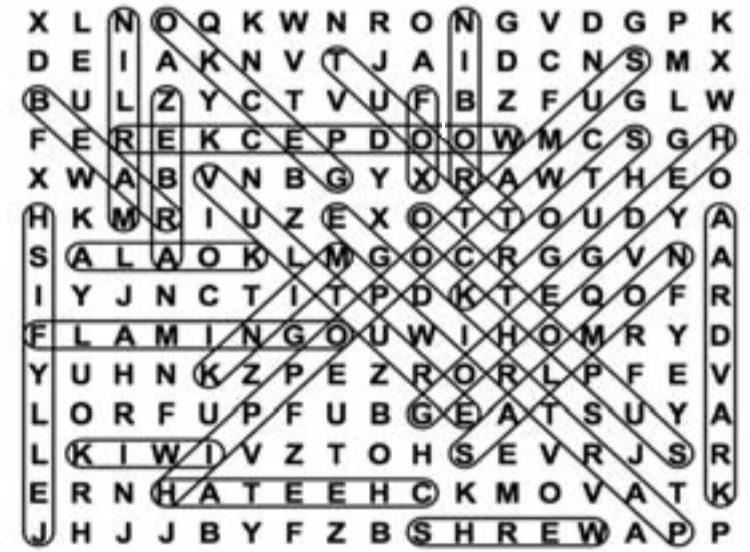
Astronomy 1 - Word Search



- | | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| APOGEE | HUBBLE | SOLAR WIND |
| ASTROLABE | LIGHT YEAR | SPACECRAFT |
| ATMOSPHERE | MILKY WAY | SUN |
| BINARY STARS | NEBULA | TELESCOPE |
| COMET | PARALLAX | UNIVERSE |
| CORONA | PERIGEE | |
| EARTH | PULSARS | |
| EQUINOX | RED GIANT | |

Yesterday's Solution

Animals 7 - Solution



- | | | |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| AARDVARK | KIWI | STORK |
| BEAR | KOALA | TROUT |
| CHEETAH | MARLIN | VULTURE |
| FLAMINGO | MINK | WOODPECKER |
| FOX | OCTOPUS | ZEBRA |
| GECKO | PARTRIDGE | |
| HEDGEHOG | ROBIN | |
| HIPPOPOTAMUS | SALMON | |

Yesterday's Solution



Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 2019



A student has her picture taken with a King Kong sculpture made out of straw in the northern Thai province of Chiang Mai. — AFP

Heirs welcome return of Nazi-looted 17th century masterpiece

Descendants of a Jewish Parisian art collector are welcoming the return to their family of a rediscovered masterpiece—a 17th century painting looted by the Nazis during World War II. Michel Vernay, 71, and his brother Laurent, 65, traveled from Paris to New York for a ceremony Monday at the French consulate to receive a 1639 painting by Dutch master Salomon Koninck titled “A scholar sharpening his quill.” The brothers are the great-grandsons of famed art collector Adolphe Schloss (1842-1910), and were accompanied at the event by Eliane Demartini, another rightful heir of the looted art. French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian was present and spoke at the event. The painting was stolen by the Nazis in 1943, during their occupation of France, and sent to Adolf Hitler’s headquarters in Munich. The painting vanished at the war’s end, and resurfaced only in November 2017 when a Chilean art dealer tried to sell it via Christie’s auction house in New York. Christie’s



The 1639 painting by Salomon Koninck titled ‘A Scholar Sharpening His Quill’ looted by the Nazis from the Schloss family during World War II, is unveiled at the French Consulate in New York City. — AFP

identified the piece and contacted the FBI to begin the process of restitution.

Spotlight on looting, genocide

Given the re-emergence of anti-Semitism in the United States and Europe, a restitution “puts the spotlight on all the looting and Jewish disappearances,” said Michel Vernay, a retired engineer. “It’s like a monument in tribute to what happened in the past,” he said. Theft and looting is an integral part of the process of genocide, said Vernay, whose mother lost half her family at the Auschwitz death camp. “People are deprived of their ability to exist in society, to exercise their profession,” he said. “Then they are deprived of their nationality, their resources and their property, and when they are alone, without resources, homeless and defenseless, it’s easy to end their lives.”

Laurent Vernay described every restitution as a small victory. “But one painting is not as important as any single life that was taken,” he said. The brothers are convinced that the return of antisemitism is not a passing phenomenon. “It’s up and down but it’s always there,” Laurent said. What plans are in store for the painting? “I have no sentimental feeling about it,” said Michel, who was seeing the painting for the first time. “I was born after the war, after it had vanished.” The artwork is an inheritance that is shared with more than 20 people, he said. “As a painting cannot be split, I hope there will be a French museum able to purchase it and mark it as artwork recovered after being stolen.”

French museums unhelpful

Even though, there are 170 paintings still missing out of the 333 in the Schloss collection, the brothers have no plans to search for them. “If you spend your life looking for them, then you don’t live,” said Laurent. “That was the position of my father, and I decided not to do too much.” Both Michel Vernay and Eliane Demartini deplored the way that French museums have dragged their feet when it comes to returning Nazi-looted artwork. In the United States “there is a real procedure and a pride to be able to restore these works,” Michel said, while in France such restitutions have been done in a haphazard way. French museums, including the Louvre, limit themselves to displaying recovered artwork under the label “MNR” (for “National Museums - Recovered”) until the descendants recognize the pieces and step forward to claim them.—AFP

Gun that Van Gogh killed himself with goes up for sale

The revolver with which Vincent Van Gogh is believed to have shot himself is to go under the hammer, a Paris auction house said Tuesday. Discovered by a farmer in 1965 in the same field where the troubled Dutch painter is thought to have fatally wounded himself 75 years before, the gun has already been exhibited at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. Billed by Auction Art as “the most famous weapon in the history of art”, the 7 mm Lefauchaux revolver is expected to go for up to 60,000 euros (\$67,000) when it is sold on June 19. Van Gogh experts believe that he shot himself with the revolver near the village of Auvers-sur-Oise north of Paris, where he spent the last few months of his life in 1890.

The Dutch artist had borrowed the gun from the owner of the inn where he was staying. He died 36 hours later after staggering wounded back to the inn in the dark. It was not his first dramatic act of self-harm. Two years earlier in 1888, he cut off his ear before offering it to a woman in a brothel in Arles in the south of France. While most art historians agree that Van Gogh killed himself, that assumption has been questioned in recent years, with some researchers claiming that the fatal shot may have been fired accidentally by two local boys playing with the weapon in the field. That theory got fresh support from a new biopic of the artist starring Willem Dafoe, “At Eternity’s Gate”. Its director, the renowned American painter Julian Schnabel, told AFP that Van Gogh had painted 75 canvasses in his 80 days at Auvers-sur-Oise and was unlikely to be suicidal.

Were local boys to blame?

The legendary French screenwriter Jean-Claude Carrière—who co-wrote the script with Schnabel—insisted that there “is absolutely no proof he killed himself. “Do I believe that Van Gogh killed himself? Absolutely not!” he declared when the film was premiered at the Venice film festival in September. He said Van Gogh painted some of



his best work in his final days, including his “Portrait of Dr Gachet”, the local doctor who later tried to save his life. It set a world record when it sold for \$82.5 million in 1990.

The bullet Dr Gachet extracted from Van Gogh’s chest was the same calibre as the one used by the Lefauchaux revolver. “Van Gogh was working constantly. Every day he made a new work. He was not at all sad,” Carrière argued. In the film the gun goes off after the two young boys, who were brothers, got into a struggle with the bohemian stranger.

Auction Art said that the farmer who found the gun in 1965 gave it to the owners of the inn at Auvers-sur-Oise, whose family are now selling it. “Technical tests on the weapon have shown the weapon was used and indicate that it stayed in the ground for a period that would coincide with 1890,” it said. “All these clues give credence to the theory that this is the weapon used in the suicide.” That did not exclude, the auction house added, that the gun could not also have been hidden or abandoned by the two young brothers in the field. — AFP

Burger King goes... vegan? The meatless Whopper is here

For decades, fast-food giant Burger King has been the undisputed Home of the Whopper—the chain’s signature sandwich featuring one of its flame-grilled, “no nonsense” 100 percent beef patties. So, what happens when the Whopper doesn’t actually have any meat? BK is going vegan. That’s right, folks: enter the Impossible Whopper, a meatless version of “America’s favorite burger.” Made up of mostly soy and potato protein, and featuring coconut oil, sunflower oil and heme—an iron-rich protein that simulates the texture, color and taste of actual meat. For years, Burger King has offered a veggie burger on the menu at its thousands of restaurants, but it was not marketed as anything even remotely resembling a juicy, tender slab of meat.

So far, the Impossible Whopper is only available at several dozen restaurants in the Midwestern city of St Louis. But Burger King’s chief marketing officer Fernando Machado told The New York Times that the company expects to quickly expand availability nationwide if all goes well. “I have high expectations that it’s going to be big business, not just a niche product,” Machado told the paper.

Burger King’s tie-up with start-up Impossible Foods is the latest, perhaps boldest move by a power player in an industry seeking to make inroads with customers on plant-based diets. On Tuesday, Nestle announced plans to roll out “cook from raw” plant-based burgers in Europe under the Garden Gourmet brand—and in the United States under the Sweet Earth label.

In December, Nestle competitor Unilever said it had bought up Dutch brand De Vegetarische Slager (The



Vegetarian Butcher) to position itself in the expanding sector. Impossible Burgers are already on the menu at US chain restaurants White Castle and, as of Monday, Red Robin. The Silicon Valley company, founded in 2011, is planning to launch its products in supermarkets later this year.

‘Sizzling sound’

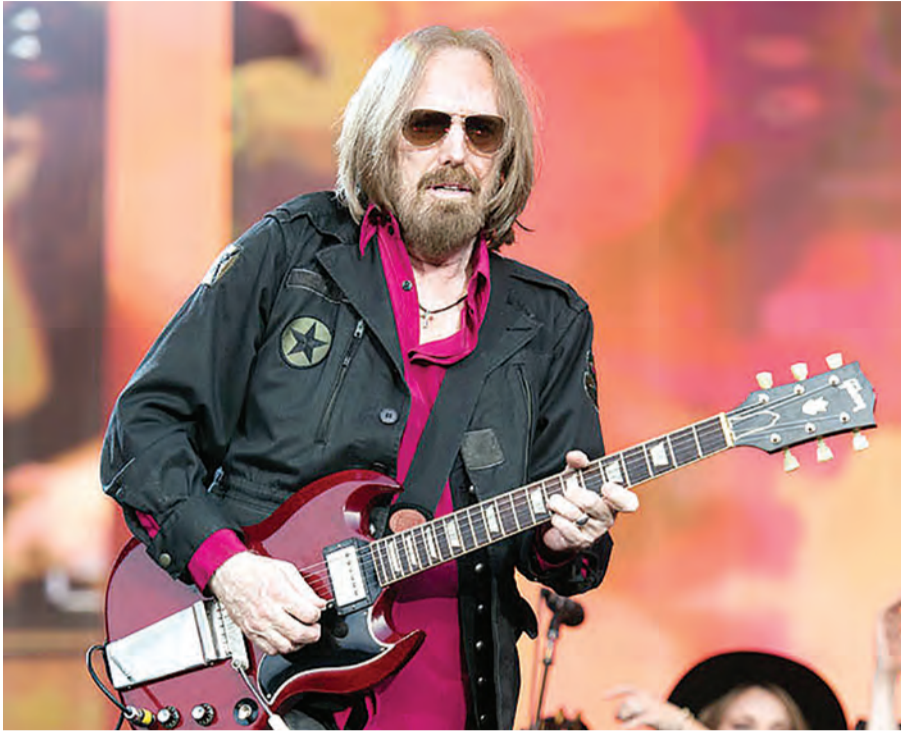
While soy burgers have existed for quite some time, several companies have taken the product up a notch by using sophisticated technology to make it taste, look and smell like meat. Beyond Impossible Foods, other start-ups in the United States like Memphis Meats and Just, or Mosa Meats in the Netherlands, are working to develop meat from animal cells, not actual animals. Nestle’s new products are made from soy and wheat proteins, with plant extracts such as beetroot, carrot and bell pepper.

The Swiss food giant goes so far as to say their veggie burger “hardly differs from a traditional burger.” “They even make the sizzling sound of a regular beef burger during cooking,” it says. In the US, Sweet Earth—the California-

based subsidiary bought by Nestle 18 months ago—will sell its product as the “Awesome Burger.”

According to Nestle, consumers are looking “at different ways to enjoy and balance their protein intake and lower the environmental footprint of their diets.” “We believe this trend is here to stay,” it says of plant-based food. Indeed, a survey carried out by Nielsen for the Good Food Institute and published in September last year showed that sales of plant-based foods grew 17 percent over the previous 12 months.

The trend is reflected in so-called “flexitarianism”—a plant-based diet with the occasional inclusion of meat—and veganism, which means the abstention from consumption of any animal products including dairy. A vegan diet has major health benefits, reducing risks of diabetes and heart problems, but some health professionals say that vegans run the risk of not consuming enough of certain nutrients like protein and iron. — AFP



Tom Petty's family embroiled in feud

Tom Petty's widow and daughters are reportedly feuding over his unreleased music. The 'American Girl' hitmaker died from an accidental overdose in October 2017 and while his wife, Dana York Petty, has filed documents claiming she is in control of her late spouse's estate, his two children from a previous relationship, Adria and Annakim have insisted they were also meant to be involved. According to court documents obtained by TMZ, Dana has accused her step-daughters of blocking the release of solo material recorded by Tom 25 years ago, which she wanted to include with a box set to mark the 25th anniversary of his seminal album 'Wildflowers' - which would have generated over \$1 million in royalties. Adria is said to have attempted to stop the release because she was unhappy with the timing. Dana also accused her of verbally attacking Tom's bandmates and making it difficult for her to control the estate. Adria allegedly wrote in an email to The Heartbreakers' Benmont Tench and Mike Campbell:

"What I don't have the temperament for is having my entire life raped. Being disparaged. My dad being disgraced. I am sorry I am not a man and cannot earn your respect through the work and deeds I do." Another element of the dispute allegedly centres around plans to rename a park in honor of the 'I Won't Back Down' hitmaker in his home city of Gainesville, Florida. After the estate were asked to create artwork for a park sign, and a representative submitted an album cover image, Adria allegedly said: "Your name is not Petty and you don't have the backbone to protect the estate from a horrible image like this one. Shame on you." Adria is believed to have filed a petition with the probate court, accusing her step-mother of ignoring two of her late father's wishes in his will, including a request to transfer the singer's "artistic property" assets out of his trust and into a separate company managed by all three women.

Missy Elliott was intimidated by expectations after debut album



Missy Elliott was "scared" by the expectations for her second album 'Da Real World'. The 'Get Ur Freak On' rapper released her debut record 'Supa Dupa Fly' in 1997 - which hit number three in the US Billboard 200 - and admitted while it all came together naturally in two weeks with producer Timbaland, it meant there was a lot of pressure for her follow-up effort two years later. Responding to a fan calling the sophomore LP "one of the greatest albums of all time", she tweeted: "Funny many say this is their favorite of my albums but this album was the hardest 2 create compared 2 my 1st album SupaDupaFly I finished in 2 weeks with @Timbaland 'Da Real World I was scared becuz the expectations was high & But we use theatrical sounds in2 our HipHop style (sic)" Missy - whose second album made the top 10 in the US - also took to social media and discussed her own legacy, sug-

gesting her innovation in the genre has meant critics often don't know how to describe her. She said: "I don't think many know what category to put me in (I think)" Meanwhile, last month the star teamed up with Lizzo on new track 'Tempo', and she surprised the singer by sending a memoji of herself singing into her iPhone before sending over her verse for their collaboration using the fun messaging tool. Lizzo recently said: "She sent me a memoji of herself singing her verse, that's how I got the verse. I got a Memoji of Missy like smiling and then she just started rapping, and I was like, 'OMG what the hell.' "I had to hook it up to my speaker system but it wasn't even the actual track, it was like her going along in her studio so ... and then she finally [sent] the track over and this was insane she killed [it]."



Rare Prince mixtape announced for Record Store Day 2019

Prince's rare mixtape 'The VERSACE Experience' is being released on cassette for Record Store Day 2019. The exclusive record - which was originally distributed as a promotional cassette in 1995 for attendees at Paris Fashion Week - included special remixes, segues, and sequencing overseen by the late pop icon himself. 'The VERSACE Experience: PRELUDE 2 GOLD' - set to drop on April 13 - has been recreated by The Prince Estate, NPG Records and Sony Legacy Recordings to bring the historical release to a whole new generation of fans. The original release included remixes of 10 of the 15 tracks which would end up on 'The Gold Experience', including very rare versions of 'Gold', 'P. Control' and 'Eye Hate U'. In 2016, an original copy of the sought-after album became the most expensive cassette ever sold on the collectors site Discogs when it sold for £3,075. Donatella Versace - who was one of the original recipients of the album - previously said: "He didn't just influence my work, he epitomized what Versace stands for: Creative, fierce, daring, extraordinary." Record Store Day itself is a global celebration of physical music and "the culture of the independently owned record store", with bands all over the world treating fans to special releases. By releasing the mixtape on its cassette format, the collection will retain the unique spirit of the original by going against the event's usual trend of artists bringing out special vinyls. Meanwhile later this month, Prince fans will also be able to honor the 'Purple Rain' singer's legacy at the 'CELEBRATION 2019' four day event at his Paisley Park home and recording sanctuary near Minneapolis. The annual gathering will be held on April 25-28, featuring live music, panel discussions, screenings of classic concerts and special presentations looking at the cultural impact of the star.

Hunnam says The Gentlemen is 'vintage Guy Ritchie'

Charlie Hunnam says 'The Gentlemen' will be "vintage Guy Ritchie". In recent years, the 50-year-old director has helmed blockbusters such as 'Sherlock Holmes' and his next release will be Disney's highly-anticipated live-action 'Aladdin' remake. However, Charlie - who starred as Arthur in Guy's 2017 film 'King Arthur: Legend of the Sword' - has hinted that the filmmaker will be returning to his roots with the British crime thriller and compared the upcoming flick to the directors early work such as 'Snatch' and 'Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels'. Speaking at STX Entertainment's presentation at CinemaCon, the 'Sons of Anarchy' star said: "When I read the script, it's sort of vintage Guy Ritchie. I grew up on 'Snatch' and 'Lock, Stock...' so when he sent me this script and invited me to be a part of it, I just jumped at the chance." The film - formerly known as 'Toff Guys' and 'Bush' - has been described as a crime-laden tale about a "very British drug lord" intent on selling off his fortune, and having plenty of trouble doing it. The movie will also star Henry Golding, Hugh Grant, Matthew McConaughey, Colin Farrell, Jeremy Strong and Michelle Dockery and Henry echoed Charlie's sentiments insisting that the filmmaker has an "iconic" way of making films. He said: "He's got such an iconic way about him; he really sort of created a lot of that sort of genre and camera movement." Charlie, 38, continued: "He's very sort of immersive in his process, he needs to be there on set with his actors to fully realize, even though he's written the script, to realize

what it's gonna be. It evolves very, very rapidly through the course of the day. It's really remarkable to watch him work in real time. There's many scenes in this film that were excellent on the page, but the entire thing got thrown out in the morning and he just starts writing and we started improvising and playing ... and the whole thing has been re-imagined."



Kumail Nanjiani to star in Any Person, Living or Dead

Kumail Nanjiani is to star in 'Any Person, Living or Dead'. The 41-year-old actor has joined the cast of the upcoming comedy which is based on a short story from author-and-comedian Simon Rich who will adapt the script and Jonathan Krisel on board to direct. The film will follow a brilliant yet reclusive scientist (Kumail) who uses a time machine he's invented to bring the greatest thinkers in human history back to present day in order to help solve the problems of today's world. However, after finding philosopher Aristotle, playwright William Shakespeare and first American President George Washington the scientist encounters a number of issues such as language barriers, racism and their tendency to solve problems with murder. Kumail will next star opposite Dave Bautista in the 20th Century Fox comedy 'Stuber' and will also feature in Sony's 'Men in Black: International' and recently wrapped Paramount's 'Lovebirds' for which he serves as an executive producer. The 'Silicon Valley' star received an Oscar nomination for scripting 'The Big Sick' which told Kumail's real-life story of a Pakistani comic who meets an American graduate student named Emily (Zoe Kazan) at one of his stand-up shows. As their relationship develops he soon becomes worried about what his traditional Muslim parents will think of her, however, when Emily suddenly comes down with an illness that leaves her in a coma, Kumail finds himself developing a bond with her deeply concerned mother and father. The movie has grossed roughly \$56.4 million since its release last year and Kumail previously admitted he wanted the story to differ from the traditional romantic comedy stating: "We wanted to take the tropes of the rom-com and tell a different kind of story."



Kayo joins Elba in Mouse Guard

Samson Kayo will join Idris Elba in 'Mouse Guard'. The 'Youngers' star will join the 'Luther' actor as well as Andy Serkis and Thomas Brodie-Sangster in Fox's adaptation of the popular Boom! Studios comic, which is being directed by Wes Ball. The film - which is set in a medieval world - will tell the story of an order of mice who are the sworn protectors of their realm. Samson will play a member of the guard named Saxson, who is described as "lush and a scallawag" with a "fiery temperament and an inclination for melodrama". Idris, 46, is in talks to play Celanawe, "an Obi-Wan Kenobi-like figure who was once a legendary champion and now thought long gone". Serkis will star as the villain, while Brodie-Sangster will play the role of Lieam, who has to prove his bravery throughout the movie. Production work on 'Mouse Guard' - which will be shot using motion capture - is expected to begin in May. Samson is known for his work on the ITV2 series 'Timewasters' about a time-traveling South London jazz band and BBC Three comedy sketch show 'Famalam'. Idris will soon star in the upcoming big screen adaptation of Andrew Lloyd Webber's beloved musical 'Cats' which is based on

T.S. Eliot's 'Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats' poetry collection - playing villain feline Macavity in the movie. Idris will star alongside the legendary Sir Ian McKellen (Gus the Theatre Cat) and Dame Judi Dench in the all-star cast. Dench - who was due play Grizabella in the original West End production in 1981, until she was forced to withdraw through injury - takes on the role of Old Deuteronomy. Jennifer Hudson, James Corden and Taylor Swift are also set to appear in the motion picture.



Leonardo DiCaprio's Akira to start shooting

Leonardo DiCaprio's live-action version of 'Akira' is to be filmed in California. The film, based on the Manga series written and illustrated by Katsuhiro Otama, will soon begin shooting in the US state after scoring \$18.5 million in tax credits under the California Film Commission's Film & TV Tax Credit Program 2.0. The shoot is scheduled to take place over 71 days and, according to Deadline, will employ more than 200 "below-the-line" crew and more than 5,000 employees. 'Thor: Ragnarok' director Taika Waititi remains attached to helm the film, which takes place in Tokyo in the year 2060 and follows Tetsuo and his best friend Kaneda after Tetsuo's government experiment-boosted psychic powers threaten both of their lives. Ravi Mehta, Warner Bros Pictures EVP of physical production and finance, said in a statement: "We are thrilled with the opportunity to shoot 'Akira' in California. The availability of top-notch crew members, plus the wide variety of location choices and predictable weather are second to none." The movie is one of 18 other films that will receive the tax benefits under the condition filming takes place in California and the picture will be produced by Leonardo's Appian Way

Productions that he founded in 2004 alongside Andrew Lazar. California Film Commission executive director Amy Lemisch added: "Big-budget film projects bring big employment and big spending, and we're able to bring them home to California more cost-effectively than other locales that don't have all that we have to offer. 'Akira' is just the latest in a growing list of big-budget film projects that have found California offers the best value despite the availability of more aggressive financial incentives in other states and nations." — Bang Showbiz



Lifestyle | Music & Movies

Fans get fright as Rolling Stone's Jagger faces heart surgery

Rolling Stones fans around the world got a fright Monday after reports that their idol Mick Jagger was to have heart surgery later this week. The iconic British band put back the North American leg of their "No Filter" tour Saturday saying the 75-year-old rocker was to receive unspecified medical treatment. There has been no official information about the veteran frontman's condition other than the group's declaration on Twitter that "Mick has been advised by doctors that he cannot go on tour as he needs medical treatment."

With fans taking to social media to say they were praying for Jagger, the band tried to dampen fears by adding that "Mick is expected to make a complete recovery so that he can get back on stage as soon as possible." Rolling Stone magazine reported Monday that the singer is to have heart valve surgery. Drudge Report said the operation would take place on Friday in New York. Jagger himself tweeted that he was "devastated" to delay the tour of 17 shows in the US and Canada that were due to start later this month and run until June. "I will be working very hard to be back on stage as soon as I can," he added. "I really hate letting you down like this." Jagger, who has eight children, five grandchildren and a great-granddaughter, has maintained his energetic stage performances well into his 70s.

'Home in a day or two'
Doctors said that if the surgery goes well, Jagger could be back on his feet relatively rapidly. Heart surgeon and US television presenter Dr Mehmet Oz said "about 10 percent of people at his age have problem with their aortic valve which can lead to chest pain and dizziness." "About 50 percent of people who have the problem will die in a couple of years if they don't have the surgery," he added in a video posted on Twitter. He said traditionally the operation has been done with open heart surgery but "new techniques allow us to do these procedures with minimal invasion with a catheter (tube)."

You can sneak your way up there and replace the old valve with a new one. "This allows the person to be back home in a day or two. (It also) halves the time of recovery going back to full exercise and activity." Oz said the other valve which also frequently requires surgery is the mitral valve, which is further into the heart. He said the procedures to repair or replace it were similar.

Fright for fans
Heart valve problems had until recent years meant serious open heart surgery. But surgeons can now introduce a new artificial valve inside a stent by making a small incision in the groin and passing it through the femoral artery. David Tillier, head of the Stones' fan club Sympathy for



In this file photo Singer of British band the Rolling Stones, Mick Jagger performs with the band during a concert at Berlin's Olympic Stadium. — AFP photos



In this file photo British musician Mick Jagger of The Rolling Stones performs during a concert at The Velodrome Stadium in Marseille as part of their "No Filter" tour.

the Devils, told AFP that the way the news leaked out had given fans a fright. "Clearly the medical checkup (before the tour) revealed something. But if what we are reading now is true, that is quite reassuring, because heart valve surgery is now rather commonplace."

Jagger's fellow Rolling Stones Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood, who have had their share of health problems, took to Twitter to calm fears. "A big disappointment

for everyone but things need to be taken care of and we will see you soon. Mick, we are always there for you!" Richards said. Wood wrote, "Here's to Mick," adding a muscle emoji, and thanked fans for "your supportive messages. It means so much to us." — AFP



Participants pose during a workshop about filming with a smart-phone as part of the 2nd edition of the Bushman Film Festival. — AFP photos



Two participants in a workshop film with their smart-phones during the 2nd edition of the Bushman Film Festival.



Two participants in a workshop film with their smart-phones.



Participants film with a smart-phone a man during a workshop.

Mexico rocker commits suicide, citing #MeToo accusation

A Mexican rock star was found dead Monday after tweeting a suicide note saying he planned to kill himself in a "radical declaration of innocence" after being accused of sexual harassment by the country's #MeToo movement. Armando Vega Gil, 63, the bassist for veteran rock group Botellita de Jerez (Little Bottle of Sherry), died early Monday, the group said on Twitter. Mexico City prosecutors said they were investigating the death of a middle-aged man found hung from a tree with wire at his home in the central Narvarte neighborhood. An investigation source confirmed the man was Vega, speaking on condition of anonymity because she was not authorized to discuss the probe.

Just hours earlier, Vega posted a suicide note on Twitter saying he was taking his own life in reaction to an anonymous accusation that he sexually assaulted a 13-year-old girl more than a decade ago. The accusation was made earlier that night on the Twitter account @MeTooMusicaMX, part of a nascent #MeToo movement in Mexico that has triggered a flood of accusations of sexual assault against journalists, academics, writers and others in the cultural sphere in recent weeks.

"I categorically deny this accusation," Vega, who was also an award-winning poet and writer, tweeted before taking his own life. "It is a fact that I will lose my work, which was built upon my public credibility. My life is detained, there is no exit," he said. Vega wrote that he feared he would not be able to defend himself on social media, where "anything I say will be used against me," and that he wished to spare his son from "suffering the effects of this false accusation against me."



"I must clarify that my death is not a confession of guilt. On the contrary, it is a radical declaration of innocence," he added. Vega's son is eight years old, a family friend told AFP. Early Sunday, the Twitter account @MeTooMusicaMX aired an accusation by a woman who said Vega befriended her when she was a 13-year-old aspiring musician and he was 50. He invited her over to his home and made a series of unwanted sexual advances, including telling her he wanted to teach her to kiss, she said.

She ultimately severed ties with him. "I'm sure I'm not the only one. It terrifies me to know that other people probably weren't as lucky as me and fell into his perverse trap," she wrote. The #MeToo movement gained little traction in Mexico when it burst onto the international scene in 2017 with a series of accusations of sexual assault against powerful Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein. However, in recent weeks, the movement has made major waves in the worlds of Mexican music, journalism, publishing and universities. — AFP

SMARTPHONE MOVIEMAKERS TAKE THE LIMELIGHT AT AFRICAN FESTIVAL

"It's not because you don't have the means that you don't dream," says Guy-Serge Namane, a director at the second Bushman Film Festival, a cornucopia of global smartphone cinema. "Action!" his assistant director calls. Namane asks actress Berenice Irie, in full make-up, to knock on the door of Room 8 at the Bushman Cafe in Abidjan, the venue at the center of the second such festival, unique in West Africa. Another assistant lights the scene with the lamp on his mobile phone. "With the telephone, we can communicate but we can also make films and we can even cast the light to make films!" Namane jests.

The three-day festival, which ended Sunday and followed an inaugural event in 2017, received more than 5,000 entries, of which organizers said they retained 3,694 submissions that met the required format. The Bushman Cafe, a verdant venue with hotel and restaurant, provided several movie theatres.

Entries were submitted from all over the world, of which 350 were selected and a shorter list established to compete for five prizes. "We want to show people that we can make films even if we unfortunately lack the means," Namane said. "Should we stop? We've found ways to be

able to express our dreams while waiting on God to give us the means to attract investors." The overarching aim of the festival, amply covered on social media, is to promote new talent. "This is a launch pad. We give a voice to those who have no voice. The goal is not simply to show films and stage an exhibition, but to accompany people in producing better films by way of sponsors and prizes. We help others to go into production or be shown on bigger platforms," said festival organizer Princesse Nomo.

The event included workshops for students and master classes with professional directors and conferences, but the main purpose was simply to show films. One of the movies portrayed a crafty, streetwise hustler who used social media to boost the faltering career of a star, even as he divests her of her ... smartphone.

'A change from the telly!'

People like Namane went right on filming. His actress Berenice Irie weeps over the broken body of her lover near the swimming pool. Just a few meters (yards) away an evangelical pastor dressed entirely in white with an enormous cross on his chest stared inquisitively at the art gallery on another set. "They slog away. They have ideas.

We try to channel this energy a little," said professional director Luis Marques, a member of the jury who also oversaw a project to make two films in 24 hours.

"We really want to do this," Irie said. "I hope that the film will be watched so that we can move beyond" the chronic lack of resources. Irie has already acted in several films made with smartphones and hopes she might be recognized. "For an actress, the work doesn't change. You even get used to the mobile phone. At home we practice making scenes with the phone." Inside the cinemas, audiences laughed loudly and cried out when startled and surprised by the ingenuity of the smartphone film directors.

"It's funny. It makes a change from what we see on the telly," said Nadia Gohou, who is studying to work in the hotel business. "Sometimes there's a lot of background noise and the picture is not clear like it is on the telly, but that's fine all the same," she added. "There are a lot of ideas drawing on daily concerns, how young people live-Instagram, the obsession with 'likes' (on social media). We enjoyed it a lot." — AFP

Actress Michelle Williams at US Capitol to push for pay equality

Hollywood actress Michelle Williams came to Congress Tuesday appealing for a vote on a law to close the gender pay gap, recalling how she was once paid dramatically less than a male colleague for similar work. Nominated for four Academy Awards during her career, the star of "Manchester By the Sea" and "Brokeback Mountain" learned that while she earned \$1,000 in 2017 to reshoot scenes for the film "All the Money in the World," her male costar Mark Wahlberg received \$1.5 million "for the exact same amount of work." The reshoots on the Ridley Scott film were done to remove appearances by Kevin Spacey, who had played a leading role and recently had been charged with sexual assault. "If it was like this for me, a white woman in a glamorous industry, how were my sisters suffering across their profession?" Williams said. The 38-year-old actress's appearance at the US Capitol was organized by House Democrats to mark Equal Pay Day, meant to symbolize how far into the year a woman must work to make what men earned in the previous year.

"Today, American women still earn, on average, only

80 cents for every dollar earned by a man, while African-American women earn only 61 cents and Latinas earn only 53 cents for every dollar paid to men," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said. The Democrat-controlled House of Representatives last week passed the Paycheck Fairness Act aimed at ending gender-based pay discrimination, still a problem decades after the Equal Pay Act of 1963 passed into law. The new measures would prevent employers from asking prospective workers how much they made in previous jobs, and by barring companies from punishing women when they try to negotiate salaries. No date has been set for a vote in the US Senate, which is controlled by Republicans.

"The ball's now in the Senate court," Williams said. "This is the next critical moment, please don't let it pass by." The Williams/Wahlberg pay discrepancy made national headlines when actress Jessica Chastain revealed it on social media, and it gained traction amid the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment. — AFP



Actress Michelle Williams speaks at an event to celebrate the Paycheck Fairness Act on Equal Pay Day in the Rayburn Room of the US Capitol in Washington, DC. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Polish priest
'very sorry' for
Harry Potter
book burning

A Polish priest apologized yesterday for burning "magic" Harry Potter books, after his actions sparked a wave of protest and comparisons with totalitarian regimes and the Inquisition. Last Sunday, after mass, three priests in a parish at the Baltic port city of Gdansk presided over the burning of items including books they said were "linked to the occult and magic". They had burned them in line with Biblical exhortations against practicing idolatry, they said.

A post detailing the incident on a Facebook page run by the Catholic "SMS from Heaven" evangelical group went viral, drawing heavy criticism online and headlines around the world. Yesterday Father Rafal Jaroszewicz, one of the three priests involved, posted on the same Facebook page that he was "very sorry". "The fact of burning books and other objects was unfortunate," he wrote. "However, it was not irreverent to any social group or religion, nor was it aimed at books as such or culture."



The offending post—which included photographs showing two altar boys standing over the fire pit as Jaroszewicz prayed over the "occult" items—had been deleted, he added. Father Jaroszewicz had appeared unrepentant in a post on Monday. He "dreamed of the day" when "the killing of unborn babies" would trigger as much outcry as the book burning, he wrote then.

'Ideological madness'

The books burned included some from British author J.K. Rowling's famed Harry Potter fantasy series; and at least one from the Twilight vampire-themed fantasy romance stories. But other items included a Hindu religious figurine. The Polish Episcopate declined comment despite calls for it to condemn the incident. Respected commentator Lukasz Turski described the "participation of children" in the burning as "particularly reprehensible". "In 1821, Heinrich Heine made a prophetic statement in his 'Almanzor' drama: 'When we start to burn books, we finish by burning people,'" he wrote in the liberal daily Gazeta Wyborcza.

"A hundred and some odd years later, in Nazi Germany, Heine and (Thomas) Mann's books and many other prominent artists were burning in piles in Berlin; a dozen or so years later, crematoria burned... the victims of the ideological madness of the supposedly civilised world." The top-selling Fakt tabloid daily thundered that "nobody expected a Holy Inquisition", referring to the campaign against heresy led by the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, which involved burning books and witch-hunting.

The row blew up as Poland's influential church is struggling to deal with the fallout of unprecedented revelations about paedophilia among priests. A Kantor Millward Brown survey published on Monday suggested that 64 percent of Poles want a secular state, with 29 percent opposed and seven percent without an opinion. — AFP



A picture taken yesterday shows seashells cover the beach near Kuwait City. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

FRENCHMAN IN A BARREL CLOSING
IN ON TRANS-ATLANTIC CROSSING

A 72-year-old Frenchman floating across the Atlantic in a custom-made barrel says he is in high spirits as he approaches the end of his journey, after nearly 100 days alone at sea enjoying "magnificent sunrises and sunsets." "The days are going by too fast," Jean-Jacques Savin told AFP by satellite phone this week. "I'm not bored at all." The former French paratrooper and avid triathlete embarked on his trans-Atlantic test on December 26 from the Canary islands just west of Africa, aiming to reach the Caribbean in about three months just by drifting in ocean currents.

Capricious trade winds slowed his progress—not that it dented Savin's enthusiasm for "experiencing this feeling of freedom, and admiring the richness of the ocean's wildlife." Measuring three meters (10 feet) long and 2.10 meters across, his barrel is made from resin-coated plywood, heavily reinforced to resist waves and potential attacks by orca whales. Inside the capsule, which weighs 450 kilograms (990 pounds) when empty, is a six-square-meter living space which includes a kitchen, sleeping bunk and storage. A porthole in the floor allows Savin to look at passing fish. Having already travelled some 4,000 kilometers (2,500 miles), he estimates he has about 1,000 more to go. "I think I'll arrive around April 20, I'm not sure where, maybe the Dominican Republic," he said.

Close calls

His days have mainly gone smoothly, though there have been a few close calls. "I've only had eight difficult nights, and one that was extremely difficult," he said. In late February, he nearly got rammed by a cargo ship that wasn't responding to his radio calls. "Luckily I shot up a flare. It was like being trapped on a railroad track and I



In this file photo Jean-Jacques Savin, a former paratrooper, poses aboard his ship made from a barrel at the shipyard in Ares, southwestern France. — AFP photos



In this file photo Jean-Jacques Savin, a former paratrooper, works on the construction of a ship made from a barrel at the shipyard in Ares, southwestern France. — AFP photos

was watching the oncoming train," he said. But the most perilous moment came on March 28, when his barrel was being pummeled by huge waves that were threatening to turn the vessel completely upside-down.

Tying himself to a safety rope, Savin crawled out to try to reattach a vertical stabilizer, only to find himself thrown off and dangling from his armpits, sometimes being dunked completely under the water. It took half an hour of scrambling to pull himself back up, and Savin later posted pictures of his heavily bruised body on his Facebook page. So far Savin has lost four kilos on his trip, eating freshly caught bream alongside freeze-dried food.

His stocks were replenished during a visit from the Ronald H. Brown, a US oceanography vessel based in

Charleston, South Carolina. "They spoiled me. I got mail, T-shirts, and lots of chocolate," he said. He's now focused on figuring out which coast to wash up on, though he added that "I will be sad to arrive."

"I'd like to end up in Martinique or Guadeloupe," he said, since it would be easier to get his ship back home since they are French overseas territories. Afterwards he plans to write a book, and requests for speaking appearances have been pouring in. But already Savin has another challenge in sight: swimming alone across the English Channel. — AFP

Mary Quant: Queen of the mini-skirt

Mary Quant, the subject of a major retrospective opening at London's Victoria & Albert Museum this week, was the fashion queen of Britain's Swinging Sixties. The 85-year-old has gone down in history for popularizing the mini-skirt and for making women's clothes fun and affordable. Whether she actually invented the iconic fashion item has been the subject of a long and bitter dispute with late French designer Andre Courreges, among others.

But her role in turning thigh-skimming super-short hemlines into an international trend has not been disputed. Known almost as much for her iconic bob hairstyle as for her designs, the petite Quant also created hot pants, the skinny rib sweater and waterproof mascara. Her personality and style made her "probably the most famous fashion designer that has come out of this country," according to V&A fashion curator Jenny Lister. "She was in the right place at the right time and that was part of her success."

'Arrogant, aggressive, sexy'

Born on February 11, 1934, in London, Quant studied at the city's Goldsmiths college of art where she met her future husband and business partner, Alexander Plunket Greene. Together, they opened their first boutique, Bazaar,

in 1955 in the Chelsea district, which would become the beating heart of Swinging London. Bazaar sold clothes and accessories, and its basement restaurant became a meeting point for young people and artists. The whole Chelsea district was soon attracting celebrities such as Brigitte Bardot, Audrey Hepburn, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones.

Telling The Guardian in 1967 that "Good taste is death, vulgarity is life," Quant raised the hemline well above the knee, creating short dresses and skirts with simple shapes and strong colors that she described as "arrogant, aggressive and sexy". She explored geometric designs, polka dots and contrasting colors, and played with new fabrics, including PVC and stretch fabrics, to achieve a modern and playful look.

Her models were showcased in extravagant and provocative window displays overlooking the King's Road, which became a mini-skirt catwalk and drew American photographers keen to document Swinging London. "City gents in bowler hats beat on our shop window with their umbrellas shouting 'immoral!' and 'disgusting!' at the sight of our mini-skirts over the tights, but customers poured in to buy," she recalled in her 1966 book "Quant by Quant". The designer is also widely quoted as saying that "it was

the girls on the King's Road who invented the mini... I wore them very short and the customers would say, 'shorter, shorter!'"

Reaching the US, Japan

The era's most high-profile model, Twiggy, popularized the mini-skirt abroad, and with business booming, Quant opened a second shop in London in 1957. She entered the American market in the early 1960s, collaborating with department store JC Penney. She also created the cheaper Ginger Group line and launched into cosmetics, all her designs featuring a trademark daisy.

Quant was "jolting England out a conventional attitude towards clothes," the Sunday Times said in choosing her for its 1963 International Fashion Award. She turned her sights on the Japanese market in the 1970s, visiting the country several times to open stores. She sold her makeup company to a Japanese group in 2000, staying on as consultant.

Outspoken on sexuality

Quant also scandalized British society with her frank views on sex, making headlines when she famously said she had shaved her pubic hair into the shape of a heart

and dyed it green. She "would make very provocative statements about sexuality and her private life as well, which perhaps went along with her clothes, which were seen as quite outrageous at the time," the V&A's Lister said.

Although her heyday was in the 1960s and 1970s, Quant's legacy can still be seen on the high-street today. In recognition of her pioneering work, Quant was made a dame by Queen Elizabeth II in 2015. — AFP



Classifieds

Thursday, April 4, 2019

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Partly cloudy with light to moderate variable wind to north easterly wind, with speed of 06 - 28 km/h.

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 22 km/h with a chance for light fog forming.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 03/04/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	26 °C	19 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	28 °C	19 °C			
ABDALY	29 °C	15 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	29 °C	18 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	25 °C	19 °C			
SALMIYAH	25 °C	20 °C			
AHMADI	26 °C	20 °C			
NUWAISIB	29 °C	17 °C			
WAFRA	28 °C	13 °C			
SALMY	28 °C	16 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	04/04	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear	30 °C	19 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h
Friday	04/05	Partly cloudy to cloudy and rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	31 °C	20 °C	SE	20 - 45 km/h
Saturday	04/06	Cloudy and rising dust over open areas with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	28 °C	19 °C	SE	15 - 45 km/h
Sunday	04/07	Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain at times	29 °C	18 °C	N-NW	08 - 32 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:14
Sunrise	05:35
Zuhr	11:51
Asr	15:23
Sunset	18:07
Isha	19:25

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	26 °C
MIN. Temp.	13 °C
MAX. RH	88 %
MIN. RH	22 %
MAX. Wind	NE 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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
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Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
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CHANGE OF NAME

I, Michelle Fernandes, holder of Indian Passport No. L8354532 and civil ID No. 277110401536, change my name from Michelle Henry Fernandes to Michelle Antonet Fernandes and hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Michelle Antonet Fernandes. (C 5511) 4-4-2019

Passport L4904943 do hereby change my name to Priyanka Elizabeth (given name) Babu (surname) for all purposes. I also undertake to effect the change in all my other public documents. (C 5507)

I, Noble John holder of Indian Passport No: J5545465 issued at Kuwait on 19/05/2011. Hereby declare that, my given name is Noble and surname is John. (C 5509)

I, NARASAPURAM NARASIMHULU holder of Indian Passport No. R8271290 & Civil ID No. 261070100176 has changed my name from NARASAPURAM NARASIMHULU to NARASAPURAM SRINIVASULU hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of NARASAPURAM SRINIVASULU. (C 5510) 3-4-2019

I, Asha Abraham holder of Indian Passport No: J6456943, issued at Kuwait on 27/07/2011. Hereby declare that, my given name is Asha and surname is Abraham. (C 5509)

I, Priyanka Elizabeth Babu (given name) holder of Indian

I, Anabel Noble John holder of Indian Passport No: S9733164, issued at Kuwait on 11/09/2018. Hereby declare that, my given name is Anabel Noble and surname is John. (C 5509) 31-3-2019

EMERGENCY
112

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is **1889988**

For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call **MSAL**
HOTLINE 128



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

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 4/4/2019				Departure Flights on Thursday 4/4/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	JZR	128	Dubai	22:50
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	GEC	8456	Frankfurt	22:55
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	BBC	043	Dhaka	23:00
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	MSC	501	Alexandria	23:10
KAC	102	London	00:50	MSC	415	Sohag	23:15
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	MSR	614	Cairo	23:30
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00				
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00				
RJA	642	Amman	01:20				
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40				
JZR	302	Istanbul	01:40				
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45				
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55				
PGT	828	Istanbul	02:00				
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15				
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15				
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30				
KAC	156	Istanbul	02:35				
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50				
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05				
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05				
JZR	406	Kochi	03:05				
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15				
KAC	418	Manila	03:20				
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30				
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00				
PIA	205	Lahore	04:00				
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05				
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10				
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25				
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05				
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05				
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20				
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25				
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30				
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:45				
JZR	112	Doha	05:50				
KAC	362	Colombo	06:05				
BAW	157	London	06:10				
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15				
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20				
KAC	106	London	06:40				
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40				
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00				
QTR	8511	Doha	07:05				
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	07:05				
IGO	1755	CNN	07:10				
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50				
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:00				
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05				
KAC	352	Kochi	08:05				
IRA	601	Tehran	08:10				
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10				
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25				
JZR	702	Asyut	08:25				
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50				
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00				
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00				
GFA	209	Bahrain	09:05				
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30				
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40				
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40				
JZR	410	Delhi	09:50				
IRA	675	Lar	09:55				
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00				
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	10:00				
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40				
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55				
JZR	216	Jeddah	10:55				
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00				
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00				
JZR	114	Doha	11:10				
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45				
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00				
JZR	252	Amman	12:20				
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30				

Bouteflika 'apologizes' to Algerians in farewell letter

ALGIERS: Abdelaziz Bouteflika yesterday offered his "apologies" to the Algerian people in a letter published by state media, after he resigned as president in the face of huge protests. "I leave the political stage without sadness or fear for the future of our country," Bouteflika said in the letter released by the APS news agency.

Flag-waving Algerians have celebrated the resignation of the veteran president, but vowed yesterday to keep protesting to demand sweeping change to the country's political system. The 82-year-old's departure, announced on state media late Tuesday, followed weeks of massive demonstrations that have shaken the North African nation. Car horns sounded on the streets before jubilant crowds converged in the center of the capital Algiers to cheer his departure.

Many Algerians have never known any president other than Bouteflika, who held power for two decades but was rarely seen in public since suffering a stroke in 2013. Protesters in Algiers welcomed his departure but said they were determined to continue demonstrating, rejecting any transition that leaves power in the hands of the "system". "I want my daughter to remember this historic day, Bouteflika's gone, but it's far from over," said 35-year-old Amal, who wore a T-shirt with the slogan "I am against the system" and vowed to march again on Friday.

For 44-year-old engineer Hamid Boumaza, Bouteflika's resignation was "too little, too late". "Bouteflika's departure is no longer enough. We want them all to go. We

want full freedom and we will march as long as necessary." Others paid tribute to the leader, but regretted that he had clung to power for so long. "Bouteflika worked, I voted for him at first, but he didn't know how to leave with his head held high," said Bilal Brahim, 40.

'Appeasement of hearts'

Algeria's Constitutional Council said yesterday it had accepted Bouteflika's resignation and informed parliament that his post was officially vacant. But some 20 Algerian civil society groups said shortly afterwards they would refuse a transition of power that kept the same structure in place, calling for protests Friday for "democratic change". "Bouteflika's resignation... is a first victory... but it is not enough," they said in a joint statement.

Algeria's constitution says that the speaker of the upper house of parliament, currently 77-year-old Abdelkader Bensalah, should now act as interim leader for up to 90 days during which a presidential election must be organized. Algeria has largely avoided the turmoil unleashed by the Arab Spring uprisings that brought down rulers in neighboring Tunisia and Libya. But discontent, particularly among the young, turned to anger after Bouteflika announced in February that he would seek a fifth term in office in an election that had been scheduled for this month.

He dropped his bid in the face of the mass protests but also postponed the vote, angering Algerians who saw the move as a ploy to

stay in power. As pressure mounted, state television announced late Tuesday that Bouteflika had submitted his resignation to the Constitutional Council. The decision aimed "to contribute to the appeasement of the hearts and minds of my compatriots, to allow them to take Algeria towards a better future to which they legitimately aspire," his resignation letter read.

Footage showed Bouteflika, dressed in a beige North African tunic and sitting in his wheelchair, handing the letter to the council's head, Tayeb Belaiz. The resignation came shortly after the military demanded impeachment proceedings against Bouteflika. Armed forces chief Ahmed Gaid Salah said the army's "sole ambition" was to "protect the people from a handful of (other) people who have unduly taken over the wealth of the Algerian people".

Although credited with helping foster peace after Algeria's decade-long civil war, Bouteflika has faced criticism for alleged authoritarianism. Former prime minister-turned-rival Ali Benflis said his departure was the "woeful epilogue" to the past two decades and praised the protest movement as "a peaceful people's revolution".

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres praised "the mature and calm nature in which the Algerian people have been expressing their desire for change," said a UN statement. "He looks forward to a peaceful and democratic transition process that reflects the wishes of the Algerian people," it added. The United States said the



ALGIERS: Algerians wave the national flag as they demonstrate to demand sweeping change to the country's entire political system yesterday following the resignation of ailing leader Abdelaziz Bouteflika. — AFP

future of the country "is for the Algerian people to decide". Russia, a long-time ally of Algeria, called for a transition without foreign "interference".

The foreign minister of former colonial power France, Jean-Yves Le Drian, said he was confident Algeria's "democratic transition" could continue "in the same spirit of calm and responsibility" seen in recent weeks. Algerian business tycoon and long-time Bouteflika backer Ali Haddad was placed in

detention Wednesday days after he was arrested while trying to cross into Tunisia with undeclared currency and two passports.

Haddad, who Forbes magazine describes as one of the country's wealthiest entrepreneurs, was widely seen as a political tool for the ailing leader. The judiciary has launched corruption investigations and, according to local media, banned a dozen prominent businessmen linked to Bouteflika from leaving the country. — AFP

Egypt Red Sea province to ban...

Continued from Page 1

Egypt's Red Sea province depends heavily on income from tourists, many of whom come to snorkel and scuba dive among its spectacular reefs. The vulnerable shallow-water ecosystems are under threat by both global warming and plastic pollution. Abdallah said businesses and families in the province will be required to replace plastic with paper and reusable bags.

Heba Shawky, head of the Hurgada Environmental Protection and Conservation Association which cam-

aigned for the ban, said it was "a huge step forward, because plastic bags cause a lot of damage". The Egyptian decision comes after countries agreed at a UN conference in March to "significantly reduce" use of single-use plastics, but failed to agree on a full ban, disappointing environmental campaigners. Sources close to the talks said rich nations, led by the US, were influential in watering down the pledge.

Egypt's Red Sea province had mulled a ban of single-use plastics prior to the 2011 revolt that toppled longtime dictator Hosni Mubarak, but the ensuing political turmoil put those plans on hold. The country's crucial tourism industry, hit hard by the uprising, has bounced back in recent years with tourist arrivals reaching 8.3 million in 2017, according to government figures. That falls far short of the figure in 2010, when Egypt welcomed 14.7 million tourists. — AFP

lion in total was looted from IMDB. Malaysia has also charged Wall Street titan Goldman Sachs over the scandal, alleging the bank and its former employees stole billions of dollars from IMDB.

Goldman units and two ex-bankers are accused of misappropriating \$2.7 billion, bribing officials and giving false statements in relation to bond issues they arranged for the fund. The bank has vowed to fight the charges. While many of Najib's suspected accomplices have been caught and charged in Malaysian courts, the alleged mastermind behind the IMDB scandal, playboy financier Jho Low, is still at large.

Yesterday the Malaysian government said a luxury yacht allegedly bought by Low with \$250 million of stolen IMDB money will be sold for around half that price. The yacht was returned to Malaysia after being seized last year in Indonesia. Attorney-General Tommy Thomas said the 300-foot, Cayman Islands-registered yacht Equanimity - equipped with a pool, helicopter landing pad and cinema - was being sold to Genting Malaysia, which operates hotels, resorts and the country's only legal casino.

"The government of Malaysia is pleased to announce that the superyacht Equanimity is to be sold to Genting Malaysia...at the price of \$126 million," he said in a statement, adding the purchase would be completed by the end of April. Thomas said the offer was the best Malaysia got since the vessel was put up for sale five months ago, and the government had received many offers, including a few over \$100 million.

Before it was seized off the Indonesian tourist island of Bali in February last year, the yacht was believed to have been used by Low - to sail around Asia, as he sought to evade arrest over the IMDB scandal. Low is still at large although he has been charged in absentia in Malaysia over the scandal. Known for partying with A-list celebrities and flaunting his wealth, Low was a close associate of Najib. — Agencies

sector resilience. Directors encouraged the authorities to implement the recommendations of the FSSA. In particular, they saw scope to further enhance the crisis management framework, notably by establishing a special resolution regime for banks and unwinding the blanket guarantee of deposits once the preconditions are met. They also encouraged the authorities to strengthen liquidity management, bolster systemic risk oversight, and called for a gradual relaxation of the interest ceilings. Directors encouraged the authorities to further strengthen the AML/CFT framework.

Directors stressed the need for structural reforms to improve the business environment, support entrepreneurship, and foster productivity. In particular, they saw scope for further easing of administrative procedures, facilitating trading across borders, and efforts to promote competition. They also called for a more enabling environment for SMEs and startups, by enhancing their access to finance, facilitating participation in public tenders, and training entrepreneurs.

Directors concurred that the pegged currency regime remains appropriate, with the peg to a basket of currencies continuing to provide an effective nominal anchor. Directors noted that the recommended fiscal adjustment would largely close the current account gap over the medium term.

Najib in dock over 1MDB scam; yacht...

Continued from Page 1

was the "first trial in our courts against a former prime minister, who for nearly a decade occupied the most powerful office in the land and wielded near absolute power." Such privilege carries with it enormous responsibility. The accused is not above the law," he added.

After the first witness, an official from the Companies Commission of Malaysia, gave largely technical evidence related to corporate records, the trial was adjourned. The judge set the next hearing for April 15, and trial dates until May 10. Najib left without commenting, to cheers from his supporters waiting outside court. Far from being considered a pariah, the ex-leader has gained a following among members of the country's Muslim majority as some are worried their long-held privileges are being eroded under the new government. He has become an unlikely social media phenomenon by attacking the new administration's policies online.

He was initially due to stand trial in February, but appeals by his defense team over procedural matters saw his case put on hold until a judge last week ruled the trial should finally proceed. It was a relief for the government, as there had been mounting public anger about the delay in bringing Najib to justice. Najib's mentor-turned-nemesis Mahathir, now 93 and in his second stint in office, has pledged to bring the younger man to justice and recoup the huge sums of cash stolen from IMDB.

The US Department of Justice, which is investigating the controversy as money was allegedly laundered through the American financial system, believes \$4.5 bil-

Kuwait returns to strong growth...

Continued from Page 1

They underscored the need to tackle the large public sector wage bill, noting that public sector wages should be gradually aligned with those in the private sector to incentivize nationals to seek private sector opportunities and support competitiveness. Directors also encouraged the authorities to proceed with the introduction of GCC-wide excises and VAT.

Directors emphasized that a robust fiscal framework and strong fiscal governance are vital to bolstering fiscal policy credibility. Directors stressed that enhanced fiscal transparency, an improved public procurement framework, and greater spending efficiency would help increase government accountability, cut waste, and reduce Kuwait's vulnerability to corruption.

Directors welcomed the banking system's sound position and commended the authorities for prudent regulation and supervision. To further enhance financial

Spider surprise: Philippines seizes 750 tarantulas

MANILA: Philippine authorities said yesterday they cracked open a gift-wrapped package shipped from Poland to discover 757 tarantulas crammed into plastic containers. The illicit payload found at a mail facility near Manila's airport was the latest seizure in a nation that is a major source and transit point of wildlife trafficking. Customs thought the package suspicious and after opening it found boxes for

cookies, oatmeal and tea. Yet the cartons contained dozens of plastic containers packed with arachnids.

The seized tarantulas - priced at about \$5,700 - are frequently sold to hobbyists as pets. Arnel Matreo, chief of the Wildlife Traffic Monitoring Unit of the environment ministry, told AFP. Matreo said two people who tried to claim the package were detained on charges of violating wildlife protection and customs laws. Customs officials turned over the tarantulas to the environment ministry's rescue centre, which will take charge of the animals and identify its species. The seizure comes about a month after authorities said they had seized about 1,500 exotic turtles, some of which were restrained with duct tape, crammed into a passenger's bag at Manila airport. — AFP



MANILA: This undated handout photo received yesterday shows a tarantula seized by customs officers at Manila international airport. — AFP

Brunei introduces sharia laws...

Continued from Page 1

that Brunei was a "fair" country and the environment for visitors was "safe and harmonious". Government officials later confirmed the laws had entered into force.

The laws are particularly upsetting for the country's small lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. Before the new laws, sex between men was already illegal in Brunei and punishable with up to 10 years in jail. But the new code stipulates death by stoning as a punishment for sex between men, while women convicted of having sexual relations with other women face up to 40 strokes of the cane or a maximum 10-year jail term.

A 33-year-old gay Bruneian man, who spoke anonymously, said the new laws were "unfair, cruel and should not happen". "It really takes away my happiness and freedom to express myself, and depresses me so much," he told AFP. Zuhelmi bin Mohamad, a transgender woman who fled Brunei last year and is seeking asylum in Canada, told AFP that the environment will be more terrifying for the country's LGBT community, who were already leading "very secretive" lives. "Some worry a lot and would like to escape the country before they are found out not to be... heterosexual," the 19-year-old said.

Confirming the new penal code was now in force, a religious affairs ministry official told AFP: "The statement from the prime minister's office last weekend on (the code's) implementation prevails, hence (April 3) marks the date of its implementation." A second government official, speaking anonymously, confirmed it had entered into force. The sultan - who is one of the world's wealthiest men and lives in a vast, golden-domed palace - announced plans for the code in 2013.

The first section was introduced in 2014 and included less stringent penalties, such as fines or jail terms for offences including indecent behavior or skipping Friday prayers. Clooney's call to boycott nine Brunei-owned hotels in Europe and the United States last week catapulted the issue into the international headlines. Since then, a series of well-known figures have lined up to add their names to the chorus of condemnation. The sultan, who is the world's second-longest reigning monarch, first called for the penal code in the late 1990s and it appears to enjoy broad support in the former British protectorate of about 400,000 people.

Analysts say he is seeking to burnish his Islamic credentials and shore up support among the country's conservatives due to the waning fortunes of the oil-dependent economy, which has been ravaged by recession in recent years. It is also unclear whether death by stoning will actually be implemented, as a high burden of proof is needed to hand down the punishment and Brunei has not executed anyone for decades. — AFP

Sports

Phillies' Bryce Harper gets last laugh in return to Washington

Cruz hit in 10th lifts Twins past Royals

WASHINGTON: Bryce Harper had three hits, including a home run, in his return to Washington, and the Philadelphia Phillies defeated the Nationals 8-2 on Tuesday night. After striking out in his first two at-bats, Harper doubled, singled in a run and blasted a 458-foot, two-run homer into the upper deck in right center at the stadium he called home for seven seasons. Maikel Franco homered and reached base five times for the Phillies, and Jean Segura (three hits) drove in three runs with a bases-loaded double. Zach Eflin (1-0) pitched five scoreless innings, allowing three hits and a walk while striking out nine. Max Scherzer (0-2) allowed two runs-one earned-on seven hits and a walk in five innings. He struck out nine.

AS 1, RED SOX 0

Matt Chapman homered, Mike Fiers pitched six shutout innings and Ramon Laureano made a potential game-saving throw as host Oakland edged Boston after Chapman cleared the wall in the opening inning against Red Sox ace Chris Sale (0-2). The loss is Boston's fourth in a row and second to the As. The Red Sox never lost more than three in a row last season en route to winning the World Series. The right-handed Fiers (2-1) allowed five hits and didn't issue a walk while striking out three. With one out in the ninth, Xander Bogaerts hit the ball off the fence in right-center, but hesitated rounding second base when Laureano unleashed a one-hop throw home to narrowly retire him.

DIAMONDBACKS 8, PADRES 5

Pitcher Zack Greinke drove in four runs with two of the five homers hit by Arizona, which scored a second straight win over host San Diego. There were a total of eight homers in Arizona's win. Ketel Marte, John Ryan Murphy and Christian Walker also homered for the Diamondbacks. Hunter Renfroe homered twice for the Padres off Greinke. Wil Myers hit a two-run, pinch-hit homer off Andrew Chafin in the seventh for San Diego. Greinke (1-1) gave up three runs on six hits with 10 strikeouts in six innings. Eric Lauer (1-1), who gave up four runs on two homers after pitching 9 1/3 straight scoreless innings to start the season, took the loss.

TWINS 5, ROYALS 4 (10 INNINGS)

Nelson Cruz had two hits and drove in three runs, including the game-winner with two outs in the 10th inning, as visiting Minnesota beat Kansas City. Cruz, who also had a two-run double, drove in Williams Astudillo, who opened the 10th with a bloop single to right off reliever Brad Boxberger (0-1). Astudillo advanced to second on a two-out walk to Jorge Polanco before Cruz drove him in with a single to right. Max Kepler had two hits, two walks and scored a run,

and C.J. Cron and Polanco also had two hits for the Twins. Trevor Hildenberger (1-0) picked up the win, while Blake Parker earned his first save.

TIGERS 3, YANKEES 1

Dustin Peterson hit a tiebreaking double off Aroldis Chapman with one out in the top of the ninth inning, and visiting Detroit edged New York. Peterson recorded his first career hit and first career RBI when he laced a 95 mph fastball well over left fielder Mike Tauchman's head. The ball bounced to the base of the fence and easily allowed Niko Goodrum to score. Before Peterson's hit gave Detroit its third win of the season, John Hicks hit a game-tying double off Masahiro Tanaka in the sixth.

DODGERS 6, GIANTS 5

The home runs keep coming for Los Angeles, who got a grand slam from Cody Bellinger and held on against visiting San Francisco, which scored three runs in the ninth inning and had the tying run on third base with one out. Dodgers closer Kenley Jansen got Pablo Sandoval to hit into a 6-4-3 double play to end the game. Bellinger's blast was his fifth of the season, putting him into the National League lead. It was also the 17th of the season for the Dodgers in six games to tie a major league record. The Giants got a home run of their own from starting pitcher Madison Bumgarner (0-2), who also gave up five runs (none earned) on five hits with two walks and four strikeouts over six innings on the mound. Hyun-Jin Ryu (2-0) gave up two runs on six hits over seven innings.

MARINERS 2, ANGELS 1

Marco Gonzales allowed four hits in 8 1/3 innings, and Seattle defeated visiting Los Angeles after Daniel Vogelbach hit a tiebreaking home run in the bottom of the eighth inning. The Mariners improved to 7-1, breaking a franchise record for the best start to a season. Seattle started 6-1 in 1984, 1985 and 1995. Gonzales (3-0) gave up a one-out single to Mike Trout in the first inning, a leadoff double to Jonathan Lucroy in the second, a two-out single to Lucroy in the seventh and a one-out single to Andrelton Simmons in the ninth. The left-hander walked one and struck out three.

RANGERS 6, ASTROS 4

Joey Gallo, known for his long ball, singled through the right side of a drawn-in infield to bring home the go-ahead and winning runs in the seventh inning, and Texas held on against visiting Houston. The Rangers chased a shaky Justin Verlander in the fifth inning, a frame that started with a Shin-Soo Choo triple to deep center. Elvis Andrus, 2-for-4 on the night, and Nomar Mazara followed with RBI singles to take Texas from



WASHINGTON: Odubel Herrera #37 of the Philadelphia Phillies slides safely into second base ahead of the throw to Wilmer Difo #1 of the Washington Nationals during the seventh inning at Nationals Park in Washington, DC. — AFP

down 3-2 to up 4-3. Rangers starter Shelby Miller lasted 3 2/3 innings, giving up two runs on five hits, but he was also his own worst enemy with five walks that ramped his pitch total to 88 in his Texas debut.

METS 6, MARLINS 5

Amed Rosario slashed a two-run double during a five-run first inning, and Justin Wilson earned his first save since 2017 as New York held on to beat host Miami. Wilson Ramos and Dominic Smith each went 2-for-5 with one RBI for the Mets, who clinched their second straight series to start the year. Jason Vargas (1-0) earned the win, allowing eight hits, one walk and two runs in five innings. Marlins Opening Day starter Jose Urena (0-2) took the loss, allowing seven hits, one walk and five runs in four innings.

ORIOLES 2, BLUE JAYS 1

Andrew Cashner pitched six scoreless innings, Jonathan Villar delivered an RBI triple and visiting Baltimore beat Toronto to win the first two games of the three-game series. Cashner (1-1) allowed four hits and three walks while striking out three. Miguel Castro earned his first save of the season despite allowing the second homer of the season by Toronto's Rowdy Tellez with one out in the bottom of the ninth. Toronto starter Marcus Stroman (0-1) allowed two runs in 5 2/3 innings, yielding nine hits and one walk while striking out five.

RAYS 4, ROCKIES 0

Reigning American League Cy Young Award winner Blake Snell returned to his 2018 form, firing seven shutout innings and striking out 13 in Tampa Bay's win over visiting Colorado in St Petersburg, Fla. Snell (1-1) was roughed up by the Astros in an opening-day loss last Thursday, but he bewildered the Rockies from the first pitch, allowing just two hits and one walk in his 102-pitch outing. Reliever Wilmer Font closed out the game with two scoreless innings. Rockies starter Kyle Freeland (1-1) allowed two runs on three hits and four walks, struck out 10 and was replaced with two outs in the fifth inning at 99 pitches. Trevor Story had the only two hits-both singles-for Colorado, which has dropped four straight.

BREWERS 4, REDS 3

Orlando Arcia hit a three-run home run in the sixth inning, and right-hander Jhoulys Chacin (2-0) allowed two runs in 5 1/3 innings as visiting Milwaukee beat Cincinnati. Arcia's two-out blast ended his 0-for-16 hitless drought to open the season and broke a 1-1 tie. It came when the Reds decided to pitch to him with first base open, Chacin on deck and Ryan Braun appearing ready to pinch hit. Reds right-hander Michael Lorenzen was summoned after lefty Zach Duke (1-1) allowed a walk, a long single and a stolen base. Arcia hit Lorenzen's second pitch just over the fence in right field. — Reuters

Settled England favourites to win World Cup: Cook

LONDON: Former captain Alastair Cook believes England have an "outstanding chance" to lift the World Cup on home soil, having built a squad full of proven match winners. Eoin Morgan's top-ranked side enter the tournament as the one of the most consistent teams in the format and their quest for a first 50-overs title begins against South Africa at The Oval on May 30.

Since their shock group-stage exit from the 2015 World Cup, England have been particularly strong at home, winning 30 of their 42 ODIs while losing only nine. "England have an outstanding chance," Cook, who retired last year from international cricket, told Sky Sports.

"This is first time going into a World Cup England have such a settled squad. Everything looks great from the outside, they have every option covered." England failed to cope with raised expectations at the 2017 Champions Trophy when they lost to eventual winners Pakistan in the semi-finals.

Cook is positive such blips can only make a team mentally stronger. Since the start of last year, England have come out on top in bilateral ODI series against World Cup holders Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and India.

"They had that blip in the (2017) Champions Trophy,



Alastair Cook

where they lost in the semi-final to Pakistan when they were favourites, but you need those lows to be able to grow as a side," he added. "They are favourites. This is a great opportunity for Eoin (Morgan) and the guys to play some fantastic cricket.

"There are match winners throughout the squad, there are batsmen that can win games on their own, and over the last six or eight months the bowling has really come on. I think they are going to win it." — Reuters

S Lanka skipper fined \$7,000 for drink-driving

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's cricket board yesterday fined captain Dimuth Karunaratne \$7,000 after he was arrested for drink-driving, with the player also ordered to stand trial next month. Karunaratne, 30, has apologised for his "unbecoming" actions after he was detained for crashing into a three-wheel taxi on Sunday, leaving its driver injured.

"Sri Lanka Cricket decided to impose a fine of \$7,000 on Dimuth Karunaratne, after the player was found to have violated the 'Player

Contractual Obligation,'" the board said in a statement.

However, the board will take no further action as he had maintained a "very high professional standard as a player". A magistrate has suspended Karunaratne's driving licence and fixed a trial for May 2. The cricket star was also asked to take a medical test.

Police told the court that Karunaratne went through a red light and hit the taxi whose driver was hospitalised for minor injuries after the pre-dawn crash.

"My actions were utterly unbecoming of a Sri Lankan national cricketer and I do apologise to all of you for this incident," Karunaratne said in a statement on Monday. The incident came as Sri Lanka decides who will be captain for the national team at the World Cup starting in England on May 30.

Karunaratne, who led Sri Lanka to a stunning Test series victory against South Africa last month, had been one of the favourites for the position. — AFP

ICC to join hands with Interpol to tackle corruption

LONDON: The International Cricket Council (ICC) will work more closely with Interpol as part of ongoing efforts to combat corruption in the sport, the governing body said yesterday.

Alex Marshall, ICC's general manager of its anti-corruption unit, met Interpol officials in Lyon last week to seek closer working relations, it added.

"The ICC has an excellent relationship with law enforcement agencies in a number of countries but working with Interpol means we are connecting with their 194 members," Marshall said in a statement.

"Our focus is on education of players

and prevention and disruption of corruptors. Where our enquiries reveal criminal offences have been committed, we will refer this to the relevant law enforcement organisations and this makes Interpol an important partner for us." Cricket has suffered a series of corruption cases in recent years.

In 2011, Pakistan's Salman Butt, Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Amir were found guilty of taking bribes to fix part of a test match against England in a case that prosecutors said revealed rampant corruption at the heart of international cricket.

Earlier this year, the ICC had granted Sri Lankan cricketers a 15-day amnesty to report previously undisclosed information relating to corruption in the sport. It was followed by former captain and chairman of selectors Sanath Jayasuriya being handed a two-year ban for refusing to cooperate with any investigation conducted by its anti-corruption unit. — Reuters

N Zealand name untested Blundell in WCup squad

WELLINGTON: New Zealand opted for experience in a 15-man squad named yesterday for this year's cricket World Cup, with rookie Tom Blundell's inclusion as back-up wicketkeeper the only real surprise.

The Black Caps hope to shed their tag as valiant losers and claim the title after exiting in the semi-finals six times and suffering a heavy defeat to Australia in their only appearance in the final four years ago.

New Zealand are currently third in the one-day rankings, behind England and India. Coach Gary Stead said the Kane Williamson-led side had repeatedly excelled at the top level and he was confident the consistency would shine through at the tournament in England and Wales.

"We've got a squad here of 15 players that we think can give us a really, really good chance of going far into the tournament," he said. "If we play close to our potential, then hopefully we can do New Zealand proud."

Wellington keeper Blundell was selected after Tim Siefert, the regular back-up to first-choice gloveman Tom Latham, broke his finger in a domestic match last month. While Blundell, who has two Test caps, will likely make his one-day international debut at the tournament, his role will be marginal if Latham stays fit.

Mitchell Santner will be the New Zealanders' primary spinner, with Ish Sodhi edging Todd Astle to claim the second slow bowling position. "Selecting the spinners was very tough, and both had signs at times that they should've been the one that was selected... but at the end of the day that's my call to make," Stead said.

The pace attack comprises Tim Southee, Trent Boult, Lockie Ferguson and Matt Henry, while Jimmy Neesham and Colin de Grandhomme add all-round options. Henry Nicholls is set to open the batting with veteran Martin Guptill after displacing Colin Munro at the top of the order, although Munro will make the trip as batting cover.

Williamson and Ross Taylor, in his fourth World Cup campaign, complete a battle-hardened batting line up. Williamson, Taylor and Guptill have collectively amassed 526 ODI appearances between them. — AFP

Sports

Canadiens sink Lightning, pull even with Jackets

Red Wings keep Penguins from clinching playoff spot

MONTREAL: The Montreal Canadiens gained a critical victory in their playoff chase with a 4-2 win over the visiting Tampa Bay Lightning on Tuesday. The win brings the Canadiens (43-29-8, 94 points) even on points with the Columbus Blue Jackets for the second Eastern Conference wild-card slot. Both teams have 94 points, though Columbus is still ahead on a tiebreaker. The Carolina Hurricanes are only a point ahead of Montreal and Columbus for the first wild-card position. After falling behind twice in the game, Montreal finally took the lead on Artturi Lehkonen's goal 7:47 into the third period. A looping shot from Victor Mete was batted out of the air by Lehkonen, then knocked in on his second attempt for his 11th goal of the season. Lehkonen also had an assist in the game, while Jordie Benn contributed two assists for the Canadiens. The Lightning must win their final two games to equal the 1995-96 Detroit Red Wings for the most wins in a single season.

HURRICANES 4, MAPLE LEAFS 1

Dougie Hamilton had two goals as visiting Carolina defeated Toronto to leap to the front of the East wild-card chase. Justin Williams and Jordan Staal also scored for the Hurricanes (44-29-7, 95 points), who won for only the second time in a five-game stretch. Staal and Hamilton each scored in the third period, including the final one into an empty net by Hamilton. Staal also recorded an assist. John Tavares scored for the Maple Leafs (46-27-7, 99 points), who secured a playoff spot Monday night with a victory at the New York Islanders.

BRUINS 6, BLUE JACKETS 2

Jake DeBrusk scored two goals, including one of the luckiest he'll ever tally, and Brad Marchand reached the century mark for points as visiting Boston routed Columbus. The Bruins (48-23-9, 105 points) solidified their claim for second place in the Atlantic Division, while the Blue Jackets (45-31-4, 94 points) saw their five-game winning streak snapped. DeBrusk's opening tally 118 seconds into the affair set the tone for the rest of the game for both teams. From the slot, he swung at a cross-ice pass and watched as the puck bounced off the top of the net, off the back of Columbus goalie Sergei Bobrovsky and into the cage.

STARS 6, FLYERS 2

Alexander Radulov had two goals, including the game-winner, and two assists, as Dallas rolled past visiting Philadelphia to clinch a playoff spot for the first time since 2016. The win was the fourth in the past five games for the Stars (42-31-7, 91 points), who held on to their three-point cushion as the first wild-card team in the Western Conference with two games to play in the regular season: Friday at Chicago and Saturday at home versus Minnesota. Dallas goalkeeper Anton Khudobin recorded 32 saves in the win. Esa Lindell and Jason Dickinson each had a goal and an assist.

AVALANCHE 6, OILERS 2

Alexander Kerfoot scored two goals, Tyson Barrie had a goal and an assist, and Colorado scored six unanswered goals to beat Edmonton in Denver. Nathan MacKinnon, Colin Wilson and Sven Andrighetto also scored, and Semyon Varlamov had 27 saves for Colorado (37-29-14, 88 points). The Avalanche took firm control of the second wild-card spot in the West, as the Arizona Coyotes (84 points) lost to Los Angeles later Tuesday. With two games remaining for both teams, Arizona must win out while Colorado loses out to get into the postseason on a tiebreaker.

KINGS 3, COYOTES 1

Arizona's playoff hopes took a major hit, and the team also lost goalie Darcy Kuemper to an eye injury in a loss to visiting Los Angeles.

Trevor Lewis gave the Kings a 2-1 lead with a goal at 3:29 of the third period. Lewis was bumped from behind by Coyotes defenseman Kevin Connauton just as the puck crossed the goal line, and his stick blade went through Kuemper's mask and struck him in the face near his right eye. Kuemper lay on the ice in pain while being treated by trainers, before departing with a towel held to his face. He was replaced by Cal Pickard, though head coach Rick Tocchet expressed optimism about Kemper's status after the game.

WILD 5, JETS 1

Zach Parise scored twice in his return from a four-game injury absence as Minnesota completed a five-game season sweep of Winnipeg with a victory in Saint



DALLAS: Jamie Benn #14 of the Dallas Stars takes a shot in front of Cam Talbot #33 and Travis Sanheim #6 of the Philadelphia Flyers in the third period at American Airlines Center in Dallas, Texas. — Reuters

Paul, Minn. Victor Rask, Joel Eriksson Ek and Marcus Foligno also tallied for the Wild (37-34-9, 83 points), who recorded just their third win in 15 home outings (3-8-4). However, it was not enough to keep Minnesota in playoff contention, as Colorado's win over Edmonton officially eliminated the Wild. Minnesota's Devan Dubnyk, who made 32 saves on Tuesday, turned aside 114 of 120 shots en route to defeating Winnipeg four times this season. The Jets (46-30-4, 96) have dropped four of their last five games and are even in points atop the Central Division with Nashville (45-29-6), though Winnipeg holds the tiebreaker.

RED WINGS 4, PENGUINS 1

Tyler Bertuzzi and Anthony Mantha scored two goals apiece, and host Detroit prevented Pittsburgh from clinching a playoff berth. The Penguins needed a victory or a Montreal loss to Tampa Bay to secure a spot in the postseason. Pittsburgh (43-26-11, 97 points) has two games remaining. Bertuzzi set a franchise record with his fourth consecutive three-point game. Mantha followed his first career hat trick against Boston on Sunday with two third-period goals. The other member of Detroit's first line, Dylan Larkin, collected three assists as the Red Wings (32-38-10, 74 points) notched their season-high sixth straight victory. — Reuters

Barca reliance on Messi underlined in escape act at Villarreal

VILA-REAL: Barcelona's thrilling 4-4 draw with Villarreal on Tuesday has been hailed as the game of the season in Spain but yet again it showed the La Liga leaders' vulnerability whenever they try to give Lionel Messi a breather.

With a top-of-the-table showdown against Atletico Madrid and two Champions League quarter-final games against Manchester United coming up, Barca coach Ernesto Valverde understandably opted to rest his talisman.

Messi sat on the bench alongside Ivan Rakitic and Gerard Pique and although Barca got off to a flying start with two early goals they were pegged back by struggling Villarreal, prompting Valverde to turn to him with the score tied at 2-2.

No sooner had Messi come on and Villarreal took a shock lead before making it 4-2. But, not for the first time this season, Barca's captain spear-headed their comeback. The Argentine smashed a freekick in off the post at the start of stoppage time, paving the way for Luis Suarez's last-gasp equaliser.

"Football is incredible," hailed the front cover of Spanish newspaper Marca, while daily Mundo Deportivo said Suarez's late strike was "a goal that is worth the league title". But Messi's role in Barca's latest escape act, which was the third time in the league this season when he has been called upon to get them out of trouble, again raised the question of whether Barca suffer from 'Messi-dependence'.

"Of course, Messi-dependence exists, it would exist in any other team in the world," said Barca coach Valverde. "But when he is there we also have to play. The first 15 minutes (when Barca were 2-0 up) we didn't need him, in the last 15 we really did. We all accept this."

Barca midfielder Carles Alena meanwhile was in awe at his team mate's freekick: "It was spectacular, a wonder goal, something that only he could do." Messi also sat on the bench against Athletic Bilbao in September but rescued a 1-1 draw by setting up a late equaliser after coming on, while he provided an assist and a goal as a substitute against Leganes to turn a 1-1 draw into a 3-1 win.

Barca's reliance on their captain is even more stark in the Copa del Rey: they were beaten 2-1 at Levante and 2-0 at Sevilla in first leg games while Messi was left at home, winning the second legs 3-0 and 6-1 respectively with him back in the team.

The Catalans' next opponents Atletico and United will feel emboldened by Barca's ragged display against Villarreal, knowing if they can somehow shackle Messi, they stand a chance. But, if like so many other teams over the past decade, they are unable to tame the Argentine, they know they will be in for a torrid time. — Reuters

Jiu-jitsu champ battles Philippines' sex abuse scourge

MANILA: Abandoned and sexually abused as a young girl, Angelica, like thousands of minors in the Philippines—a global blackspot for child abuse—struggled to cope with the horrors of her past, but a new campaign run by a sporting champion is giving her and other survivors fresh hope.

Filipina martial arts star Meggie Ochoa is teaching self-defence to victims of sexual abuse in a bid to give them tools to better recover from such trauma, but also to better protect themselves in the future. Children's charities have branded the Philippines a key hub for both the live-streaming of child sex abuse and for sex tourism, estimating that 60,000-100,000 children are involved in prostitution rings.

"Some of the kids that I've gotten to know... they saw themselves as worthless because of what they experienced. For me that's so heartbreaking," the jiu-jitsu world champion told AFP of her decision to launch advocacy campaign Fight to Protect.

In just two years, she has taught hun-

dreds of sex abuse survivors. She offers two courses—one for those who wish to learn the sport, and another focused purely on self-defence.

"Jiu-jitsu taught me to be disciplined, confident and to face my fears," Angelica, now aged 15, told AFP.

"I can face the problems I encountered before and I am now comfortable interacting with people," she added. Poverty in a nation where tens of millions get by on less than \$2 per day, as well as increased internet access and fluency in English, make the Philippines vulnerable to both online and real-world sexual predators.

PARENTS ABUSE CHILDREN

Advocacy and legal aid group International Justice Mission (IJM) says Philippine children are at risk of being forced into live streamed sex abuse, where paedophiles pay to direct so-called "shows" online.

"Easy access to the web and money transfer services make the country a global hotspot for this problem," said

Cheika's players were "not a million miles off" being able to get on a roll and upset the favourites.

"We have as much chance as anyone else," said Johnson. "Our rugby DNA is acumen and skill, and 'Cheik' has got great drive, great passion to get a team going good."

'HARD DECISIONS'

Cheika had his players running up steep hills in a punishing January fitness camp in an attempt to knock them into shape for a brutal World Cup year. However, with bitter rivals New Zealand again the team to beat as they chase an unprecedented third successive World Cup, Australia are dealing with backroom changes after the sacking of attack coach Stephen Larkham.

"There were changes on and off the field I think we needed to make to get the best possible outcome," said Cheika, who last month hit out at his "over-dramatic" critics. "Sometimes you've got to make hard decisions—they're very difficult but it was the right thing to do to move us into a space where we could get a different outcome."

Cheika appeared relieved when journalists steered questions away from the Wallabies by asking for his thoughts on the demise of the Tokyo-based Sunwolves, who were axed from Super Rugby six months before Japan hosts the World Cup.

"Personally I'm very disappointed," said the 52-year-old. "They play good rugby, they're entertaining—and that's what we do. We're there to entertain and give people value for money so I think it's very disappointing they're (no longer) involved." —AFP



MANILA: This photo taken on April 2, 2019 shows jiu-jitsu world champion Meggie Ochoa (R) sparring with a young opponent during a session at a gym in Manila. — AFP

IJM, noting that it is often parents or family members that organise or even commit the abuse.

Children's charity Terre des Hommes drew attention to the problem using a computer-generated girl nicknamed "Sweetie" that hung out in chatrooms

and was approached by about 20,000 people—mostly men—in a matter of weeks.

"It's just horrible, not just sexual exploitation but also sexual abuse which is happening in the homes of many Filipino children. I was just so bothered," Ochoa explained. — AFP

Wallabies coach Cheika relishing 'open' Rugby WCup

TOKYO: Australia's under-fire coach Michael Cheika insisted yesterday that the Wallabies will come out firing at this year's Rugby World Cup, despite a wretched year of results. The two-time champions won just four of 13 Tests last year, but Cheika—who led Australia to the 2015 final—once again shrugged off criticism.

"We will be in good shape when we need to be," he said at the Australian embassy in Tokyo. "It's going to be an open World Cup for sure—not just because of how the teams have performed leading up to here, but also because it's in Japan."

"It's going to be very different, a different atmosphere at the games," added Cheika, whose side have slipped to sixth in the world since he steered them to the 2015 World Cup final. "We've got a bit to do before then, but the players can't wait and the lucky ones who get picked can't wait to get on the plane."

Australia take on Fiji in Sapporo on September 21 in their Pool D opener, before facing Six Nations grand slam winners Wales, Uruguay and Georgia. World Cup winners in 1991 and 1999, the Wallabies have done little in the run-up to this year's tournament to suggest they can capture a third title.

But Australia's new director of rugby Scott Johnson last week expressed confidence that

Cardiff await Nantes response over Sala talks

LONDON: Premier League club Cardiff have requested a meeting with French outfit Nantes to resolve their dispute over Emiliano Sala's transfer fee, the Welsh-based side said yesterday. Cardiff also obtained from world governing body FIFA—to whom Nantes had referred the case—an extension to the Wednesday deadline for the two clubs to hand over evidence, so they could rule on it, to April 15.

Sala, 28, died along with the pilot David Ibbotson when the Piper Malibu aircraft they were travelling in came down in the English Channel on January 21, two days after Cardiff had signed the Argentinian striker for a club record £15million (\$19.7million) from Nantes.

Since the tragedy both clubs have engaged in an unedifying war of words over the fee with a source close to Cardiff telling The Daily Telegraph last week they do not owe anything as they consider the contract to be "null and void".

The Daily Telegraph said Sala signed a contract with Cardiff that was rejected by the Premier League and died before a revised one could be signed, adding there is a dispute about whether he had agreed to sign a new deal.

The Premier League club sounded a more conciliatory note yesterday issuing a statement to say they were willing to talk directly to the French side. "Cardiff City has requested and been granted an extension to the deadline to respond to Fifa on this matter. — AFP

Sports

United have no margin for error, admits Solskjaer

'Now we need 15 points from our last six games'

WOLVERHAMPTON: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer admitted Manchester United have no further margin for error in their bid to secure a top-four finish after a damaging 2-1 defeat against Wolves on Tuesday.

Ashley Young's needless dismissal and Chris Smalling's farcical own goal were the low points of a disappointing evening for Solskjaer's side at Molineux.

United had been set a target of 15 points from their remaining seven games by the manager before their visit to Molineux. That total is now 15 points from six matches, with games to come against both Manchester City and Chelsea at Old Trafford, a target which Solskjaer admits leaves no room for mistakes.

"I'm as confident as I was three hours ago," joked Solskjaer after the defeat. "I said we need 15 points from our last seven games and now we need 15 from our last six. "It's difficult but then again, we're a very good team and it's going to be difficult for anybody who plays against us."

"This was a tough game but a performance that deserved a win." Scott McTominay's first goal for United was equalised by Diogo Jota before the interval, but the game's turning point proved to be a second yellow card collected by Young with just 57 minutes gone.

Young was booked twice in the space of five minutes for fouls on Jota, the second a particularly unpleasant high challenge. "When you're on a yellow you're always in danger of it being a yellow card again," said Solskjaer.

"Probably it was a bad decision by Ashley but in the heat of the moment he reached for the ball and was a little bit too high, it made it more difficult. "We didn't get the pressure built that we expected, so we kept

possession well but then they scored with the first chance they put the ball in the box."

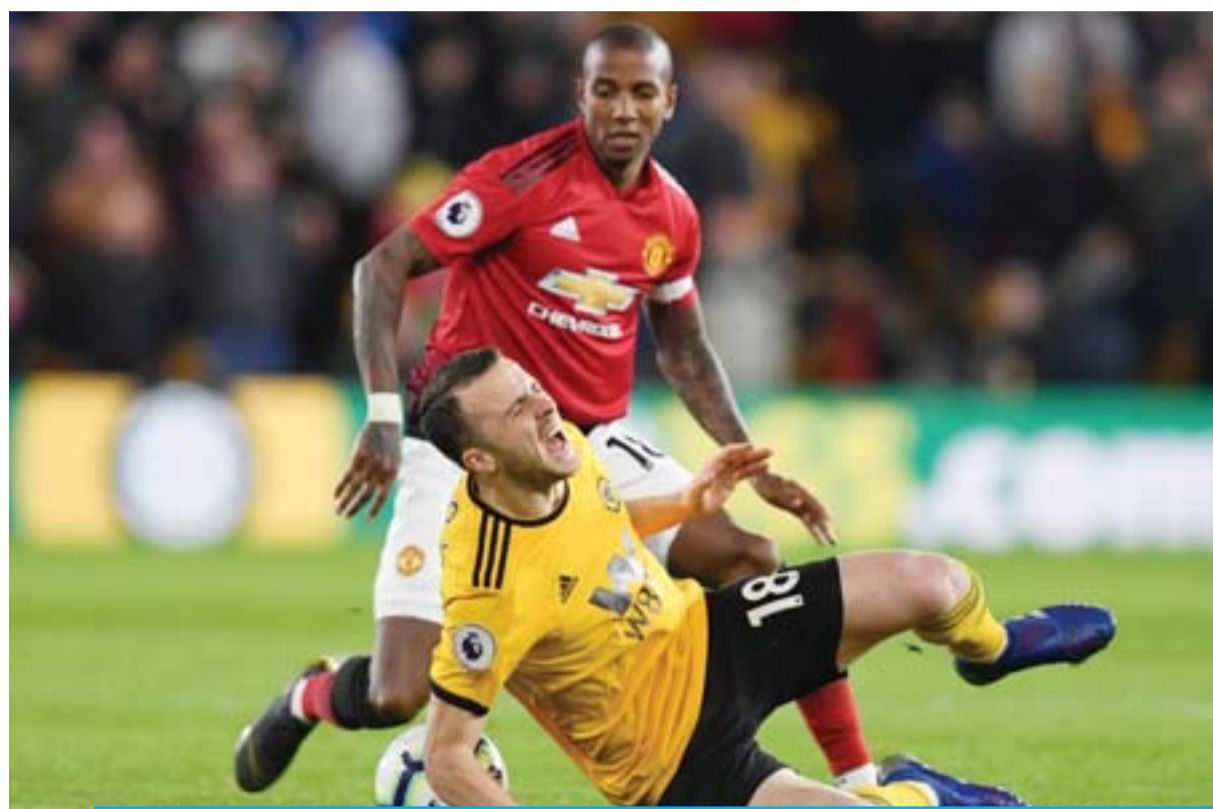
United finally caved to Wolves' numerical superiority 20 minutes later, when Raul Jimenez rose above Phil Jones and headed a Joao Moutinho cross goalwards. The awkward attempt saw Smalling and goalkeeper David de Gea become entangled, with the former making the final touch as the ball rolled over the line.

McTominay's memorable first ever goal in professional football had come after just 13 minutes. A patient left-wing build-up ended with Jesse Lingard playing the ball centrally to Fred, with the Brazilian quickly moving it sideways to Scotland international McTominay.

The 22-year-old unleashed a brilliant, right-foot finish from 25 yards that beat the diving Rui Patricio and nestled in the far left-hand corner. It might have been an even healthier position with Romelu Lukaku having already headed a good chance directly at Patricio and Lingard doing likewise from Lukaku's chip forward.

But, as Wolves finally began to take control of midfield, United struggled to cope; first when an unfortunate rebound off Diogo Dalot allowed Willy Boly to play through Jimenez who hurried a 24th-minute shot wide.

Just seconds later, United were not so lucky after a poor clearance from De Gea, and even worse control by Fred, saw him lose the ball to Moutinho with Jimenez pouncing on it and playing in Jota. The Portuguese forward did not need a second invitation to advance and calmly beat De Gea for the equaliser. As Wolves fans, warming up for Sunday's FA Cup semi-final with Watford, celebrated, De Gea had to save to prevent Smalling scoring a second own goal. — AFP



WOLVERHAMPTON: Wolverhampton Wanderers' Portuguese midfielder Diogo Jota (front) is brought down by Manchester United's English defender Ashley Young (back) to earn his first yellow card during the English Premier League football match between Wolverhampton Wanderers and Manchester United at the Molineux stadium in Wolverhampton. — AFP

Dismal Fulham condemned to Premier League relegation

LONDON: Fulham were relegated from the Premier League as a 4-1 thrashing against Watford on Tuesday brought a fitting end to their turbulent one-season stay in the top flight.

Scott Parker's side had to avoid defeat at Vicarage Road to stave off their inevitable demise for a few more days. But second-bottom Fulham, 16 points from safety with five games remaining, slumped to a ninth successive loss that confirmed their relegation to the Championship.

Abdoulaye Doucoure put Watford ahead in the 23rd minute before Ryan Babel's equaliser 10 minutes later briefly gave Fulham hope. Fulham's fate was sealed in the second half when Will Hughes, Troy Deeney and

Kiko Femenia all netted for Javi Gracia's men in the space of 12 minutes. "Obviously bitterly disappointed, devastated for the football club and fans," Parker said. "We always knew it was a tough ask. It's the way we lost the game which was most disappointing for me."

"The five or 10-minute spell from 2-1 onwards, that was our season in a snapshot. "We played some nice bits at times, but at the end of the day you are where you are." On Saturday, bottom-of-the-table Huddersfield became only the second team after Derby in 2008 to be relegated from the Premier League in March with six games left.

Three days later, Fulham followed Huddersfield through the trapdoor in what ranks as the third earliest relegation in the Premier League era.

'SERIOUS ISSUES'

Despite a close-season investment of over £100 million (\$131 million) on new signings—the most ever spent by a promoted Premier League club—the Cottagers went down with a whimper.

"When a club gets relegated you know there are some serious issues. I have ideas, but it's not the time to broadcast it," Parker said. "The team owe it to the football club and fans to go out in the last five games and give something back, although it'll be very little. The

next five games, we will crack on."

Fulham have lost all five matches under caretaker manager Parker, but they were already destined for relegation long before he took over as the club's third boss this term.

Slavisa Jokanovic was sacked in November as Fulham owner Shahid Khan tried to lift his team out of their wretched run. But his replacement Claudio Ranieri fared even worse and was axed in February after Fulham fans turned on the Italian following seven defeats in eight league games.

It was fitting that Fulham's futile stay in the Premier League ended on the road as they have been historically bad in away fixtures. They have lost their last seven consecutive away matches and have not won away in the league for almost a year, with their tally of just two points away from home this season the lowest in the top four tiers of English football.

Fulham have also conceded at least twice in 13 consecutive league games, both home and away.

In contrast, Watford's victory was the ideal preparation for Sunday's FA Cup semi-final against Wolves at Wembley. Watford's 13th league win this season is their most in a top-flight campaign since 1986-87. The Hornets have also eclipsed their Premier League club record of 45 points, set in 2015-16. — AFP

Kean scores for Juve despite racist abuse

MILAN: Rising Italy star Moise Kean was targeted by racist abuse after he scored for Juventus on Tuesday—but teammate Leonardo Bonucci blamed him for inciting the crowd at Cagliari. Goals from 19-year-old Kean and Bonucci gave Juve a 2-0 victory over Cagliari that took them closer to an eighth consecutive Serie A title.

Kean slotted in his fourth goal in as many league games in the 85th minute after Bonucci nodded in the opener on 22 minutes in Sardinia. The youngster's celebration after scoring, however, infuriated the home crowd who had jeered the teenager throughout after he was booked for diving in the first half.

Kean, along with his French teammate Blaise Matuidi and Brazilian Alex Sandro, were targeted by monkey noises throughout the match, but they increased in intensity after the second goal. The Juventus teenager celebrated with his hands outstretched in front of the Cagliari fans after scoring, but Bonucci claimed that Kean should not have provoked the home supporters and said his teammate was partly to blame.

"Kean knows that when he scores a goal, he should celebrate that with his teammates. He knows he could have done something differently too," Bonucci told Sky Sport Italia. "There were racist jeers after the goal. Blaise heard it and was angered. I think the blame is 50-50, because Moise shouldn't have done that and the Curva (Cagliari fans) should not have reacted that way. "We are professionals, we have to set the example and not provoke anyone."

OBJECTS THROWN

Cagliari fans appeared to throw objects at Kean, and the match was momentarily stopped and an appeal made over the stadium speakers. Former Paris Saint-Germain player Matuidi appeared furious at the jeers at the same stadium where he was targeted last season.

The abuse came on the day that UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin said he was "ashamed" by the recent outbreak of racist abuse and vowed to ask referees to stop matches in the future if racist chanting breaks out.

Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri called for the culprits to be identified and banned. "As usual, there are some idiots, but also normal people," Allegri said. "We



CAGLIARI: Juventus' Portuguese defender Joao Cancelo (C-L) comforts Juventus' Italian forward Moise Kean at the end of the Italian Serie A football match Cagliari vs Juventus at the Sardinia Arena in Cagliari, after Cagliari's fans threw projectiles at him following his goal. — AFP

have cameras, we identify and ban them."

Cagliari president Tommaso Giulini, however, blamed Kean for stirring up tensions and said criticism of his club's supporters was "self-righteousness". "If (Federico) Bernardeschi had done what Kean did, the reaction would have been the same," said Giulini.

"Nobody had heard anything up to that point. Kean made a mistake, he's 19, that's understandable," he added, saying he "mostly heard whistles". "There is a drift towards self-righteousness that I don't like, this club has always been exemplary and has always denounced racist behaviour."

The win put Juventus back 18 points clear of second-placed Napoli, who travel to lowly Empoli, with only eight matches to play. The champions' next game is at home against AC Milan, who were held 1-1 by Udinese.

Juventus shrugged off the absence of star duo Cristiano Ronaldo and Paulo Dybala, with Mario Mandzukic also out suffering from flu. Cagliari goalkeeper Alessio Cragno denied Kean twice before the

teenager finally broke through, scoring from Rodrigo Bentancur's pass.

UDINESE DENT MILAN TOP-FOUR HOPES

Kevin Lasagna grabbed a point for Udinese to further dent AC Milan's Champions League ambitions. Polish striker Krzysztof Piatek managed to break through just before the interval after connecting with a Patrick Cutrone cross.

But Italian international Lasagna pulled Udinese back level after finishing off a flowing counter-attack on 65 minutes. The stalemate complicates the Champions League race for Gennaro Gattuso's side who are targeting a return to the competition for the first time since the 2013-2014 season.

They are fourth, in the final Champions League spot, but Lazio are four points behind with two games in hand ahead of their trip to struggling SPAL on Wednesday. "In a season a team can have highs and lows. We had five wins in a row and now we've a bad moment," said Gattuso. — AFP



Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

SPANISH LEAGUE	
Sevilla FC v Deportivo Alaves	20:30
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
CD Leganes v Real Valladolid	21:30
beIN SPORTS HD 1	
Real Sociedad v Real Betis	22:30
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE	
US Sassuolo Calcio v AC Chievo Verona	20:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4	
Atalanta v Bologna FC	22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4	

Controversial Champions League revamp summit set for May: Sources

LAUSANNE: A meeting in which UEFA and Europe's football leagues are expected to discuss controversial reforms to the Champions League will be held on May 8, multiple sources told AFP yesterday.

The meeting will bring together UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin and his counterpart from the European Leagues organisation Lars-Christer Olsson. They will meet either at UEFA headquarters in Nyon or in Geneva to discuss a range of radical changes to the continent's top football competition from 2024, the sources said.

One source told AFP that "the aim is to discuss Champions League reforms developed by the European Clubs Association (ECA)". Those reforms reportedly include the introduction of weekend fixtures, four groups of eight instead of the current eight groups of four, and a tiered system with relegation and promotion that would see the top six teams of each group automatically qualify for the following year's competition.

A UEFA spokesman confirmed to AFP that European football's governing body "will meet league representatives in the coming weeks", but didn't say what they would discuss.

Another source said there were "no concrete projects yet, only ideas that come from discussions between UEFA and the ECA". The wide-ranging proposals were reportedly put forward by Juventus chairman Andrea Agnelli during a meeting held on March 19 between UEFA and ECA, which represents Europe's major clubs and is chaired by Agnelli.

The ideas were blasted last month by senior officials in the Spanish and German leagues. Alberto Colombo, spokesman for European Leagues, which represents domestic competitions across the continent, told AFP that the members "absolutely want to protect our weekend games and our leagues".

The reforms are also set to be discussed at another meeting, this time of the UEFA Club Competitions Committee, which is scheduled for May 14 in Nyon. — AFP

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Westbrook's 20-20-20 carries Thunder

Warriors rout Nuggets despite Durant's ejection



OKLAHOMA CITY: Lance Stephenson #6 of the Los Angeles Lakers shoots a three point basket against the Oklahoma City Thunder at Chesapeake Energy Arena in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. —AFP

OKLAHOMA CITY: Russell Westbrook had 20 points, 20 rebounds and 21 assists to lead the Oklahoma City Thunder to a 119-103 home win over the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday night. It was just the second time in league history a player had at least 20 points, 20 rebounds and 20 assists in a game. Wilt Chamberlain had 22 points, 25 rebounds and 21 assists in a 1968 game. Westbrook finished off the feat in the final minute, nabbing Lance Stephenson's miss with 41 seconds left, drawing a large ovation from the crowd. He clinched the triple-double-his 31st of the season-with 4:38 left in the third quarter, hitting a contested jumper.

WARRIORS 116, NUGGETS 102

Golden State took a big step toward securing the top seed in the Western Conference, overcoming the ejection of Kevin Durant to crush Denver in Oakland, Calif. The win gave the Warriors (53-24) a two-game lead over the Nuggets (51-26) with just five to play. The Warriors also earned a potential tiebreaker by virtue of their third straight win over the Nuggets after an October defeat, claiming the season series 3-1. In a marquee matchup of big men, DeMarcus Cousins outplayed Nuggets star Nikola Jokic, contributing 28 points, 12 rebounds, five assists, two steals and two blocked shots, helping the Warriors to

their fourth win in their last five games.

ROCKETS 130, KINGS 105

James Harden recorded his 32nd double-double, and visiting Houston completed a sweep of its four-game season series with Sacramento. Harden paired 36 points on 12-of-19 shooting with 10 assists and sank 7 of 12 3-pointers for Houston (50-28), which led by as many as 30 points. The Rockets improved to 17-4 since the All-Star break to move a half-game ahead of Portland in pursuit of the third seed in the Western Conference. Eric Gordon added 19 points, Danuel House Jr. scored 19 off the bench, and P.J. Tucker chipped in 13 points, including

a buzzer-beating 3-pointer that gave the Rockets a 62-46 lead at the intermission.

SPURS 117, HAWKS 111

Derrick White and Marco Belinelli led a fourth-quarter surge as San Antonio rallied past visiting Atlanta. White, who hit 10 of his 12 shots, finished with 23 points, and DeMar DeRozan went for 29, as the Spurs (45-33) kept pace with Oklahoma City (45-33) in their duel for seventh place in the Western Conference. The Spurs trailed by as many as nine points in the fourth quarter before rallying into the lead during a stretch in which White scored seven straight points. —Reuters

Pele undergoes treatment in Paris hospital

PARIS: Football legend Pele was taken to a Paris hospital as a precaution yesterday after suffering from an "infection" but is "doing well", according to members of his entourage. The 78-year-old Brazilian three-time World Cup winner was being treated for "a light fever" prior to the long flight back to his home country, the sources told AFP, confirming earlier reports by French radio station RMC.

The sources indicated that he was still in hospital yesterday afternoon. Pele, who won the World Cup in 1958, 1962 and 1970, was in Paris for a promotional appearance alongside France star Kylian Mbappe.

The declining health of the player known as 'O Rei' has been a cause for concern in recent times, and the planned meeting with Mbappe had already been postponed last November. Previously, Pele had admitted to not being up to the task of lighting the flame at the opening ceremony of the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Before that, Pele spent time in intensive care in Brazil in late 2014 following a kidney complaint. "I wasn't

afraid of dying as I am a man with three hearts," he joked at the time, alluding to the translation from Portuguese of the name of the town of his birth, Tres Coracoes. On Tuesday, the man who was named FIFA's player of the 20th century spent the entirety of his encounter with Mbappe sitting down, but appeared on good form at the event organised by watch manufacturer Hublot. Mbappe last year became only the second teenager to score in a World Cup final, following in Pele's footsteps, in France's 4-2 victory over Croatia when he was still just 19.

Pele achieved the feat as a 17-year-old in 1958 and claims to have gone on to score over 1,000 goals in his career, during which he starred at club level for Santos and later the New York Cosmos.

"It's possible. I scored exactly 1,025, so 1,000 goals is possible for him," Pele said when asked if Paris Saint-Germain superstar Mbappe, now 20, could also reach that milestone. It has previously been said that Pele scored 1,281 goals in 1,363 matches during his glittering career which spanned two decades.

Pele also told Mbappe, who has been repeatedly linked with a move away from PSG, that the key to smashing goalscoring records is playing in the very best teams. "People tend to say that goals are the most important thing-I thank God for having scored so many in my career-but we must know that we need to be well-supported, you can't score on your own, you need good teammates, that's very important," he said. —AFP



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and France national football team forward Kylian Mbappe (R) and Brazilian football legend Pele pose during their meeting at the Hotel Lutetia in Paris. —AFP