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Panel recommends five-year cap on new expat residencies

Up to 30 involved in bank account scam: MP

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The higher committee for tackling the demographic structure has reportedly recommended to the government to impose a five-year cap on the stay of expatriates in the country. The committee recommended to the council of ministers to issue a decision stipulating that expatriates who arrive in the country after the decision takes effect will be forced to leave the country after five years. These expatriates will not be allowed to stay in the country after the completion of the five years under any circumstances.

The new measure, if approved, will be the harshest measure against expatriates, who have faced strict government measures during the past few years. MPs have repeatedly made proposals to limit the stay of expatriates in the country as an important means to restructure the demographic balance in the country, which is massively tilted in favor of expatriates, who number more than three million against just 1.4 million Kuwaitis. MPs have also called for dismissing expats from government to create jobs for nationals.

In another key development, an opposition lawmaker yesterday said up to 30 MPs and businessmen

are suspected to be involved in a large money-laundering scam, which is under investigation by the public prosecution. MP Riyadh Al-Adasani, who was the first to break the news about the scam, said at least four people among the group have already been indicted, but did not provide further details. Some of those involved are major investment and real estate companies in which the state holds key stakes.

Adasani said several current and former MPs are involved in the scam, which is "more to do with money laundering", and warned that any shortcomings in legal procedures will lead to a grilling of the con-

cerned minister. The lawmaker had said that the issue began after some local banks reported to authorities suspicious transactions into the accounts of several leading personalities, including at least two current MPs and several businessmen.

He later said that based on the files of the cases, financial movements in some accounts reached around KD 11 million, adding that the case is more to do with money laundering rather than bribery, like the infamous 2009 bribery case in which 13 MPs had allegedly received more than KD 50 million in political bribes.

Qatari Amir meets Kuwaiti speaker



DOHA: Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani received at the Amiri Diwan yesterday the visiting Speaker of the Kuwaiti National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem and an accompanying delegation. Ghanem conveyed to Sheikh Tamim greetings from HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his good wishes for Qatar. Sheikh Tamim asked Ghanem to relay his greetings to HH the Amir and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The two sides examined, during the meeting, the historic and brotherly relations between the two countries and the necessity to further bolster these bonds, in addition to the latest developments in the regional arena. The meeting was attended by Secretary of the Kuwaiti National Assembly and the parliamentary caucus MP Odah Al-Ruwai, caucus treasurer MP Mohammad Al-Dallal and MP Safaa Al-Hashem, as well as Kuwait's Ambassador to Qatar Hafidh Al-Ajmi. —KUNA

Pakistan claims India planning attack this month

KARACHI: Pakistan has "reliable intelligence" that India will attack again this month, its foreign minister said, drawing condemnation from New Delhi which described the claim as irresponsible. Shah Mahmood Qureshi's comments came after tensions over a February standoff between the archenemies had appeared to ease. He said yesterday that an attack could take place between April 16 and 20, adding that Pakistan had told the five permanent members of the UN Security Council of its concerns.

"India rejects the irresponsible and preposterous statement by the foreign minister of Pakistan with a clear objective of whipping up war hysteria in the region," a spokesman for India's foreign office said in a statement. "This public gimmick appears to be a call to Pakistan-based terrorists to undertake a terror attack in India." The foreign office said India reserved the right to respond firmly and decisively to any cross border militant attack, accusing Pakistan of being complicit in such attacks on India.

A suicide car bombing by Pakistan-based militants in Indian-controlled Kashmir killed at least 40 Indian paramilitary police on Feb 14. The risk of conflict rose dramatically on Feb 27, when India launched an air strike on what it said was a militant training base inside Pakistan. The following day Pakistan shot down an Indian fighter jet and captured its pilot who was later released. Earlier yesterday, Pakistan summoned the Indian deputy high commissioner to protest against any "misadventure". Pakistani Foreign Office spokesman Mohammad Faisal said in a tweet.

"We have reliable intelligence that India is planning a new attack on Pakistan. As per our information this could take place between April 16 and 20," Qureshi told reporters in his hometown of Multan. He said the ambassadors of the permanent members of the UN Security Council in Islamabad had been informed about "the plan" two days ago. "I am saying it with responsibility and I have a responsible position. I know each word I say would make headlines in the international press," he said, stressing the reliability of his claim. He said the planned aggression was aimed at "increasing diplomatic pressure against Pakistan".

Qureshi did not elaborate on what evidence Pakistan had or how he could be so specific with the timing, but he said Prime Minister Imran Khan had agreed to share the

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JERUSALEM: A supporter of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wearing a mask with the face of US President Donald Trump marches with a sign reading in Hebrew "guardian of Israel" along an alley of the Machane Yehuda market yesterday. — AFP

Netanyahu vows to annex West Bank settlements

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pledged to annex settlements in the occupied West Bank if he wins tomorrow's elections, a deeply controversial move that could prove to be the death knell for the two-state solution. His comments late Saturday, just days before the closely-fought April 9 poll, could be seen as an appeal to right-wing voters who do not believe in the feasibility of a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

"I will apply (Israeli) sovereignty, but I don't distinguish between settlement blocs and isolated settlements," he said in an interview with Channel 12 television. He did not provide details on how quickly he planned to move ahead with it and whether it would involve all settlements. If done on a large-scale, annexation could end already fading hopes for a two-state solution with

the Palestinians.

It is a move the Israeli far-right has long pushed for. Settlements built on land occupied by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War are deemed illegal by the international community and their ongoing construction is seen as a major barrier to peace. Taking Netanyahu at his word, Palestinians seeking statehood in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem called his settlement annexation remarks a violation of international law regarding occupied territory.

Senior Palestinian official Saeb Erekat said Netanyahu's statement on annexation was "not surprising". "Israel will continue to brazenly violate international law for as long as the international community will continue to reward Israel with impunity, particularly with the Trump administration's support," he said on Twitter.

"His declaration is not just in the heat of ... electioneering campaigns," said Hanan Ashrawi, a Palestine Liberation Organization official. "This is the end of any chances of peace." A spokesman for Hamas, the Islamist militant group that runs the Gaza Strip, said "the response to (Israeli)

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Ghosn to name names as wife flees Tokyo

PARIS: Arrested former Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn is set to name the people he believes are responsible for his downfall in Japan, his wife said in an interview as she fled Tokyo out of fear she could be detained. Ghosn was re-arrested last week in the Japanese capital over fresh allegations of financial misconduct which will see him held in custody until at least April 14.

Speaking to the Journal du Dimanche newspaper in France, his wife Carole detailed the latest twists in the extraordinary saga, saying that Ghosn had recorded a video interview in English before his detention. "He names the people responsi-

ble for what has happened to him. The lawyers have it. It will be released soon," she told the newspaper. Carole added that she had fled Tokyo on a flight to Paris - with support from the French ambassador to Tokyo - because she "felt in danger".

Despite her Lebanese passport being confiscated by Japanese authorities, Carole said she was able to use her American passport to board a flight and was accompanied by the ambassador to the airport. "He didn't leave me until the plane," she explained. "Up to the last second, I didn't know if they were going to let me fly. It was surreal." The role of the French ambassador could lead to fresh friction between the countries over the highly sensitive case, which involves Nissan and French car maker Renault, which were both previously run by Ghosn.

Japanese news channel NHK said prosecutors in Tokyo wanted to question Carole on a voluntary basis.

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TOKYO: Former Nissan Chairman Carlos Ghosn and his wife Carole leave the office of his lawyer Junichiro Hironaka in this April 3, 2019 photo. — AFP

Escalating Libya conflict prompts international alarm



TRIPOLI: Spokesman of the Libyan forces of the Government of National Accord (GNA) Mohamed Gnounou holds a press conference in the capital yesterday. — AFP

TRIPOLI: The conflict shaking Libya escalated yesterday as forces of strongman Khalifa Haftar launched an air strike on a suburb of Tripoli and the UN-backed government vowed a major counteroffensive. The United Nations called for an urgent two-hour truce to allow evacuations of civilians and the wounded, while the unity government said the fighting had so far killed 21 people. Rivalries between the two camps threaten to plunge the country into a full-blown civil war after Haftar on Thursday launched an offensive on Tripoli.

Oil-rich Libya has been riven by chaos since the NATO-backed uprising in 2011 that killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi, as rival administrations and armed groups have battled for power. Repeated attempts to find a peaceful solution have failed. After a pause overnight, fierce fighting flared anew yesterday morning south of the capital between Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) and forces backing the internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA).

As clashes raged in the mainly farmland region of Wadi Raba and the destroyed international airport south of the capital, a spokesman for pro-GNA forces announced a counteroffensive against Haftar's forces. Colonel Mohamed Gnounou told

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Deputy Amir hosts top officials



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



KUWAIT: HH the Deputy Amir receives Yemeni Foreign Minister Khaled Hussein Al-Yamani and his accompanying delegation.

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, Acting National Assembly Speaker Issa Ahmad Al-Kandari, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Seif Palace yesterday. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled was accompanied by the visiting Yemeni Foreign Minister, Khaled Hussein Al-Yamani, along with the accompanying delegation. HH the Deputy Amir also hosted Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Khaled Al-Saleh.



KUWAIT: HH the Deputy Amir receives Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Khaled Al-Saleh.



KUWAIT: HH the Deputy Amir receives Acting National Assembly Speaker Issa Ahmad Al-Kandari.



KUWAIT: HH the Deputy Amir receives First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: HH the Deputy Amir receives Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: HH the Deputy Amir receives Yemeni Foreign Minister Khaled Hussein Al-Yamani.

Kuwait FM hosts Yemeni counterpart, re-affirms support

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday received Yemeni Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Yamani, currently paying an official visit to the country. Talks between the two sides addressed bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries in diverse realms, latest developments on the Yemeni arena, international efforts aimed at reaching a political solution to the Yemeni crisis, alleviating hardships of the Yemeni people and the latest developments at the international and regional levels.

During the meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled renewed Kuwait's unwavering stance and support for Yemen. For his part, minister Al-Yamani expressed his deep appreciation for Kuwait's diplomatic efforts and its major humanitarian role in various parts of the globe. Al-Yamani has expressed admiration of Kuwait's support for his people at the official and popular levels. Senior ministry officials also attended the meeting.

Elsewhere, Kuwait's Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held talks with Yemeni Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Yamani at Seif Palace yesterday, on issues of common interest, with attendance of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The Ministry of Defense said in a statement that Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad and minister Al-Yamani discussed issues of joint interest. Separately, Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad hosted the Tajik Ambassador, Dr Zubaydullo Zubaydov, discussing topics of mutual interest. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives Yemeni Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Yamani. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with Yemeni Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Yamani.

Kuwait defense minister chairs joint committee talks



KUWAIT: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah chairs joint committee talks. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah yesterday presided over a joint committee meeting dealing with political, media and economic affairs. A number of Kuwaiti officials attended the talks, including Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water

Khaled Al-Fadhil, Kuwait's General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development said in a statement. The meeting is expected to yield Kuwait's strategy for sustainable energy amid capricious oil prices and major developments in the energy industry, the statement added.—KUNA

Al-Qatami receives honorary French order

KUWAIT: France has bestowed upon a prominent Kuwaiti women's rights activist one of its most prestigious state orders to acknowledge her outstanding work and commitment towards gender parity. In a statement yesterday, Lulwa Al-Qatami thanked French president Emmanuel Macron and Paris' Ambassador to Kuwait Marie Masdupuy for adorning her with the, "Order of the French Chorus of Honor," expressing her elation over the accolade.

She spoke of her personal affinity for the French language, in addition to what she described as affection for France's sprawling capital city of Paris, having been the first "Francophone"

Kuwaiti woman. As one of the founding members of the Kuwaiti Women's Cultural and Social Society, Al-Qatami has worked tirelessly over the last 35 years to put women on equal footing with their male counterparts. "Today is a historic day as we honor a friend who has done a lot of work to promote women's rights in Kuwait," said the French envoy. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has addressed a cable to Lulwa Al-Qatami, the honorary president of the Kuwaiti Women's Cultural and Social Society, on earning the French Legion of Honor Medal of the Officer's Rank, in appreciation of her role in promoting Kuwaiti women. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Lulwa Al-Qatami receives the French Chorus of Honor.



The honoring ceremony

Local

KRCS continues to provide aid to flood-stricken victims

TEHRAN: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) on Sunday provided additional food, tents and supplies to help flood-stricken victims in Iran. Deputy Chairman of KRCS Anwar Al-Hasawi told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that medical equipment were also distributed, providing humanitarian and relief assistance to several affected areas, with the support of the Iranian Red Crescent Society. Accordingly, Al-Hasawi commended the cooperation of the Kuwaiti Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense to provide relief planes as a way to transport necessities such as water pumps. The Kuwaiti Cabinet instructed KRCS to provide the aid in swift manner help upon directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The dangerous floods that swept dozens of Iranian provinces since March 17, killed 70 people and injured 768 others, according to data.

The Iranian embassy in Kuwait announced yesterday that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's aid initiative to help those affected by floods is considered a new achievement in Kuwait's humanitarian record. "This humane initiative shows Kuwait's keenness towards its neighboring countries and duty towards humanity in general," it added. "Supporting

needy people in Iran demonstrates social solidarity and brotherly bonds between Kuwait and Iran, as it has become the biggest emergency aid provider to 11 million Iranians affected with the devastating floods," it continued. The Iranian embassy expressed its gratitude towards the Kuwaiti government and Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) for their humanitarian initiative.

Meanwhile, Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Saturday Kuwait's assistance to those affected by torrential rains engulfed several Iranian cities and villages is a sign of "humanitarian responsibility and affirms fraternity between Muslim countries". This move reflects also solidarity amongst Muslim countries during hard circumstances resulted from natural disasters, Iranian Foreign Ministry's spokesman Bahram Qasemi told Iran's news agency (IRNA) in a statement.

Earlier this morning, the Iranian Red Crescent Society valued highly the initiative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a Humanitarian Leader, to provide urgent support to those affected by the floods. On Friday, the first aircraft of Kuwait's relief aid arrived in Iran to help those affected by the downpours. — KUNA



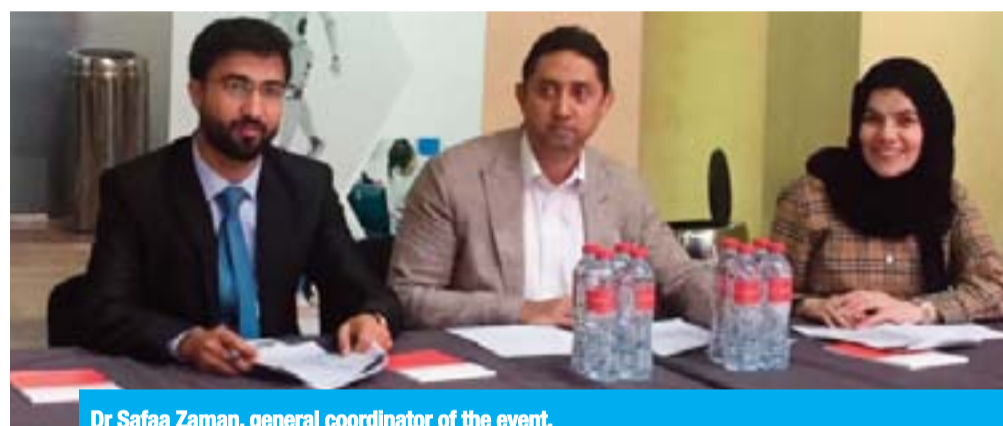
TEHRAN: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) team visiting flood-stricken victims in Iran. — KUNA

Kuwait leads in GCC Robotics Challenge

DUBAI: The American University of the Middle East (AUM), a private university based in Kuwait, won the top place in the final round of the fourth IET GCC Robotics Challenge, on Saturday. This is the third time for a Kuwait-based educational institution to win the award of this annual event. The competition, organized by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) of the Canadian University Dubai (CUD), UAE, gathered computer engineering students from universities of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

It consists of two rounds, the first of which is organized on the national level where two five-member teams from each country qualify for the final round, Dr Safaa Zaman, general coordinator of the event, told KUNA. "The competition aims to encourage undergraduates and young professionals across the GCC to build an innovative robot and compete within space and time constraints, utilizing their academic knowledge and technical skills," she pointed out. "The event aims also to strengthen academic cooperation on the regional level, increase student exchanges, enhance the competitive edge of GCC universities in the area of IT and promote the culture of robotics." Dr Zaman, also member of the jury of the competition, added.

She congratulated the AUM on winning the top award of the completion, and appreciated the supportive roles of Kuwait



Dr Safaa Zaman, general coordinator of the event.



The jury of the competition.

Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and the Kuwaiti Public Authority for Youth (PAY). Kuwait hosted

the first GCC Robotics competition in 2016, Qatar - the second in 2017 and Bahrain - the third last year. — KUNA

Kuwait municipality turns 'smart', spurring businesses

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality's Vision, "Smart Municipality," has contributed to spurring domestic businesses, says the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The initiative has proven effective in the state approach to render His Highness the Amir outlook, New Kuwait 2035, come into reality, said Fahad Al-Shu'la, who doubles as Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs.

He was speaking at the launching of the second phase of processing digital licenses, along with affiliate up-to-date services yesterday. The municipality approach of applying digital and smart technology is designed to facilitate operations, making law enforcement easier and backing up the state strategy of making Kuwait a lucrative financial and economic hub. These smart services have proven quite helpful for citizens and have drawn applause from His Highness the Amir; a gesture that came as an addition to incentives, indicated the minister. The municipality has cooperated with the private sector to issue architectural licenses, namely for construction, safety as well as for rapid placement of power installations.

Meanwhile, Ahmad Al-Manfouhi, the

Municipality General Director, said in a press release that updating the electronic system "does entail laying off personnel; rather it is aimed at 'Kuwaitizing' jobs related to the new electronic programs." The electronic aspects of the project have improved the business environment, earning acknowledgement by the World Bank for the third consecutive year. "More importantly was the praise by His Highness the Amir for the municipality role, thus our responsibility has doubled." The digital system will be operational in full in July. Architectural sketches will be examined electronically. Moreover, privatization of land plots will be done in the same manner.

Health announcements and replying to queries by stores' owners will be done by phone, and not electronically, he has explained. But up to 85 percent of the municipal works will be performed electronically in the second phase. These electronic facilities are among the incentives for foreign investors; a license can be obtained online from outside Kuwait.

For his part, Humoud Al-Enezi, member of the Municipal Council, said the newly intro-



Fahad Al-Shu'la

duced electronic system has trimmed paper work, thus transforming the department into "a smart municipality." Meanwhile, MPs Saleh Al-Fadalah and Ahmad Al-Fadl have lauded the record progress in updating the mechanisms of processes at the municipality. Director General of the development at the municipality, Saad Al-Muhailbi, praised the new system for its agility and accuracy. — KUNA



The second phase of processing digital licenses.



Ahmad Al-Manfouhi

IPU needs more efforts to end conflicts: Al-Ghanem

DOHA: National Assembly Speaker Marzuq Ali Al-Ghanem called on the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to take serious measure to resolve conflicts around the world. The remarks were made during Al-Ghanem's speech at the 140th Assembly of the IPU held in Doha, Qatar yesterday.

Al-Ghanem affirmed the need for more efforts to fight terrorism, adding that the terrorist attack on the two mosques that left many dead and wounded in New Zealand weeks ago is a reminder that terrorism has no religion. He hailed the support of New Zealand government, especially Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern who stood by the victim's families. In this context, Al-Ghanem spoke of the Al-Sadiq Mosque terrorist attack that happened in Kuwait a few years ago. He stressed on Kuwait's strong stance against terrorism and extremism of all forms. Meanwhile, he spoke of failure of the



Marzuq Ali Al-Ghanem

international community to end over 70 years of "Israeli terrorism against Palestinians." He affirmed Kuwait's refusal of the recent US decision to recognize Syria's occupied Golan as "Israeli territories," saying that it will further destroy "the peace process." — KUNA

EU imports from Kuwait drop in 2018

BRUSSELS: EU imports from Kuwait showed a drop in 2018, while exports to Kuwait remained nearly stable as compared with 2017, according to the latest figures released by Eurostat, the EU's statistical agency yesterday. EU imports from Kuwait in 2018 totaled EUR 3.28 billion (USD 3.68 billion), while EU exports were valued at EUR 5.64 billion (USD 6.33 billion).

EU imports from Kuwait in 2017 had totaled EUR 4.17 billion (USD 4.68 billion) while EU exports to Kuwait were valued at EUR 5.66 bil-

lion (USD 6.35 billion). Euro area imports from Kuwait in 2018 were valued at EUR 2.67 billion (USD 2.99 billion), while euro area exports to Kuwait totaled EUR 4.59 billion (USD 5.15 billion). Euro area imports from Kuwait in 2017 were valued at EUR 3.22 billion (USD 3.61 billion), while euro area exports to Kuwait totaled EUR 4.55 billion (USD 5.11 billion). EU includes 28 member countries, while the euro area has 19 members, which use the common currency EUR. — KUNA

Kuwaiti MP chosen for youth parliamentary forum



Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) 140th General Assembly

DOHA: Member of Kuwaiti Parliament Omar Al-Tabtabaie announced his election uncontested by the Arabian group for membership of parliamentary youth forum. This is the second appointment for Al-Tabtabaie, and has been voted unanimously on the sidelines of Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) 140th General Assembly.

Al-Tabtabaie said that this unanimous support for him comes after hard teamwork by the Kuwaiti delegation which thrives in lifting Kuwait's name internationally. Al-Tabtabaie expressed his gratitude for the members who have chosen him. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) was established, 130 years ago, as the first international political organization in the



Member of Kuwaiti Parliament Omar Al-Tabtabaie

world, aiming to tackle international issues, comprising 178 members and 12 associate members. — KUNA

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A greater spotted eagle is seen in the Al Jahra Nature Reserve. These eagles usually remain in the Reserve for 4-5 months. — KUNA/Hamad Bureslee

AUB participates in annual Career Fair of the Australian College of Kuwait

KUWAIT: In line with its long-term strategy to support young talent in Kuwait, Ahli United Bank is participating in the annual Career Fair of the Australian College of Kuwait, taking place from April 7 to 8 on campus in the Aviation Hangar. Through this participation, the Bank seeks to connect with students and graduates of different business majors with the aim of attracting and recruiting young talent, including Kuwaiti nationals, by discussing internship opportunities across the Bank's departments with them.

Naqeeb Amin, Ahli United Bank's Human Resources Manager underlined the Bank's firm belief in the younger generation of new students, saying: "Today's youth has great potential with innovative ideas to help any company to grow faster and better compete in a global environment". Amin added: "Australian College of Kuwait is a prestigious institution producing thousands of young national and non-national graduates every year. Having a variety of talent and capabilities, we are delighted to support their ambitions and help them attain their career objectives in the banking sector by offering them promising job and/or internship opportunities at AUB".

Ahli United Bank has participated in several job fairs organized by many private and public universities in Kuwait in line with their growing role in the country's economic welfare, which is to provide job opportunities for young ambitious Kuwaitis, urging them to join the private sector. This enables the youth to contribute to the growth and development taking place in the country, particularly the banking sector.



ASDA'A BCW to unveil findings of Youth Survey

DUBAI: ASDA'A BCW, the leading PR agency in the Middle East and North Africa, will unveil the findings of its 11th annual Arab Youth Survey, the largest independent study of its kind on the region's largest demographic - its youth - on April 30 in Dubai. This year's survey marks the first time that the thought leadership initiative, with a distinctive new logo and brand identity, will be presented by ASDA'A BCW, following the global merger of WPP's Burson-Marsteller and Cohn & Wolfe firms last year.

The ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey underlines the agency's 'power of three' model, which combines public relations, research and digital capabilities through three specialist brands. ASDA'A BCW works closely with its sister company PSB Middle East, the research firm, which conducted 3,500 face-to-face interviews with young Arab nationals aged 18 to 24

in 16 MENA countries; while Proof, the digital, data and design agency, drives digital and creative aspects of the Survey including the new logo and brand identity, and its digital and social presence.

With 65 per cent of the Arab population under the age of 30, the Survey presents evidence-based insights into the attitudes of Arab youth, providing public and private sector organizations with data and analysis to inform their decision-making and policy creation. Sunil John, ASDA'A BCW's President Middle East, said: "Over 11 years now, the Survey has provided credible pointers to the events shaping the region and highlights how young people here - the world's youngest demographic -

respond to them. The aspirations and attitudes of Arab youth serve as a compelling source of information and insight to help shape policies and drive business strategies."

The launch event will be live streamed on ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey's social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter in addition to real time updates on Instagram and LinkedIn and at www.arabyouthsurvey.com.

The Annual ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey has also won the coveted IN2 SABRE Award for 'Thought Leadership in PR' in EMEA for three consecutive years and was awarded the PR Week Global Award for Middle East Campaign of the Year in 2018.



ABK marks World Autism Day

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) marked World Autism Day in collaboration with the Kuwait Dream Center; a UK accredited Early Intervention Centre Specialized in autism. The event was held at the Center's headquarters in Khaldiya, on Tuesday 2 April, 2019. World Autism Day is an internationally recognized day, which aims to raise awareness of children with autism around the world. The day itself brings individual autism organizations together to aid in things like research, diagnoses, treatment, and overall awareness.

ABK's sponsorship and support to this cause stems from its strong belief in the value of supporting individuals with special needs and raising awareness of the importance of recognizing them among Kuwait's communities, and providing them with a sense of equality. The children from the Center enjoyed a fun-filled day and were engaged in various activities. The event was concluded with a powerful message sent across by the children, where they released blue balloons into the sky of Kuwait, as a sign of solidarity.

The Bank is keen to play an active role in encouraging a stronger sense of belonging among these individuals by celebrating them and offering them the opportunity to realize how special they truly are. It will continue to participate in impactful events and activities in an effort to make a true difference in the lives of these individuals.



KCI, Central Circle conducts science workshop

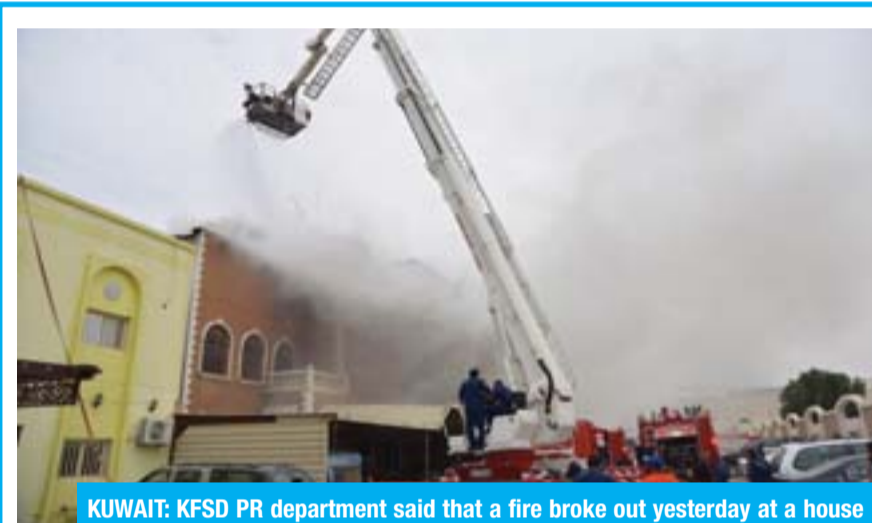


CEO of Central Circle Company Dr Ziad Al-Alyan (center) is flanked by plastic surgeon Dr Ibby Younis (right) and General Manager Middle East and North Africa at Acelity Alexander Burger (left).

KUWAIT: KCI in cooperation with Central Circle Company conducted a scientific workshop focusing on the effective use of Negative Pressure Wound Therapy. The speaker, Dr Ibby Younis, a consultant plastic surgeon from UK, conducted a lecture about managing complex wounds using innovative modalities of negative pressure wound therapy.



Alexander Burger and Dr Ibby Younis.



KUWAIT: KFSD PR department said that a fire broke out yesterday at a house in Rabiya. Firemen from Ardhiya, Farwaniya and Mubarak Al-Kabeer rushed to scene and found the blaze was in a shack on the roof and managed to control it. No casualties were reported.

Q8 EduEx, US Embassy education expo kicks off



KUWAIT: Lawrence Silverman with Q8 EduEx officials cutting the ceremonial ribbon.—Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A two-day education expo kicked off yesterday at the Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref. The Q8 EduEx Spring-International Higher Education Exhibition was organized in support of Kuwait government's vision to create world-class educational opportunities for Kuwaiti and expats students in line with higher educational standards. The event is organized by Pine Experiential under the auspices of the US Embassy and supported by Education USA, Education in Ireland and AMIDEAST.

US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman cut the ceremonial ribbon with Pine Experiential officials. "This is the biggest expo of US universities and colleges in Kuwait. I understand there are around 39 participants and among them are 20 American schools. They are here to showcase their campuses and educational strength and services," Silverman said.

The envoy said US education is the best in the world. "We have the easiest visa process. However, students must apply individually to their preferred schools; we are here to guide and assist. Students have enormous choices in the US for a high-quality education - whether it is engineering, medicine, business or liberal arts. Our universities' best offer is the sense of independence - remember, this is not about learning mathematics or sciences, it is about discovering yourself and US universities are best at that," he said.

Silverman encouraged students to make the most of their stay in the US while studying to discover more about the history and people around them. "You will learn a lot because we are a country of diverse cultures and people. People who studied in the US have proven this. Just last week, when Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was here, we gathered about 50 Kuwaitis who were once our students. They are all back here and are very successful now. They are helping the country in almost all sectors. Why they are in



this status and successful? Because they were once our students in the US," he said.

Kuwait and US are working very closely with regards to education and training. "We have our educational advisor at the US Embassy to deal with higher education issues. We also work with the Kuwaiti ministry of education to train teachers and provide the necessary help and train them in English. The idea is to prepare students whenever they want to get higher education in the US. We have trained around 400 public school teachers," Silverman added.

Nine percent drop in accident fatalities

By A Saleh, Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: KFSD's PR and media manager Brig Khalil Abdul Redha Al-Amir said 2018 statistics showed a 9 percent drop in accident fatalities compared to 2017, noting that the drop was the result of the awareness campaigns KFSD organizes to reduce human and material losses. Amir also hailed the role played by both citizens and expats in reducing the number of fires and urged them to use fire prevention measures in their houses including smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and first-aid kits.

Female citizen gets 5 years

The court of cassation yesterday sentenced a female citizen to five years with labor over charges involving a state security case. According to the case, the woman had stolen her husband's mobile phone and used it, pretending to be him, to post tweets calling for toppling the Kuwaiti regime and slandering His Majesty Amir and Shiites. She did this to get back at her husband for getting married to another woman.

MCI forms special committee

After surviving a no-confidence motion in parliament, Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalid Al-Roudhan formed a special committee to investigate the points included in the grilling motion to resolve them. Roudhan also urged all MoCI officials to prepare special plans to replace expats with citizens, and this includes advisors whose contracts will not be extended.

Health coverage

Head of the ministry of health media office Dr Ghalia Al-Mutairi announced that universal health coverage indicators in Kuwait show that 67 percent of the population uses modern birth control methods, 71 percent get pre-birth medical care, 99 percent vaccinate their children, 82 percent seek medical care for children with pneumonia and that 84 percent received successful TB treatment. Speaking at a special ceremony held to celebrate World Health Day, Mutairi said the comprehensive health coverage indicators in Kuwait also include the provision of 106 doctors and 3.3 psychiatrists per 100,000 people and 20.4 hospital beds per 10,000 residents.

MEW hires 155 Kuwaitis

Recent statistics showed 155 Kuwaitis have been appointed in the ministry of electricity and water compared to February, when only 86 were appointed, said informed sources, noting that no expats were appointed in this period. The sources added that statistics also showed that 172 employees had been terminated, including 133 citizens and 39 non-Kuwaitis.

Plainclothes cops bust fake detective

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti posing as a detective stopped an unmarked car with two detectives inside, who caught him with an ID and handcuffs. The citizen used to accost his victims in dark streets and steal their valuables. The suspect had asked the driver of the unmarked car to stop and told them he was a detective and presented an ID, but quickly put it back in his pocket. When he was asked to show the ID again, he refused and fought with them. Police found he does not have any connection with criminal detectives, and found a forged ID, handcuffs and emergency tools used by police with him. The suspect was taken to police headquarters, where he said he used to impersonate as a detective to mug citizens and expats. He was detained for further action.

Fishermen flee

The Environment Public Authority and environmental police stopped a fishing boat in Kuwait Bay. The violating fishermen were able to escape, leaving behind the boat and fishing equipment that was confiscated. EPA received a call about fishermen violating the fishing law in Kuwait Bay. Police are investigating.

Drug peddlers

Customs detectives caught an Indian with 3 kg of hashish, which later led to the arrest of a Sudanese who had 2 kg of shabu in an Abdaly building. Both were coming from Iraq and were sent to the Drugs Control General Department. — Al-Rai

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International

MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2019



Starved, injured infants crowd Syrian hospitals

For the parents of long-missing children, agony and hope

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TEHRAN: Members of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) march during the annual military parade marking the anniversary of the outbreak of the devastating 1980-1988 war with Saddam Hussein's Iraq, in this file photo. The United States will designate Iran's Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist organization, an unprecedented move that would ramp up pressure on the elite force. — AFP

Iran wants US troops out of Iraq

Tehran 'will retaliate' if US designates Revolutionary Guards as terrorists

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has called on Iraq to demand US troops leave "as soon as possible", warning that Washington is plotting to remove the Iraqi government. The remarks came during a visit to Tehran on Saturday by Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi, whose country is under pressure from the United States to distance itself from Iran.

"You should take actions to make sure the Americans withdraw their troops from Iraq as soon as possible because wherever they have had an enduring presence, forcing them out has become problematic," Khamenei told Abdel Mahdi. "The current government and parliament in Iraq and the political figures are not what the US desires; they plot to remove them from the political scene of Iraq," he said, according to his official website.

Abdel Mahdi, on his first official trip to Iran, also met Saturday with President Hassan Rouhani, who visited Iraq last month. Baghdad is under pressure from Washington to limit ties with its neighbor, particularly after the United States withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal last year and hit Tehran with sanctions. Iran has

close but complicated ties with Iraq, with significant influence among its Shiite political groups.

The two countries fought a bloody war from 1980 to 1988 and Tehran's influence in Baghdad grew after the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq toppled the government of Saddam Hussein. Iran was the first country to respond to Iraqi calls for help after Islamic State group jihadists captured Mosul in 2014 and threatened to overrun Baghdad and Kirkuk. Tehran dispatched "military advisors" and equipment overnight along with the Revolutionary Guards elite Qods Force commander Qasem Soleimani to prevent IS jihadists from approaching its western borders.

Terrorism blacklist

According to the Wall Street Journal, Washington is

planning to designate the Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist organization, an unprecedented move that would escalate tensions between the two countries.

The newspaper, quoting unnamed officials, said President Donald Trump's administration would announce the long-mulled decision as soon as today. But it said that the Pentagon and the CIA were concerned the move would increase risks for US troops without doing much more to damage the Iranian economy.

Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif slammed the move as "another US disaster" in the making, and warned Washington yesterday of the consequences it would have. "#NetanyahuFirsters who have long agitated for FTO designation of the IRGC fully understand its consequences for US forces in the region," Zarif said on Twitter, referring to Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu. "In fact, they seek to drag US into a quagmire on his behalf. @realDonaldTrump should know better than to be conned into another US disaster," he added.

Iran's parliament has vowed to retaliate by passing an urgent bill putting American troops on a terrorism blacklist alongside the Islamic State group, the semi-official news agency ISNA reported. "Even though we believe one should not play along with America's extreme acts, the reality is that we must retaliate," the head of Iran's influential national security and foreign policy commission, Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh, told ISNA.

A statement signed by a majority of MPs in support of the bill said any action against Iran's national security and its armed forces was "crossing a red line" and the US administration would "regret" its decision. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp was formed after the 1979 Islamic revolution with a mission to defend the new system. Designating the Guards as a terrorist organization would "effectively be a service to terrorists," Falahatpisheh said, since they have "the biggest role in combating terrorism" in the region. — AFP

“US plotting to remove Iraqi government”

Rwanda genocide and its aftermath

KIGALI: Over 100 days in 1994 in Rwanda around 800,000 people, mainly Tutsis, were slaughtered in a campaign of killings. Here is an overview:

President killed

On April 6, 1994 Rwanda's president Juvenal Habyarimana, from the Hutu majority, is killed when his aircraft is shot down over Kigali. He is returning from peace talks in Tanzania with Tutsi rebels of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), who have been waging a rebellion since 1990.

Genocide starts

The next day soldiers kill the moderate Hutu prime minister, as well as 10 Belgian paratroopers guarding her and other top officials in the Hutu-dominated coalition government. The genocide begins. Lists of those to be killed, mostly Tutsis but also opposition Hutus, are distributed. Soldiers and Hutu militiamen set up roadblocks. They go house-to-house to search for their targets. The Mille Collines radio station spouts propaganda against Tutsis, referring to them as "cockroaches". Officials and media outlets incite people to carry out the massacres, to loot and rape. Men, women and children are killed with machetes, grenades and bullets.

UN scales down effort

From April 9 French and Belgian paratroopers arrive to evacuate their nationals. On the 18, as the killing continues, the Red Cross says tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of people, have died. A UN peacekeeping operation, unable to stop the massacres, is on April 21 reduced from around 2,500 to 270 men. A week later Doctors Without Borders (MSF) says a "genocide" is under way. On June 22 France deploys Operation Turquoise, a UN-mandated



KIGALI: Human skulls preserved are exhibited at the Genocide memorial in Nyamata, inside Catholic church where thousands were slaughtered during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. — AFP

force tasked with halting the killing. It has little effect. On June 30 the UN Human Rights Commission special rapporteur says the slaughter legally qualifies as "genocide" and appears to have been planned.

Slaughter stops

On July 4 the mainly Tutsi RPF soldiers finally seize the capital Kigali. The 100 days of killings ends. Hundreds of thousands of Hutus, fearing reprisals, flee to neighboring Zaire, today's Democratic Republic of Congo.

International court

In November 1994 the UN sets up the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in neighboring Tanzania to try the main perpetrators. In May 1998 Jean Kambanda, prime minister during the killings, pleads guilty to genocide and crimes against humanity. He is the first to admit responsibility. In September 1998, the

court becomes the first international tribunal to hand down a conviction for genocide, finding a former town mayor guilty of inciting the massacre of more than 2,000 Tutsis. The court goes on to sentence several dozen people, including some to life in jail. The court closes in 2015.

Local courts

From March 2005 community-run courts called "gacaca" begin trials for people suspected of participating in the genocide. Nearly two million people are brought before the 12,000 courts, with 65 percent convicted. They close in 2012. Related trials are also held in Belgium and France.

Rwanda president

RPF leader Paul Kagame is chosen to be president in April 2000, following the resignation of Pasteur Bizimungu, a Hutu who had served in the post since July 1994. Kagame remains in power today. — AFP

Israel: Mideast 'powerhouse'

JERUSALEM: Israel, which goes to the polls tomorrow, has become the Middle East's military powerhouse and a major player in the high-tech sector since its creation seven decades ago. It has fought multiple wars with its Arab neighbors and continues to occupy the West Bank, where the peace process with the Palestinians has been moribund since 2016. Here are some facts about the country.

Military power

Israel is considered the leading military power in the Middle East and is widely believed to possess its sole, if undeclared, nuclear arsenal. It receives nearly \$4 billion a year in military aid from the United States. The first Arab-Israeli war broke out on May 15, 1948, a day after Zionist leader David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the country's creation. Officially Israel has been through eight conflicts, including the Six-Day War of June 1967 in which it seized the West Bank-including east Jerusalem-from Jordan, and the strategic Golan Heights from Syria. It has signed peace treaties with just two Arab governments-Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994.

Settlements, intifadas

Israel's population has increased tenfold since 1948, reaching 8.8 million in 2018, according to official statistics. In recent decades, Israel has massively intensified its settlement of the occupied West Bank, building homes for some 650,000 people, including in annexed east Jerusalem. The international community regards the settlements as illegal and the United Nations says their persistent expansion is the biggest obstacle

to peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

There have been two Palestinian uprisings or intifadas - 1987-1993 and 2000-2005. The first ended with the signing in Washington of the Oslo accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. They granted the Palestinians limited autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as an interim step towards a comprehensive peace deal, which has never been agreed. In 2002 during the second intifada, Israel began building a security barrier that it said was intended to keep out attackers but which snakes across swathes of Palestinian territory.

Trump support

Israel has sought to avoid direct involvement in the Syrian civil war that began in 2011. But it has publicly acknowledged to carrying out a bombing campaign inside Syria, targeting archfoe Iran and its Lebanese ally Hezbollah. Israel has vowed to prevent either of them entrenching themselves in its northeastern neighbor, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has been in power since 2009, formed the a new government in 2015 that is widely regarded as the most right-wing in Israel's history. He is seeking re-election under the shadow of looming graft charges, which he has repeatedly denied. Netanyahu has won the staunch support of US President Donald Trump. Breaking with decades of international consensus, the US leader recognized the disputed city of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017 and its annexation of the Golan from Syria in March 2019. — AFP

International

Starved infants and wounded women crowd Syrian hospitals after IS defeat

Europe bars return of IS-linked citizens, worsening strain

HASAKA: The paramedics' log at Al-Hol camp in eastern Syria lists the injuries and ailments of infants rushed from the battlefield to its crowded, dirty clinic: malnourishment, stunted growth, broken leg. Those in critical need - mostly emaciated babies born in war to the wives of dead Islamic State militants - are taken to the nearest hospital, a bumpy two-hour drive away. Other people cram into a waiting room with a tin roof in a growing queue for basic medical treatment.

At the hospital, staff have had to build two portacabins on the roof that serve as a makeshift ward for the treatment of malnourished babies, crammed sometimes two or three to a cot. Lower floors are filled with teenagers missing limbs and women with shrapnel and bullet wounds. The exodus during intense fighting of more than 60,000 people from Islamic State's final redoubt of Baghous is overwhelming medical staff in eastern Syria who struggle to cope at the camp and ill-equipped hospitals. Scores of people, mostly children, have died on the 150-mile journey to al-Hol or soon after arriving, aid groups say.

"My son has a dislocated hip. He needs an operation urgently," said Umm Mohammed, a veiled 33-year-old woman holding an expressionless six-month-old boy at the camp. "Medics keep saying they have more urgent cases to deal with - wounds and shrapnel injuries." In the waiting area, dozens of people who mostly left Baghous during a brief truce last month, arranged for civilians and surrendering militants to evacuate, sit on wooden benches or the concrete floor. Children in wheelchairs watch while babies scream as they are banded or given injections.

US-backed forces declared the defeat in March of Islamic State's self-proclaimed caliphate - the territory it once held in Iraq and Syria - after militants were driven out of the village of Baghous where they made a months-long last stand. The intense bombardment and fighting to dislodge the Sunni Islamist extremist group cost countless

lives and wounded many more people, including the wives of fighters, their children, IS supporters and other civilians trapped by the militants in the enclave.

Those who evacuated in recent weeks have strained healthcare in Kurdish-run areas of eastern Syria beyond capacity. In the clinic at al-Hol, which is hosting more than 70,000 people displaced by violence, many people wore crude casts. One woman said she did not have enough painkillers for a wound to her hand - a long metal rod from the explosion that wounded her and killed three relatives was still lodged in her knuckle. "I just want an X-ray at the hospital," she said, giving her name as Umm Ahmed.

Starving children of IS

But local hospitals can take only the most severe cases. In one room at the hospital in the nearby town of Hasaka, 19-year-old Baraa Al-Kurdi, the wife of a Syrian Islamic State member, lay motionless next to a boy with third-degree burns covering his head. "I was hit in the head by shrapnel," Kurdi said quietly. "We were next to a car packed with ammunition and explosives, including suicide belts ready for fighters to use."

"My husband was killed. My daughter is one month old - she's upstairs in the babies' ward." Kurdi's daughter was one of the few non-foreign infants in the ward. Others, many blond or with Asian features, lay quietly in their cots with cheekbones showing and eyes sunken into their sockets from malnutrition. The patients' register listed the names their mothers gave the hospital - Ali Azerbajani, Ali al-Uzbeki, Mohamed Skramo, a Norwegian name.

Many who remained in Baghous until the end of the fighting were die-hard supporters of Islamic State who flocked from all over the world to support its violent interpretation of Islam. A number of European countries have refused to take back citizens who joined IS, putting additional strain on local authorities to deal with prisoners and



HASAKEH, Syria: A doctor changes the gauzes on a Russian girl at a hospital in Syria's northeastern Hasakeh province. — AFP

patients. "Children from the camp are arriving night and day. We currently have more than 70 babies being treated for malnutrition," a nurse in the ward said. She and other hospital staff declined to be named or for the hospital to be identified, fearing reprisals for treating the children of IS fighters. "Most cases are treated and then returned to the camp. A few have

died. We're doing our best but had limited resources even before this influx." More than 200 people have died on their way to al-Hol or after arriving in the camp in recent months, according to the International Rescue Committee. It said this week that around 30 to 50 cases every day were referred to local hospitals. — Reuters

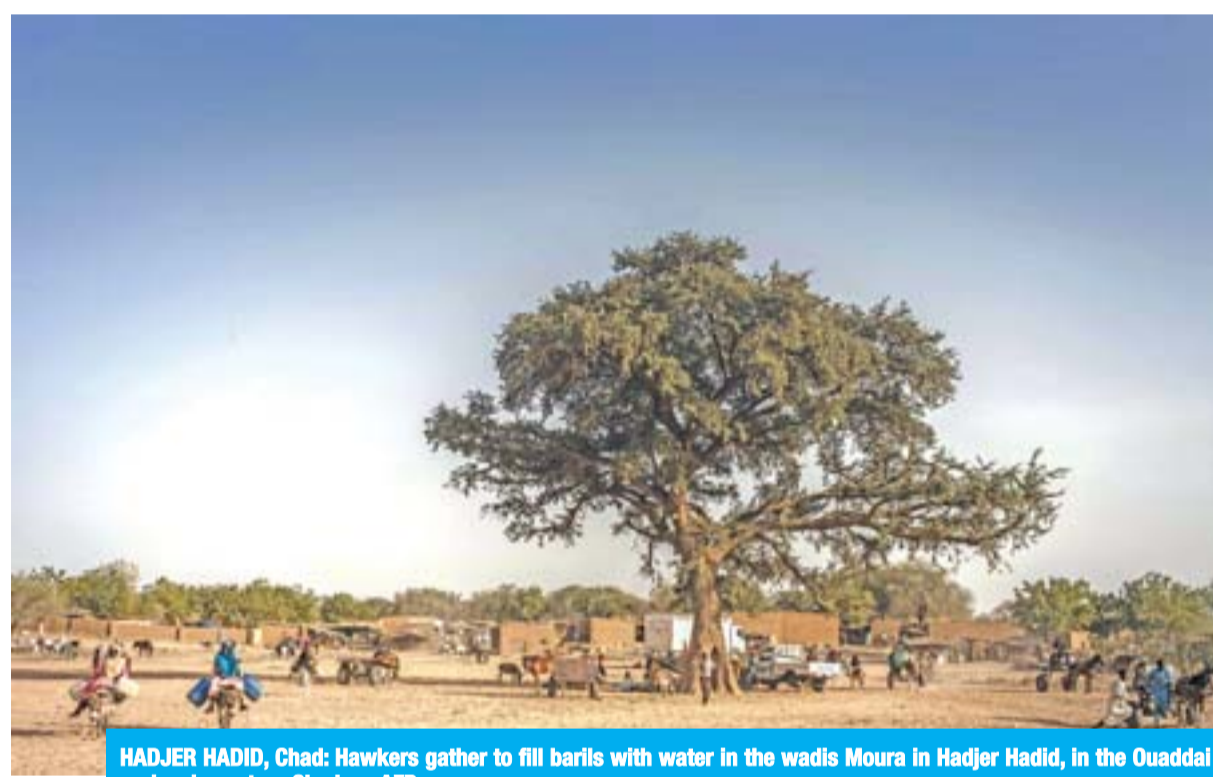
Farmers, nomads take to violence in drought-stricken Chad

ABECHE: The chief medical officer at Adre hospital takes a routine phone call: a patient has been admitted with gunshot wounds and needs emergency surgery. A dusty town in eastern Chad, once part of the proud Ouaddai empire, Adre is caught up in a mounting conflict between local farmers and nomadic camel herders from the north of the sprawling country. Last year, the hospital treated more than 100 patients with bullet wounds. In a territory where almost everyone seems to have a gun - a legacy of rebellions launched from eastern Chad and of the brutal conflict in Sudan's Darfur - squabbles over grazing land and trampled crops swiftly lead to violence. Such disputes are tragically familiar in many parts of Africa. But in arid eastern Chad, near the border with Sudan, the bloodshed is particularly acute, rooted in a bitter drought and population pressure sharpening rivalry over access to land. The vicious circle of attack and retribution is running full tilt.

Seasonal

Admissions in Adre rise sharply during "times of tension", a source at the local hospital said. Those times mirror the seasons. At the end of the rainy season, in December and January, herders drive their beasts northwards into the Sahel. When water sources start running low, they return south, from about the end of June. Local chief Abderahim Dahab, who supervises 136 villages in his traditional leadership role, said the modern-day bloodshed contrasted with long-established cohabitation. "Movement of livestock has always happened peacefully, for decades," he said. Migratory herders benefit from pasture on which to feed their animals, and farmers benefit from the animals, whose droppings fertilise the soil. And farmers and herders mutually benefit from trading with each other for food.

Historian Mahamat Saleh Yacoub said two factors explained the breakdown between the two communities. The first is a drought that has gripped the Sahel since the 1970s and seems to be worsening. Everyone who spoke to AFP agreed that the key issue is a lack of water. "The herders are now coming earlier in the year and going back later. The established ways have broken down," said another district chief, Saleh Yacoub, who is head of the ENS col-



HADJER HADID, Chad: Hawkers gather to fill barrels with water in the wadis Moura in Hadjer Hadid, in the Ouaddai region, in eastern Chad. — AFP

lege of higher education in Abeche, near Adre, said the second cause was a population increase - "as much among people as among livestock". Herds are getting larger, straining the fragile ecological resources of the Ouaddai.

Ethnic friction

The rivalry has "become intertwined with ethnic problems", added Yacoub. "The herds all belong to the same people: colonels, generals, people in politics," explained a village elder sitting on his mat with a glass of tea. "We have had meetings, we write letters to the deputy prefect (district administrator), the prefect himself, but get nothing back," he protested. "The population has no power against them."

Many cattlemen are members of the Zaghawa ethnic group, who come from the northeast of the giant country. The Zaghawa include President Idriss Deby Itno, who came to power in 1990. Members of their ethnicity have entered every rank of the Chadian state, although Ouaddai's governor, Ramadan Erdebou, dismisses any suggestion that tribalism is to blame for the region's problems. "This ethnic question is a false debate. There are

Chadian women and Chadian men and one single unity, Chad," said Erdebou, who was formerly the chief of the regime's powerful intelligence services.

Disarmament

Erdebou's predecessor was sacked after an explosion of communal violence last October claimed eight lives. One of his first moves in office was to announce a massive disarmament campaign among the population. He also warned that a mission would be coming from the capital N'Djamena to chase away "those farmers who have cultivated crops along the corridors (set aside) for livestock movement." These designated corridors were established by law in 1959, to give nomads and their herds passage of up to one kilometer wide for their seasonal migrations. "But Zaghawa herders feel they can do what they like and don't respect them," said a farmer, who maintains he lost his entire peanut crop in 2016 when hundreds of dromedaries trampled his field. "How do you expect Ouaddians to agree to be disarmed when you see that the herdsman have more and more weapons?" asked a local official. — AFP

Rwanda 'a family again', 25 years after genocide

KIGALI: President Paul Kagame said yesterday that Rwandans had become a family again, 25 years after more than 800,000 people were slaughtered in a genocide that shocked the world. Kagame lit a remembrance flame at the Kigali Genocide Memorial, where more than 250,000 victims are believed to be buried, mainly from the minority Tutsi people, as the country began its annual 100 days of mourning that coincide with the length of the slaughter.

They are only some of those killed by the genocidal Hutu forces, members of the old army and militia forces called the "Interahamwe", that began their bloody campaign of death on April 7, 1994, the day after the assassination of President Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu. Some were shot; most were beaten or hacked by machetes. "In 1994, there was no hope, only darkness. Today, light radiates from this place ... How did it happen? Rwanda became a family once again," Kagame said.

"The arms of our people, intertwined, constitute the pillars of our nation. We hold each other up. Our bodies and minds bear amputations and scars, but none of us is

alone. Together, we have woven the tattered threads of our unity into a new tapestry," he said. Kagame was speaking at the Kigali Convention Centre, a dome-shaped auditorium in the centre of the capital, a modern building emblematic of the regeneration of Rwanda. "Our people have carried an immense weight with little or no complaint. This has made us better and more united than ever before," Kagame said.

"The fighting spirit is alive in us. What happened here will never happen again." The killings lasted until Kagame, then 36, led the mainly Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) into Kigali on July 4, ending the slaughter and taking control of the devastated country. Kagame, now 61 and who has been in power ever since, is leading the memorial to the dead. Kagame will later preside over a vigil at the country's main football ground, the Amahoro National Stadium - whose name means "peace" in Rwanda's Kinyarwanda language - was used by the UN during the genocide to protect thousands of Tutsis from being massacred on the streets outside.

Deep trauma

In past years, ceremonies have triggered painful flashbacks for some in the audience, with crying, shaking, screaming and fainting amid otherwise quiet vigils. For many survivors, forgiveness remains difficult when the bodies of their loved



KIGALI: (From left) African Union chief Moussa Faki, Rwanda's President Paul Kagame, his wife Jeannette (2nd right), and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker light a remembrance flame for the 25th Commemoration of the 1994 Genocide at the Kigali Genocide Memorial in Kigali yesterday. — AFP

ones have not been found and many killers are still free. A quarter of a century on, the east African nation has recovered economically, but the trauma still casts a dark shadow.

Kagame has kept an authoritarian hold as he steers the small, landlocked East African nation through economic recovery. Growth in 2018 was a heady 7.2 per cent, according to the African

Development Bank (AfDB). Some 10 leaders are expected to pay their respects, mostly from nations across the continent. Former colonial ruler Belgium is sending Prime Minister Charles Michel. French President Emmanuel Macron is not attending, but expressed his "solidarity with the Rwandan people and his compassion to the victims and their families" in a statement Sunday. — AFP

News in brief

Bombardment kills 13

BEIRUT: Bombardment killed 13 civilians in north-west Syria yesterday, the large majority in regime fire on areas of the jihadist-held Idlib region, a war monitor said. The violence was the latest to threaten a seven-month-old truce intended to stave off a regime offensive on the region held by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate. Yesterday's shelling and rocket fire by regime forces killed nine civilians in several areas of Idlib, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. They included five people in the town of Nayrab, three in Saraqeb, and one in the village of Al-Khuwayn, the Britain-based monitoring group said. The Observatory said bombardment by Islamist fighters on the regime-held town of Masyaf in the adjacent province of Hama killed four civilians. The rocket fire hit a hospital killing members of its staff, state news agency SANA said. — AFP

Attackers target Saudi checkpoint

DUBAI: Four attackers targeted a security checkpoint with guns and explosives in eastern Saudi Arabia as they tried to flee the country, leading to the death of two and the arrest of two others, Saudi-owned Al Arabiya television said yesterday. The broadcaster, citing its correspondent, said the incident occurred at Abu Hadriyah, a highway connecting the kingdom's Eastern Province with neighboring Bahrain and Kuwait. It reported two injuries among the security forces. The oil-producing province is a flashpoint between the government and the Shiite minority, which complains of discrimination and repression. Al Arabiya said three of the attackers were on a list of wanted suspects from Al-Qatif region, without providing more details. It said the operation took place away from built up areas. — Reuters

Gunmen hit Egypt police

CAIRO: Gunmen opened fire on a police vehicle in a Cairo suburb at dawn yesterday, killing a police officer and the driver and wounding two others, the interior ministry said. It was not immediately clear who was behind the latest attack on security forces in Egypt, which has been battling an Islamist insurgency since President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi came to power in 2014. Police were on a routine patrol in New Nozha, a suburb east of Cairo, when their minibus came under fire, the ministry said. Four unknown assailants armed with automatic rifles opened fire at the police vehicle, it said in a statement, before fleeing in a black car. Police captain Mohamed Ahmed Abdel Razek and the driver of the minibus were killed, the statement said, adding that two policemen who were riding with them were wounded in the attack. Security forces have deployed in the area to track down the perpetrators, the ministry said. — AFP

Pakistan diplomat summoned

KABUL: The Afghan government summoned a Pakistan diplomat to explain Prime Minister Imran Khan's latest remarks on ongoing Afghan peace talks, as tensions flared between the neighboring countries once again. Afghanistan's ministry of foreign affairs summoned the diplomat to object about remarks that it deemed "explicit interference" in Afghan affairs, the ministry's spokesman, Sibghatullah Ahmadi, said on Twitter. It marks the fourth time in about a month and a half that Kabul has demanded an explanation from Islamabad for comments related to peace talks aimed at ending 17 years of war in Afghanistan. In late March, Afghanistan recalled its ambassador from Islamabad for Khan's suggestion that forming an interim Afghan government might smooth peace talks between US and Taliban officials. The ambassador returned shortly after Pakistan clarified Khan's remarks as being reported out of context. — Reuters

International

Compromise? Time ticking down for Britain to come to Brexit agreement

Opposition Labor still waiting for changes to 'red lines'

LONDON: Britain's government held out the possibility of compromise yesterday with the opposition Labor Party to try to win support in parliament for leaving the European Union with a deal, just days before the latest Brexit date. Prime Minister Theresa May, weaker than ever after her Brexit deal was rejected by parliament three times, has been forced to turn to Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn after giving up on winning over eurosceptics in her Conservative Party, whose opposition has hardened. With Britain's departure now set for April 12, May's government is running out of time to get a deal through Britain's divided parliament, and must come up with a new plan to secure a new delay from EU leaders at a summit on Wednesday.

Britain's biggest shift in foreign and trade policy in more than 40 years is mired in uncertainty, with ministers saying Brexit may never happen, businesses worried the country could leave without a deal, and others just wanting to reverse it. In a last-ditch bid to get her deal through parliament, May opened talks with Corbyn last week to try to strike a deal on Britain's future ties with the EU in exchange for his support for her divorce deal, the Withdrawal Agreement. So far those talks have failed to yield any kind of accord, with Labor policy chiefs saying the government has yet to move from its "red lines", above all over a customs union, which sets tariffs for goods imported into the EU.

"Specifically provided we are leaving the European Union then it is important that we compromise, that's what this is about and it is through gritted teeth," said Andrew Leadsom, the Brexit-supporting leader of the House of Commons (lower house of parliament). "But nevertheless the most important thing is to actually leave the EU," she told the BBC's Andrew Marr show, adding that May's proposal for a customs arrangement after Brexit was not too far from Labour's desire for a customs union.

But, while describing the talks so far as positive, Labor's business policy chief Rebecca Long-Bailey said there had as yet been no "real changes" to the deal. "I think both sides are committed to working quite rigorously to compromise as much as possible so that we can provide that compromise Brexit deal that I think parliament desperately needs at the moment," she told the BBC. Shami Chakrabarti, Labor's legal policy chief, was more blunt. "It's hard to imagine that we are going to make real progress now without either a general election or a second referendum on any deal she can get over the line in parliament," she told Sky News.

Running out of time

Britain voted by 52 to 48 percent in 2016 to leave the EU, and parliament, May's cabinet and the country at large remain deeply polarized over the terms of Brexit and even whether to depart at all. Despite the lack of convergence between the two major parties over a deal, there was one thing they did agree on - time is running out for Brexit to be secured. May, who has been verbally mauled by members of her own party for turning to Labour, herself warned Brexit-supporting lawmakers that "the longer this takes, the greater the risk of the UK never leaving at all".

In an attempt to avoid falling out of the EU without a deal, she again heads to Brussels this week to ask for a further delay until June 30 - something EU leaders have said requires her setting out an alternative path to getting her deal approved. Any extension would require unanimous approval from the other EU countries, all wary of Britain's Brexit indecision, and could come with conditions. EU summit chair Donald Tusk plans to propose an extension of a year, which could be shortened if Britain's parliament eventually ratifies the deal.

But even the threat of losing Brexit has so far failed to



MAIDENHEAD: Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May (center) and her husband Philip (right) leave after attending a church service, near her Maidenhead constituency, west of London yesterday. — AFP

change the minds of hardline eurosceptic Conservative lawmakers, and some are now suggesting that Britain make the EU's life a misery if Britain is forced to accept a long delay. "If we are forced to remain in we must be the most difficult member possible," Jacob Rees-Mogg,

leader of the European Research Group, a Conservative eurosceptic group, told Sky News. "When the multi-annual financial framework comes forward, if we're still in, this is our one in seven year opportunity to veto the budget and to be really very difficult." — Reuters

Brexit axe looms for the British office-holders in France

RENNES: After Britain leaves the European Union some 900 Britons serving on local councils in France will also have to give up their seat at the table. Like all EU citizens living in another member country, Britons in France have the right to vote in local elections and stand for election to their local council. But in leaving the bloc Britain will forfeit that right, meaning that British residents will no longer be able to represent the communities some have served for years. Sandra Sheward and her husband moved to the western French region of Brittany 13 years ago. "Our children fled the nest and we decided to drop out of the rat race in London," said Sheward, 58, a former training specialist for a property services company.

The pair restored a farmhouse on the edge of Saint-Caradec, a riverside village of 1,200 people, where Sheward was courted by the mayor to join his slate of candidates for the municipal council in 2014. Being the only non-French councilor, and one who has yet to fully master the language, has not been an obstacle, says Sheward, a born organizer who developed the village's Christmas art market and helped set up a yoga class, among other activities. "She doesn't speak much during council meetings but when she does it's always very constructive," Mayor Alain Guillaume said.

In a region that draws large numbers of British tourists and where a number of Britons have second homes, it's also helpful to have a native English speaker to call on for translations and other assistance. But if Britain leaves the EU as expected, Sheward will be forced to bow out of politics at the next local elections in 2020. "French villages are like ghost towns so it has been nice to be on the council. You get to meet more people!" said Sheward, who has applied for residency in France. "I'd like to be re-elected but it depends on Brexit," she said, adding with a sigh: "I just wish they'd get on with it so that we too can get on with our lives."

'Mad Englishwoman with dogs'

According to official British statistics, France is home to a little over 157,000 British citizens, making it the biggest expatriate British community after that of Spain. Outside Paris, large numbers are to be found in Brittany and the southwestern Dordogne region. France has given them a year after Brexit to apply for residency but many have decided not to wait for divorce day to get their papers in, swamping local authorities. The government has attempted to fend off panic, with former European Affairs Minister Nathalie Loiseau assuring in March: "We want them to stay. They are an asset for France."

About 10 kilometers to the west of Sheward's village in Brittany, an Englishwoman is also a lynchpin of her community. Jacqueline Bertho, 60, from Yorkshire, ended up in France in 2000 after a divorce, and began a new life in "Kreiz Breizh" — Breton for the centre of Brittany, where she lives with her Breton husband and their daughter. In the village of Saint-Guen (population 450), which is "very rural, like 1960s Britain", the chatty 60-year-old is a well-known figure. "I'm the mad Englishwoman with the dogs," she jokes.

While still feeling "very much British", Bertho says she has thrown herself into community life, volunteering to teach English to local schoolkids, helping the elderly and, since 2014, becoming a member of the council. A year after her election, Bertho obtained French citizenship, meaning her place in France is assured. But she worries that other British couples who retired to the region, where they restored old houses and helped revive villages that were in their death throes, will struggle. "Most won't be able to become French," she said, citing their French language skills, which are put to a citizenship test, as a key hurdle. — AFP

For the parents of missing children, agony and hope

WASHINGTON: Hundreds of thousands of children are listed as missing in the US every year, the vast majority quickly turning up. But for parents whose children remain missing for months - or even years - the wait is almost unspeakably agonizing. So when an impostor appears, raising false hopes - as happened this week when a young man claimed to be Timothy Pitzen, who disappeared in 2011 at the age of six - the shock is particularly horrific. Still, these families are unanimous about one thing: you can never give up hope.

"Unfortunately, this child is not our beloved Timothy," his aunt Kara Jacobs said, once the truth became clear. "We know that you are out there somewhere, Tim, and we will never stop looking for you, praying for you and loving you." Like Jacobs, Patty Wetherling clung to hope for decades after her son was kidnapped in 1989 at the age of 11.

She said she was encouraged by the examples of Shawn Hornbeck, who was found in 2007 after four years in captivity; of Jaycee Dugard, who turned up in 2009, 18 years after her abduction; and of the three young girls freed in 2013 from kidnapper Ariel Castro after a dozen years in his hands. "They are living proof even in the worst of situations, when all leads are dry and it feels like all hope is lost, we must never, never give up looking for our missing children," she wrote in the foreword to a 2016 guide for police on how to handle missing child cases.

Thousands of runaways

A few months later, human remains turned up; they were identified as those of Wetherling's son. Despite that

Protests as Guaido declares 'definitive' escalation

CARACAS: Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido on Saturday launched what he promised will be a "definitive" escalation of pressure to force the country's embattled leftist leader from office. Addressing a giant anti-government rally in Caracas, Guaido - whose claim to be interim president is supported by around 50 nations - kicked off what he called "Operation Liberty," his plan to oust President Nicolas Maduro. "Everyone to the streets, let's start the final phase of the end of the usurpation!" he told supporters, speaking from the back of a pickup truck. He called for a huge nationwide turnout on Wednesday, and urged his followers to redouble their efforts to maintain pressure in the streets.

"The greatest escalation of pressure we have seen in our history" has begun, Guaido said. The call comes amid massive blackouts and the collapse of water supplies affecting the nation, further exacerbated a growing political crisis. The United States meanwhile has stiffened its economic sanctions against Maduro, and one top US official warned Venezuela's military that it must protect the rights of peaceful protesters. At the rally, Guaido also warned Cuba's President Miguel Diaz-Canel that the supply of subsidized Venezuelan oil to the Caribbean communist island nation was over.

Venezuela has been sending cheap oil to Cuba in exchange for labor from Cuban doctors and teachers, but Guaido said the oil was actually financing a Cuban intelli-

gence group known as G2 that was cracking down on Maduro opponents in the Venezuelan military. "The exploitation of Venezuelan oil is over, so Mr Diaz-Canel... Venezuelan oil will not be used to submit and investigate our military officials" through the G2, he told the crowd. Pro-Guaido protests drew thousands in rallies across the country on Saturday. A pro-Maduro counter-demonstration in Caracas, with supporters dressed in red, drew a large crowd that gathered at the Miraflores presidential palace.

"Together, permanently mobilized, let's keep defending national peace and independence: no more interference!" Maduro tweeted. Later, he called upon Mexico and Uruguay to relaunch their proposal for dialogue to resolve the crisis without foreign intervention. The two countries had first introduced that idea in January. Two opposition deputies were detained at an anti-government demo in the western city of Maracaibo, but a few hours later Guaido announced that the two had been released.

Elimar Diaz, a lawmaker who marched in Maracaibo, told AFP the protest there had encountered "brutal repression," including tear gas canisters dropped from helicopters, the use of National Guard armored vehicles and attacks by members of the pro-government militia, known as "colectivos." Diaz said people in Maracaibo had gone "days without electricity" amid "inhumane rationing" by the government. Maduro Saturday claimed that attacks on electricity infrastructure had been carried out from Chile and Colombia with the support of the US. The opposition blames a failure to maintain critical infrastructure for the blackouts, which have deprived millions of power.

Abrams an 'assassin'

Facing intense pressure at home and abroad, the Maduro government has sought to weaken Guaido. The government



WASHINGTON: File photo shows Timothy Pitzen (left) and an 'Age Progression' image of Pitzen at 13. Hundreds of thousands of children are listed as missing in the US every year, the vast majority quickly turning up. — AFP

been found after absences of more than 12 months, including 234 who had been missing for more than 10 years, according to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).

The great majority (59 percent) were runaways who returned home - many after experiencing terrible trauma during their time away. Nearly all the others were abducted by a family member. Less than one percent - 16 in total - had been kidnapped by a stranger. But when a child disappears, it is not always clear which group he or she falls into. The Washington Post recently recounted the story of the reunion between Cynthia Haag, a Baltimore resident, and her daughter Chrystal, who disappeared at the age of 14.

After an agonizing 20 years of uncertainty, Haag learned that her daughter had run away to escape the clutches of a neighbor who had been raping her for years.

Painful reunions

Convinced that her mother must have been turning a blind eye to the continued abuse, Chrystal decided to run away and reinvent herself, taking on a new name. Only when her son, 20 years old now, repeatedly asked Chrystal about her family did she finally decide to reconnect with her mother. Whatever the story, the return of a missing child does not immediately put an end to a family's torment. The parents may feel resentment that the child ran away, leading to so much anguish. Meanwhile, the children may feel that not enough was done to find them and there can be festering anger over past sexual abuse. Physical changes in the children can complicate things too and the NCMEC says reunions can be painful. But years after her liberation, Elizabeth Smart said she would never forget the moment she again set eyes on her father. In 2002, at the age of 14, she had been abducted from her bedroom by a man who held her captive and repeatedly raped her for nine months. "I would never forget thinking that whatever lay in front of me, it was going to be okay." It was the "best feeling in the world," she said, "knowing that someone loves you." — AFP



CARACAS: Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro waves at supporters during a rally at the Miraflores Palace in Caracas, Venezuela on April 6, 2019. — AFP

has stripped his parliamentary immunity, authorized his prosecution for proclaiming himself acting president, and banned him from holding public office for 15 years. Guaido said earlier this week he feared that he could be abducted by government agents. Speaking to the pro-government Constitutional Assembly, Maduro's top lieutenant Diosdado Cabello slammed the US point man on Venezuela, Elliott Abrams, as an "assassin." "It is Abrams who should be in prison, condemned in the United States for genocide in Central America," said Cabello, referring to the US official's controversial role in the Central American conflicts of the 1980s.

Washington meanwhile kept up the international pressure on Maduro to step down. Vice President Mike Pence on Friday announced fresh sanctions against 34 ves-

sels belonging to Venezuela's state oil company and two companies that ship crude to Cuba. "This is only a first step," US national security advisor John Bolton tweeted on Saturday in reference to the sanctions. He cautioned the Venezuelan defense minister in a separate tweet of the official's "constitutional responsibility to protect innocent civilians who are peacefully demonstrating," adding: "Do not let the Cubans or the 'colectivos' inflict violence against Venezuelan patriots." Maduro is supported by the Venezuelan military, China and Russia. Washington and its allies view the socialist president as illegitimate since he took office in January for a second term following elections widely seen as deeply flawed. Washington has convened a UN Security Council meeting for Wednesday to discuss the Venezuelan crisis. — AFP

International

Roads, boats and elephants: Voters gear up for India's general election

India general election - world's largest democratic exercise

NEW DELHI: India will hold a general election starting April 11 in the world's largest democratic exercise, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking a second straight term. The election will be conducted in seven phases until May 19 and votes will be counted on May 23. Here are some facts and figures of the election in the country of 1.3 billion people.

Millions of voters

Around 900 million people are eligible to vote, which is nearly the combined population of the whole of Europe and Brazil. About 432 million of them are women voters. In the last Indian election in 2014, there were more than 830 million registered voters. But only about 553 million Indians, or 66 percent of the eligible voters then, came out to vote. There were 8,251 candidates from 464 political parties. The process is conducted by the Election Commission of India (ECI), an autonomous constitutional authority, with a staff of more than 300 full-time officials at its headquarters in New Delhi.

The fight is for 543 of the 545 seats in India's lower house of parliament, the Lok Sabha. The remaining two seats are reserved for the Anglo-Indian community, which traces part of its ancestry to Europeans who intermarried with Indians in the colonial era. These members are nominated by India's president. On average, each constituency had 15 candidates during the 2014 election, according to ECI data, with the highest number of hopefuls for one seat recorded at 42. Of the 8,251 contestants in the last election, only 668 were women. Modi had the highest winning margin of all

candidates, at 570,128 votes from Vadodara in his home state of Gujarat.

By road, boat and elephant

The ECI has set up about 1 million polling stations in the country, 10 percent higher than the last election. ECI guidelines say no voter should be more than 2 km away from a polling station. For such a mammoth exercise, nearly 5 million government officials and security forces were deployed in the last election, travelling by foot, road, special train, helicopter, boat, and sometimes, elephant. These locations are often in remote areas with few facilities. More than 80,000 stations surveyed by the ECI lacked mobile connectivity, and nearly 20,000 were located in forest or semi-forest areas, according to data released last year.

In the 2009 general election, the ECI set up a polling station in the Gir forest of western Gujarat state, home to Asiatic lions, just for one voter. The voting takes place in multiple phases, typically taking more than a month to allow officials and security forces to re-deploy, and the counting for all 543 constituencies is done in a single day. The cost of the entire process in 2014 was 38.7 billion rupees (\$552 million), according to ECI estimates.

Controversy

Although admired for its ability to conduct the polls with few hitches, the ECI came under pressure from opposition parties in recent months for the use of electronic voting machines (EVMs). In 2014, 1.8 million of these were used to conduct the elections. Opposition



SRINAGAR: Indian security forces are transported in a convoy on a closed highway on the outskirts of Srinagar yesterday. Civilian traffic has been banned on the Srinagar-Jammu highway on Sundays and Wednesdays to allow the passage of convoys of Indian security forces. —AFP

groups allege that EVMs - which were first introduced in 1982 - can be tampered with, and want the ECI to extensively use the Voter-Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) system to cross-check votes. VVPAT is a device that is

attached to an EVM and prints a small slip of paper carrying the symbol, name and serial number of the candidate voted for. This is visible to the voter for a short period, and can be later used by the ECI to verify the votes. —Reuters

Singapore's 'fake news' laws upset tech giants

SINGAPORE: Tech giants have reacted with horror after Singapore proposed laws against "fake news" allowing authorities to order the removal of content and impose hefty fines, in what critics say is an assault on free speech. The government unveiled a bill last week containing tough measures, including powers for ministers to order social media sites like Facebook to put warnings next to posts authorities believe to be false and in extreme cases take them down.

If an action is deemed malicious and damaging to Singapore's interests, companies could be hit with fines of up to Sg\$1 million (\$740,000). Individuals could face jail terms of up to 10 years. Authorities in the tightly-controlled country - long criticized for restricting civil liberties - insist the measures are necessary to stop the circulation of falsehoods which could sow divisions in the multi-ethnic city-state. But press freedom groups condemned the proposals, saying they could stifle online discussion, as did tech companies which have big investments in the ultra-modern city.

"As the most far-reaching legislation of its kind to date, this level of overreach poses significant risks to freedom of expression and speech," said the Asia Internet Coalition, an industry association whose members include Facebook, Google and Twitter. Simon Milner, Facebook's vice president of public policy in Asia-Pacific, said the social media giant was concerned about potentially being compelled to remove content. "Giving people a place to express themselves freely and safely is important to us and we have a responsibility to handle any government request to remove alleged misinformation carefully and thought-



SINGAPORE: Photo shows the national flag flying on the roof of the Parliament House in Singapore. Singapore proposed tough new measures to combat 'fake news' including a maximum 10-year jail term, saying they were necessary to protect national security but sparking concerns of new curbs on free speech. — AFP

fully," he said in a statement.

The internet is a relatively free space in Singapore and there are some local alternative news sites, which are typically more critical of the authorities than the traditional, pro-government newspapers and TV. Singapore is among several countries pushing legislation to fight fake news, and the government stressed ordering "corrections" to be placed alongside falsehoods would be the primary response, rather than jail or fines. A government decision can also be appealed to the courts.

'Courts will decide'

K Shanmugam, law and home affairs minister, said in a Facebook post that "the proposed law targets false statements of fact - not opinions, not criticisms. 'Ultimately, disagreement over truth and falsity will be

decided by the courts". Google, Facebook and Twitter have their Asia headquarters in Singapore, a city of 5.6 million which is popular with expats as it is developed, safe and efficient.

But there were already signs of tensions with tech companies as the government prepared to unveil the laws. During parliamentary hearings last year about tackling online falsehoods, Google and Facebook urged the government not to introduce new laws. In November, Facebook refused a request to remove an article linking Singapore to a financial scandal in Malaysia which the government said was untrue - prompting the law ministry to say the firm "cannot be relied upon to filter falsehoods". Critics say one of the most worrying aspects of the new legislation is that it is up to authorities to decide what is false and what is not. — AFP

Opposition enlists star power as India vote approaches

NEW DELHI: India's opposition Congress party unveiled a slick Bollywood-inspired theme song yesterday, bringing celebrity muscle to its campaign as polling showed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity soaring ahead of the start of voting next week. Congress launched the track by superstar Bollywood composer Javed Akhtar as it announced its party slogan, "Justice for All", putting the final touches to its campaign before the biggest election in history gets underway.

There are 900 million Indians eligible to vote in the poll, which starts Thursday and lasts nearly six weeks, with results to be announced on May 23. Modi and his main rival, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, have been criss-crossing the country speaking at huge campaign rallies since the poll was announced in early March. The Congress theme song reinforces the opposition's campaign message that Modi has mismanaged the economy for struggling farmers, unemployed youth and ordinary families.

"We advise Narendra Modi not to doubt the intelligence of the people of this country," Congress spokesperson Anand Sharma told reporters in New

Delhi yesterday. "They remember what you promised in 2014. He should speak about the real issues." But Congress - which ruled India for much of its modern history but was routed in the last election - faces a formidable opponent in Modi, who has confidently told supporters he will return with another thumping victory.

Polling released in recent days suggests the Hindu nationalist leader is even more popular now than 2014, when his Bharatiya Janata Party won an outright majority, the first in India in decades. A pre-election survey by the New Delhi-based Centre for the Study of Developing Societies found 43 percent of respondents wanted Modi to return as prime minister. Only 24 percent wanted Gandhi as leader, found the poll of 10,010 respondents conducted in the last week of March and published Friday.

Researchers found that Modi had surged on the back of three policies: job quotas for poorer Indians, cash handouts to farmers and bombing Pakistan after a suicide attack in Kashmir. India launched the first air strikes inside Pakistan in decades after at least 40 troops were killed in a militant attack. New Delhi blamed Islamabad for backing the militants behind the attack, a claim Pakistan denies. The survey also found far fewer voters had heard about Gandhi's promise to pay a minimum guaranteed income to India's poorest citizens. Congress has also not found traction over its allegation that Modi corruptly arranged a fighter jet deal to benefit a billionaire friend, the poll showed. — AFP

Mixing 'fake news,' outrage, far-right provocateur riles France

PARIS: Armed with his computer and a video camera, former French politician Mike Borowski has emerged as a test case for social media companies under pressure to crack down on "fake news" ahead of next month's European Parliament vote. The fresh-faced Franco-Polish founder of the website "La Gauche m'a Tuer" (The Left Killed Me) is one of the most prominent purveyors of far-right fundamentalism in France.

His reports and videos are often laced with dubious claims against his rivals, and they often prompt audience engagement levels that mainstream media outlets would dream of. As a result Borowski is well known to news fact-checking teams, including AFP Fact-Check, which expect to be kept busy as European Parliament elections approach for May 23-26. Hardly a week goes by without social media users reporting a false claim in one of Borowski's postings or video harangues against favorite targets, not least French President Emmanuel Macron.

But asked if he's deliberately spreading misinformation, Borowski suggests that he sees himself as an editorial writer, and that objectivity isn't the point. "It's partisan journalism. You say it's false, we say it's true, and each side defends its stance," he told AFP. His site has been caught in the

crosshairs of Facebook, which many governments and rights activists accuse of failing to do enough to curb malicious meddling in high-stakes elections. Borowski said "Facebook sabotaged my page" last year by limiting his site's visibility in users' news feeds - a policy in which AFP participates via a fact-checking agreement with the social networking giant.

'Even more virulent'

In response, Borowski filed a lawsuit against Facebook for shutting down his page for several weeks early last year - a case he says has convinced the company to think twice before moving against him. "Sometimes all you have to do is bare your teeth," he said, claiming he could now be "even more virulent" because there was "no more censorship."

Last year Borowski also paid Facebook nearly 1,000 euros (\$1,120) last year to render his latest YouTube videos more visible, according to invoices seen by AFP. Yet he admits the US social media giant has nonetheless pulled down about a dozen postings for "violating its standards," and he estimates that fact-checkers have deemed 150 to 200 of his articles to be "false". Facebook, which normally prohibits users with questionable records from accessing its "monetization" services, said it would not comment on individual cases.

Borowski began his political career in the rightwing UMP party of ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy, when young recruits created the "La Gauche m'a Tuer" website to attack leftwing rivals ahead of the 2012 presidential vote. The site shot to popularity after Borowski took over management alone a few years later, with many articles reaching far bigger social media audiences than those of traditional stalwarts like the Liberation daily, Le Point magazine or Europe 1 radio. — AFP

Workers doing India's dirtiest job say Modi has failed them

MUMBAI: Five sanitation workers, all from the lowest rung of India's caste system, were chosen in late February to meet a very important guest: Prime Minister Narendra Modi. As cameras flashed, Modi proceeded to wash the feet of the workers, one by one, using water and his hands, a gesture intended to honour staff who clean toilets at the Kumbh Mela, a massive religious gathering in north India.

But sanitation workers, scores of whom die each year from asphyxiation while removing waste from underground drains, have had enough, said Bezwada Wilson, the head of the Safai Karmachari Andolan (SKA), or Sanitation Workers' Movement. Ahead of general elections that begin on Thursday, the workers are reminding Modi of his promise to eradicate by this year the practice of manual scavenging - the cleaning, carrying or disposing of human excreta from dry latrines and sewers. "(Modi) has done nothing for us in the past five years," Wilson said.

India has laws banning the hiring of manual scavengers, but they have not been properly enforced, mostly due to difficulty collecting evidence and apathy by successive governments. Workers picking up human waste with



AMRITSAR: Indian workers polish marble near the Jallianwala Bagh Martyrs' Memorial ahead of the 100th anniversary of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar yesterday. — AFP

bare hands is a common sight at railway stations. While government estimates peg the number of manual scavengers at anywhere between 14,000 and 31,000, the SKA says the figure is closer to 770,000, with nearly 1,800 sewer cleaners asphyxiating to death in the last decade.

The community has little political power and Modi remains the front-runner to win the election, but critics point to their condition as another example of lofty promises undone and the empty symbolism of washing their feet. Wilson has launched a hashtag #StopKillingUs on Twitter and demanded

government help workers find jobs that give them dignity. Most sanitation workers find it difficult to get other work because of caste-based barriers, while many operate without formal contracts and are unaware of the terms of their employment, a study by U.S.-based advisory firm Dalberg shows.

The workers whose feet Modi washed in February are not satisfied with their jobs and want an end to manual scavenging, they told the Indian Express newspaper last month. One said he was grateful for the honor, calling Modi a great man. But, he added: "There is no difference in our lives. — Reuters

Analysis

Kuwait Times
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The First Daily in The Arabian GulfTHE LEADING INDEPENDENT
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suspicions mount
in Thai election

Thailand's first general election since a 2014 army coup has been touted by the ruling military junta as a return to democratic rule, but two weeks after the vote, results are still unclear and allegations of manipulation are mounting. Since the March 24 vote, figures linked to a "democratic front" of opposition parties say they have come under increasing pressure from police and the military. The Election Commission has also indicated it would use a complex allocation formula for 150 "party seats" in the House of Representatives in a way that would likely dilute the opposition alliance's seats in the 500-seat lower house.

The Election Commission has said it won't announce even provisional winners of the 150 party seats until May 9, saying it needs time to order by-elections and vote recounts as well as to disqualify candidates who broke election laws. But critics say the time gap allows the military-royalist establishment to manipulate results and disqualify opponents of the pro-army Palang Pracharath party that seeks to keep junta leader Prayuth Chan-ocha in power as an elected prime minister.

The leading opposition Pheu Thai party, made up of loyalists to army-ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, sees the delays and legal actions as an attempt to deny the "democratic front" enough seats in the House needed to block the main junta-linked party from unrestrained lawmaking power. "After the election ... the majority of the people feels a sense of hopelessness and distrust for the election process," said Pheu Thai's secretary-general, Phumtham Wechayachai. "People are talking about the Election Commission's part in supporting the extension of power by the National Council for Peace and Order," he said, using the junta's formal name.

The Election Commission's secretary-general, Jarongwit Phumma, told Reuters the body is not helping the pro-military party. "The election commission is neutral and adheres to the law. We don't take sides or help one particular party," Jarongwit said. Palang Pracharath said it does not gain any advantages over opposition parties. "It's completely false to say that the election commission is helping Palang Pracharath. This is an attempt to discredit us," the party's deputy spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana told Reuters.

Sedition charge

However, opposition figures say they are being targeted. Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, the leader of the youth-oriented Future Forward Party which did surprisingly well in the vote, was charged on Saturday with sedition on a junta complaint dating back to 2015 - a case that could see his party disbanded. Online campaigns have also cast Thanathorn as anti-monarchy, a serious crime in Thailand, where the monarchy is revered without question. Thanathorn denies being against the monarchy and all charges against him. "It's the establishment's desire to stir hatred, fear, and mistrust among the people, creating legitimacy for the military to take over and stay on," Thanathorn said last week. Winthai Suvaree, a spokesman for the junta, said the charges against Thanathorn were not aimed at weakening the opposition and were "entirely unrelated to current political events".

'Abnormal election'

The rules of the election were written in the 2017 junta-backed constitution, which critics said were aimed at ensuring military influence in Thai politics. Among the new provisions is that the Senate, the 250-seat upper house of parliament appointed by the junta, must approve the prime minister in a combined vote with the House, which previously solely voted on the premier. That means the junta-backed party and its allies have to gain only 126 seats in the House to install Prayuth as prime minister, while the opposition would need 376 votes for their potential candidate.

Still, days after the March 24 vote, the "democratic front" claimed through its own calculations that it would gain at least 255 House seats - not enough to form a government but potentially allowing it to block the military-backed party from having free rein. Last week, however, the election commission indicated the complex formula to calculate allocation of the 150 "party list" seats will round up decimals to give seats to 11 small parties although their popular votes did not meet a previously described threshold required to earn even one seat. "This is an irregularity that reflects an effort to block the democratic front from forming the next government," said Pheu Thai's spokeswoman Ladawan Wongsriwong. Widening the list would cut seats from top popular vote getters and could reduce seats for Future Forward from around 87 to 80, potentially hurting the democratic front's claim of House majority. "It's an abnormal election from the outset. It's a game where the junta wrote the rules and appointed the referee, who is also acting abnormally," said Yingcheep Atchanont, project manager at legal-monitoring group iLaw. — Reuters

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A man shows a two-sheet edition of Cuban official newspaper Granma on his bicitaxi in Havana on April 5, 2019. — AFP

Cuba newsprint shortage sounds alarm

The newsprint shortages which forced Cuba's Communist daily to run a trimmed-down edition on Friday would pass off as a simple supply glitch in most other countries, but in Havana they carry chilling memories of the not-so-distant past. The last time the government cut back on newspapers because of a lack of newsprint was in the early 1990s, when Fidel Castro ushered in a "Special Period" of drastic belt-tightening in the wake of the collapse of his main sponsor, the Soviet Union.

Today, the Caribbean state is facing difficulties once again, with US President Donald Trump - who has lashed out at Cuba for its support of Venezuela's socialist regime - determined to tighten Washington's six-decade trade embargo. Meager growth of 1.2 percent is not enough to cover the needs of an island nation that imports 80 percent of what it eats. Amid shortages, the government is being forced to ration basics like flour, cooking oil and chicken, leading to long lines outside stores.

Tania, a 49-year-old nurse, has come to buy rice at a Havana grocery store but she's going away empty-handed. "It's like that with everything. Sometimes you look for a product and you can find it in one place, then you go somewhere else and you can't get it," she said, summing up the average Cuban's daily struggle to fill their shopping basket. "What's happening now doesn't look like the Special Period, because at that time it was really a disaster," she said.

'Special Period'

Suddenly deprived of its big brother in Moscow - responsible for 85 percent of Havana's foreign trade - the economy on the Caribbean archipelago ground to a standstill as it struggled to absorb the shock of Soviet collapse in the early 1990s. Cubans suffered shortages of food and fuel and the emergence of diseases linked to malnutrition. Thousands fled, if they could. For long since, the country has relied on medical and teaching services supplied to countries like Brazil and, in particular, Venezuela, in return for cheap oil imports. But trade with Caracas has plummeted as sanctions-struck Venezuela's economic crisis deepens.

Tourism has been a bright spot but that has suffered after hurricane damage and a new US sanctions squeeze. "For three years, Cuba has been trying to offset the impact of the slump in trade with Venezuela and the rise in tourism, private activity and foreign investment projects have helped cushion the economic shock," said Pavel Vidal, a Cuban economist at the Javeriana University in Colombia. "But the measures and threats of the Trump administration are posing obstacles to these three factors that have helped keep the economy afloat."

Cuba recently defaulted on a portion of its debt to Brazil, a big supplier of poultry. At the end of 2018, Havana had accumulated short-term debt of \$1.5 billion, according to former economy minister Jose Luis Rodriguez. "There is a level of debt that we will not be

able to pay (in 2019) and that's affecting the smooth running of the economy," the current portfolio-holder Alejandro Gil said.

In Havana, 90-year-old Leandro Lopez has seen it all before and isn't overly concerned, expressing confidence in President Miguel Diaz-Canel - elected in 2018, the first of a new breed of leaders born after the revolution. "Diaz-Canel is trying to strengthen the economy so where he can reduce costs, we reduce them, so much the better. I do not think it will hurt the news."

Paper cuts

The cuts, announced on Thursday, saw Friday's edition of the mouthpiece Granma daily slashed from 16 pages to a pamphlet-thin eight. The measure will mean drastically shortened editions twice a week and also affect other publications. "Yes, there are shortages, long lines, especially for chicken, soap, these kinds of things," said Nelson Flores, turning away from a long line of shoppers waiting to buy poultry.

So far, the crisis has spared the sacrosanct "libreta" - the ration book which entitles Cubans to buy basics like rice, beans and bread at subsidized prices, though in insufficient quantities to last a month. Worryingly, the tourist industry is beginning to feel the pinch. A hotel manager in one of the outlying island beach paradises told AFP that tourists on all-inclusive holiday packages were unhappy about a lack of eggs, fruit and bread. — AFP

Bolsonaro
struggles in first
100 days as
Brazil leader

Jair Bolsonaro

Since taking power on a pledge to trash corrupt "old politics," Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's first months have been marred by chaos and blunders that have eroded support for the far-right leader and put the brakes on his reforms. The brash ex-army captain - nicknamed the "Trump of the tropics" for his admiration of the US president - is struggling to make good on his key election promises to kick-start Latin America's biggest economy and stamp out corruption.

As Bolsonaro prepares to mark the symbolic milestone of 100 days in office on Wednesday, analysts say the euphoria of his October victory that ended decades of center-left rule is evaporating. "It wouldn't be an understatement to say that the president's performance to date has been disappointing," said Thomaz Favaro of the political risk consultancy Control Risks. "There was a misperception that he was coming in with a very strong support base and I think we're now beginning to see that maybe that support wasn't strong."

Condemned by opponents as racist, sexist and homophobic before the ballot, Bolsonaro's message of toughness and an end to business-as-usual politics resonated with voters fed up with violence and industrial-scale graft. But Bolsonaro, who was better known for making insults rather than policy during his decades as a congressman, is finding that his uncompromising style and penchant for Twitter are not working in Congress where he lacks a ruling-party majority to push through legislation.

His signature policy to overhaul Brazil's unsustainable pension system, which he has warned would bankrupt the country if changes are not adopted, has stalled following a spat with key political allies and raised doubts about his ability to do the job. "Over the last few weeks we've really seen the side people feared about Bolsonaro," said William Jackson, an economist at London-based Capital Economics. "His lack of governing experience, showing up in deteriorating relations with Congress, and his struggles to keep his coalition

together seem to have led to a paralysis in policymaking." Bolsonaro appears to have adopted a more conciliatory tone in recent days, holding meetings with the leaders of several parties. He may have finally accepted the "give and take" of Brazilian politics, said David Fleischer, a political science professor at the University of Brasilia. "It's a make or break," Fleischer warned. If the pension reform bill fails then Bolsonaro "doesn't get any tax reform, which is another important thing on the table, and his government will just drift along until 2022."

Walking a tightrope

Bolsonaro has scored some wins since his Jan 1 inauguration, including the relaxation of gun ownership laws and the sale of concessions to 12 airports, which was seen as test of foreign-investor confidence in his ability to privatize state-owned companies. But more contentious policies are going to be tough to push through the lower house of Congress where Bolsonaro's ultraconservative Social Liberal Party only holds around 10 percent of the 513 seats. That means he is relying on ad-hoc alliances with lawmakers in various parties who are part of his evangelical, pro-agribusiness, pro-gun base.

Further complicating Bolsonaro's task is the chaos within his own government, where competing factions, including the military, right-wing ideologues and his own sons - are jostling for influence over policy. "It's a tightrope he will be constantly trying to tread," said Favaro. "Bolsonaro's strategy depends on his political capital to create a viable coalition in Congress and that's tricky because we're now seeing the president's approval rating decline."

Bolsonaro's approval rating plunged to 51 percent in March from 67 percent in January - the worst reading recorded by a first-term president in the three months after taking power. A series of missteps and blunders have further undermined Bolsonaro's credibility and exposed his government's inexperience. — AFP

Elections over,
Erdogan eyes
economic reforms

Soon after his ruling party faced defeat in Ankara and Istanbul in last Sunday's election, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was quick to promise reforms to revive the country's weakened economy. Stung by high living costs and a 2018 currency crisis, voters handed the AKP one of the party's worst setbacks after a decade and a half in power. Now with no elections until 2023, Erdogan has room to focus on the economy, but analysts say he must convince investors already wary over his sometimes unorthodox policies, and worried about fallout from tensions with the United States.

Turkey's lira can be volatile, but analysts said Erdogan's government must balance any gains from short-term stopgaps with the need for deeper reforms for more long-term stability. Finance Minister Berat Albayrak, also Erdogan's son-in-law, has said Turkey will enter "an economic rebalancing period" after the elections and he is set to reveal reform details next week. Albayrak is due to meet IMF and World Bank officials in Washington April 12-14 to "shed light on the new road map" for Turkey's economy, according to the Daily Sabah newspaper.

"As concerns about the struggling economy motivated many voters' decisions at the ballot box, Erdogan will be compelled to address its underlying problems," said Amanda Sloot at the Brookings Institute. "However, he has limited room for maneuver." The AKP built its success on Turkey's strong growth and his supporters point to progress in living standards during Erdogan's 16 years in office. But on Sunday, the AKP was punished in part because Turkish households were stung last year by a 30 percent slide in the lira during a diplomatic crisis with the US.

Once the darling of emerging market investors, economists say Turkey has lost some of its appeal as problems emerged with growth driven by foreign credit. Turkey has slipped into recession for the first time in a decade, inflation is in double digits and economists are watching how Turkish officials will manage its recovery. "On paper and in public speeches, the economic leadership... seems to agree reform is needed. In practice, the government's

recent record is poor," said Maya Senussi, senior economist at Oxford Economics. "The authorities have to not only admit that mistakes were made over the past year, but also signal a readiness to sacrifice growth in the short term to increase the chances of long term prosperity - a decision the AKP has so far been unwilling to make."

No pain, No gain?

Turkish officials have in the past talked up broad reforms, including a tax overhaul and measures to strengthen growth. But a major worry, analysts say, is foreign debt exposure for Turkish companies, which face more costly repayments for foreign lending because of the weaker lira. "We see this period as an opportunity to make permanent solutions for our structural problems," Rifat Hilarcioglu, head of Turkey's Chambers and Commodity Exchanges Union, told a meeting of business leaders on Friday. Anadolu state news agency said.

After a 2017 vote granting him broader powers as president, Erdogan is in a position to deliver reforms. But Sunday's election highlighted investor worries over how Turkey can turn to short-term fiscal expediency if required. Before Sunday's vote, the lira fell almost 6 percent in one day after investors worried the government tapped foreign reserves to prop up the currency in the lead up to the ballot. And measures to halt lira short-selling afterwards did not help investor confidence.

Moody's rating agency warned lira intervention raised doubts about central bank independence and Turkey's broader policy. "Renewed turmoil in the Turkish financial markets and heightened uncertainty regarding the policy reaction to the ongoing recession raise the risk of further capital flight," it said.

US tensions

Turkish officials defend the central bank's independence, but Erdogan has demanded it lower interest rates, which he blames for high inflation. That worries investors who see political pressure on bank policymaking. The Turkish leader has also lashed out at foreign investment banks, and blamed recent currency fluctuations on part of a US-led attempt to "corner" Turkey financially. Finance Minister "Albayrak has to come up with a program to convince markets and importantly locals that the current management team know what they are doing, rebuilding credibility in the process," said Timothy Ash, a senior sovereign strategist at BlueBay Asset Management. — AFP

Business

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13 Brexit drags on while trade war delivers vague progress**13** Under Donald Trump, Fed faces politicization**14** Huawei excites the crowds with the P30 Series pre-booking event

BEIJING: Commuters cross a road opposite a shopping mall in Beijing. Top EU leaders meet Chinese Premier Li Keqiang this week at a summit in Brussels. — AFP

No breakthrough likely in EU-China summit

Brussels beefing up its approach to Asian giant

BRUSSELS: Brussels is trying to beef up its approach to the Asian giant as it shows little willingness to listen to longstanding complaints about industrial subsidies and access to its markets, and as fears grow about growing Chinese involvement in European infrastructure. But the half-day summit tomorrow is on course to fizzle out with little to show in terms of agreements, with European sources saying it looks highly unlikely a final joint statement will be agreed.

EU officials say China is unwilling to give binding commitments on their key demands, including the inclusion of industrial subsidies as part of World Trade Organization reform, and they are reluctant to agree the kind of anodyne declaration of good intentions pushed out after last year's summit in Beijing. The European Commission last month issued a 10-point plan proposing a more assertive relationship with Beijing, labelling China a "systemic rival"—a move wel-

comed by French President Emmanuel Macron as a belated awakening.

But while the EU's 15 trillion euro market gives it significant economic clout, it struggles to maintain unity among its 28 members on issues of foreign policy, allowing China to pursue one-on-one deals with individual countries. "When economic policy intersects with foreign policy and security, the EU lacks the will and capacity to act strategically," Philippe Legrain, visiting senior fellow at the London School of Economics' European Institute, wrote in an analysis for Project Syndicate magazine.

"Apart from France and the UK, which is leaving the EU, member governments lack a geopolitical mindset."

This most striking recent example came last month when Italy became the first G7 nation to sign up to China's "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI), a massive network of transport and trade links stretching from Asia

to Europe. Concerns have been raised about the way the BRI saddles countries with Chinese debt and leaves key infrastructure nodes owned by a potential strategic rival, though Beijing insists the initiative is a "win-win" arrangement.

Former Greek finance minister and scourge of the EU, Yanis Varoufakis, said Europe only had itself to blame if Mediterranean countries turned to China.

"We created a vacuum and the Chinese are filling it. The Chinese are coming in because there is a dearth of investment in this continent... We are failing to generate investment that would give our business the opportunity to compete with them," he said in Brussels last week.

'The summit has already taken place'

Macron's own China initiative last week—hosting President Xi Jinping for a summit with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and European Commission

President Jean-Claude Juncker—may also have been a double-edged sword for the EU.

The meeting in Paris gave the EU—through its two most powerful members—the chance to press its concerns directly with the paramount Chinese leader.

But analysts say it also seriously undercut this week's summit in Brussels, where Li will hold talks not with heads of government but with Juncker and EU Council President Donald Tusk.

"The China summit has already taken place. It is not Europe for China without France and Germany in the same room," Hosuk Lee-Makiyama, director of the ECIPE Brussels think-tank, told AFP.

"Xi has already spoken. Xi has already shaken hands with his counterparts so by default the summit has already taken place. In a sense, they only bring out Li for Europe or when something bad is going to happen and somebody needs to take the blame." — AFP

Did India's Modi fulfill his economic promises?

MUMBAI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi swept to power five years ago on a business-friendly manifesto that promised to shake up Asia's third-largest economy and boost employment.

As Modi, 68, seeks a second term in India's almost six-week mega-election beginning on Thursday, AFP looks at how he has delivered on his main economic pledges.

Lost jobs

Young people voted for Modi in droves in 2014 after he said he would create 10 million jobs a year. Many, however, have been left disappointed—and jobless. A newspaper recently published what it called an official report buried by Modi's government showing unemployment at its highest since the 1970s.

Last year a staggering 19 million people applied for 63,000 positions at Indian Railways. The opposition has used unemployment as one of its main lines of attack in the campaign, with Congress chief Rahul Gandhi attacking Modi for creating a "national disaster". Analysts say that the economy has failed to expand at the rate required to employ the one million Indians who enter the workforce every month.

Corruption crackdown

In 2014, Modi projected himself as an anti-corruption crusader who would eradicate graft and so-called "black money". While Modi has been widely credited with ending a culture of crony capitalism throughout government his overall record on corruption is mixed.

He has been lauded for toughening anti-corruption laws, including one outlawing "benami" property, where owners purchase real estate through third parties to hide money. India has risen three places to 78th in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index under his watch, five places behind South Africa but nine ahead of China.

However, Modi's first term will perhaps most be remembered for a shock cash ban that rendered 86 percent of the high-currency bank notes void overnight and hit growth. Modi said "demonetisation" would root out illegal money but almost all notes returned to the banking system, while the move caused untold suffering to millions of poor who operate outside of India's formal economy.

'Make in India?'

Modi promised to boost foreign investment by making it easier for companies abroad to do business in India. To a large extent he has succeeded. The government has relaxed stringent foreign direct investment rules in many sectors including in infrastructure, aviation and single-brand retail.

Foreign capital inflows into India have increased as a result. FDI in India rose to nearly \$62 billion for 2017-18 and the gov-

ernment hopes it can register \$100 billion annually within two years. One of the most high-profile investments was US retail giant Walmart's purchase of a 77-percent stake in Indian e-commerce behemoth Flipkart last year for \$16 billion.

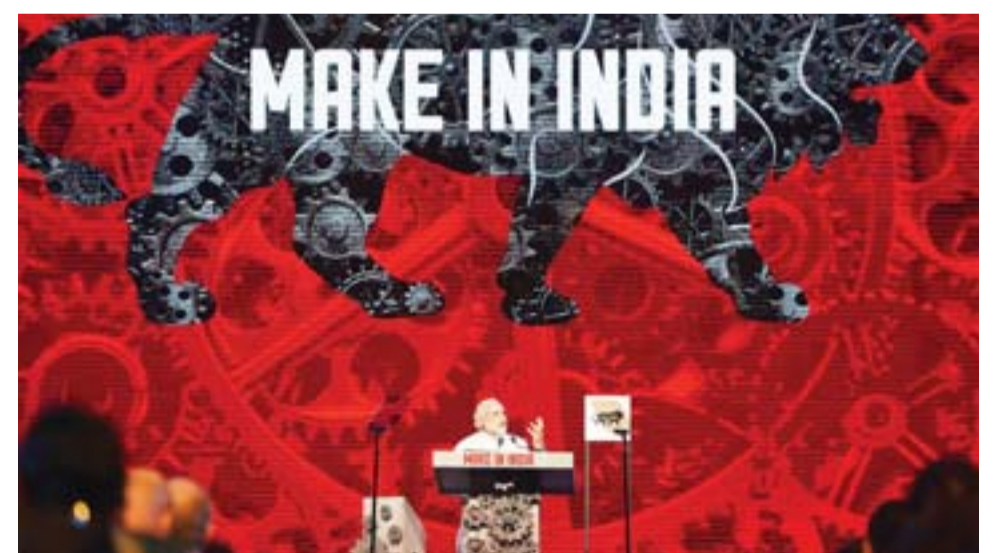
Investors have expressed concern about recent protectionist measures in e-commerce though. The government announced surprise restrictions in December that would limit how companies like Amazon and Walmart could operate. Analysts are in general agreement that Modi's much-trumpeted "Make in India" initiative failed to turn the Asian giant into a manufacturing hub, despite an advertising blitzkrieg.

Taxing

Modi delivered on one promise that previous governments had said they would achieve but never did—pushing through a single national goods and services tax (GST) designed to make conducting business in India easier. The tax, which came into effect on 1 July 2017, was designed to replace more than a dozen state and national levies and transform India's \$2 trillion economy into a single market for the first time.

First proposed in 2006, it got the backing of most economists as being long overdue and was hailed as the biggest tax reform since independence. It has been credited with helping India soar up the World Bank's "ease of doing business ranking", with the institution saying India had jumped 23 places to 77th position between 2017 and 2018.

The government has been forced to



MUMBAI: In this file photo taken on February 13, 2016, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during the opening ceremony of 'Make in India Week' in Mumbai. — AFP

announce several changes to the GST however, after small-scale businesses complained they were being unfairly hit by high tax rates.

Bad debt

Indian banks are saddled with some of the highest levels of bad debt anywhere in the world and Modi made tackling them a key priority. The government has given the central bank greater powers to intervene in cases of bad loans and in 2017 approved a \$32 billion recapitalization plan to help state-owned banks clean up their books.

Analysts say progress is being made but

the difficulty of recovering dues from alleged offenders, such as fugitives Vijay Mallya and Nirav Modi, show that there is still a long way to go. In 2016 Modi's government overhauled archaic bankruptcy laws by passing the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code which sought to make it easier to wind down companies and help banks recover soured loans.

The law set a 180-day deadline to resolve bankruptcy cases, which previously took over four years on average. However, the Supreme Court issued a verdict this week which could again delay some insolvency proceedings. — AFP

ALL NEW
RAV4

Mohamed Naser Al Sayer Launches

all-new Toyota RAV4 - "Do it in Style"



- Introduction of a hybrid electric model brings new levels of engaging performance
- Stylish exterior to express distinguishable personality

- 8-speed automatic transmission
- Innovative features and systems to enhance passenger safety

Delivering on Toyota promise to introduce trendsetting vehicles that meet and exceed customer expectations Mohamed Naser Al Sayer, a subsidiary of ALSAYER Holding held a press conference to launch all-new Rav4, stylish compact SUV from Toyota. Bringing a new era of improved performance, capability, and safety, the fifth generation RAV4, the compact SUV trend-setter, is poised to, once again, change the game.

The event was attended by the members of the Top Management from ALSAYER Toyota Group Sales including Johan Heislitz Senior Business Director, Scott McNicol General Manager, Hamad AlFouzan Product Planning Manager, Sales consultants, Group Marketing along with members of the press and media.

According to Scott McNicol "Toyota is continuing its journey of making ever-better cars. As you all know we had an eventful 2018 including launch of all new Camry, Rush and Avalon. Thanks to the support of our loyal customers. 2018 was also the year Toyota announced its vision of becoming a mobility company. This announcement has also come within the context of Toyota's sponsorship for 2020 Tokyo Olympic Paralympic Games. This vision inspires to START YOUR IMPOSSIBLE. These words are so inspiring, isn't it? Through this exceptional tagline, Toyota is saying - when you are free to move, anything is possible."

The all-new RAV4 is, in essence, disrupting the segment it created. It is bringing more sport and more utility back while further enhancing the agile handling, everyday comfort and exemplary fuel efficiency that established the RAV4 as a firm favorite among motoring enthusiasts in the region. The all-new vehicle is designed to tackle urban, suburban, and great outdoor adventures with equal finesse. The look is tougher, and there's greater capability with a new all-wheel-drive system, yet the ride is smoother and quieter, with new comfort touches inside.

Hamad AlFouzan commented "Compact SUV segment in Kuwait is highly competitive. Consumers have wide range of models to evaluate or choose from. Our research says that consumer strongly prefer Rav4 due to its high quality and reliability and it reflects their social identity. The new generation Rav4 is even better. Aggressive styling, safety and advanced technology features, enhanced interiors, and much more. This is the reason "Do it in Style" is our launch caption and the new Rav4 is all set to win customers hearts in style."

One of two major additions to the all-new RAV4 is the hybrid electric model, which combines two power sources consisting of a petrol engine and two electric motors. The class-leading model, which offers the lowest fuel consumption value of 22.2km/L, enables customers to contribute to a more sustainable future while enjoying increased driving satisfaction and engagement provided by its advanced technologies and cabin quietness, as well as its acceleration smoothness, especially when accelerating from

a stand-still.

The second addition to the RAV4 is the Adventure model, which was established as a symbolic model to appeal to active users through enhanced Waku Doki - the equivalent of "heart-pumping excitement" in Japanese - and a more powerful image. It is distinguished by a more aggressive bumper, grille design and fog light surrounds, larger over-fenders, high-rise roof rails, a retuned suspension, and exclusive 19-inch, split five-spoke wheels with matte-black accents.

Yoshikazu Saeiki, Chief Engineer for the Toyota RAV4, said: "The RAV4 has held a strong market presence since its introduction 25 years ago. It has gained a loyal following the world over, continually evolving to respond to changing customer needs. For the new RAV4, we set out to create a product that appeals to the next generation of customers. At the very beginning of the design process for the all-new vehicle, we thought about how best to evolve the original idea, building on the two over-arching views of the RAV4 - 'driving performance suited to any road' and a 'user-friendly interior suited to any situation.' This led us to the new concept of Adventure and Refinement. We have also improved the RAV4's performance to meet the demands of any road. Whereas a conventional SUV suspension makes for an uncomfortable, unresponsive ride in off-road conditions, the RAV4 provides sedan-like comfort and an enjoyable ride."

Yugo Miyamoto, Chief Representative, Middle East and North Africa Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, said: "We are excited to launch the all-new RAV4 in the region, setting a new benchmark in the compact SUV segment and presenting our customers with a vehicle that has evolved over five generations, to offer them an unparalleled ownership experience."

Miyamoto added: "Owing to its stylish design, ride comfort, dynamic performance and superior value, the all-new RAV4 will make a deep connection with the region's motoring enthusiasts whose needs and aspirations evolve constantly. We would like to extend our gratitude to our valued customers for their continued support and inspiration, which motivate us to develop 'ever-better' cars that exceed their expectations."

Enabling the all-new RAV4 to express its distinct personality and brawny stance is its robust design. The exterior lines and detailing in the cabin are influenced by regular, polygonal shapes, communicating strength and coherence. Following the guiding themes of Adventure and Refined, designers created an athletic, chiseled appearance especially in the front-end and grille design. Stunning LED headlamps, which are available with the automatic leveling function, and unique signature LED daytime running lamps produce a more premium light source while also contributing to the vehicle's bold look.

Owing to its polygonal motifs, the wheel arches appear to hold the tires from a high position, emphasizing the lifted-up body and drawing attention to the vehicle's capability. Meanwhile, the side mirrors are positioned lower on the doors for increased forward visibility around the A-pillar. Side visibility is increased thanks to a lowered beltline and the redesigned and enlarged rear-quarter glass. Form and function combine in taillights and exterior door handles, which have been shaped to contribute to aerodynamic stability.

The RAV4's distinct personality is completed by its expansive and comfortable cabin, which displays exceptional quality and finish throughout. The Refined theme guided interior design and the word "premium" will come to mind, as well. The instrument panel's horizontal layout has a slimmer profile and a lower position than before to enhance forward visibility. Solid material used for the upper and lower parts of the instrument panel and door trim grip conveys strength and durability. Soft padding has been added to areas that passengers frequently touch, while stitching that enhances the continuity from the door trim to the instrument panel adds a sense of quality. The center console is wider and more versatile than before, and the console storage has been expanded. Furthermore, front and rear seats are more supportive, and with the improvement in seat cushioning, they are more comfortable in the all-new vehicle.

With an exciting interior featuring a distinctive design, and offering convenience and comfort, the bold new car's cabin is accentuated with a range of advanced features, including Multi-terrain Select (MTS), wireless charging system for smartphones, dual-zone automatic air conditioning system with Smart-flow (S-FLOW) control to provide air conditioning to only occupied seats, achieving comfort and enhanced fuel efficiency, 7-inch color multi-information display (MID) in the cluster gauge, 7-inch multimedia infotainment display, ambient illumination, six-speaker sound system, multi-adjustable power driver seat, front ventilated seats, and 60:40 split-folding rear seats.

Complementing the all-new RAV4's daring looks is a thrilling drive personality imbued by two powertrain options. A new 2.5-liter four-cylinder Dynamic Force engine with D-4S fuel injection system, which produces 204 hp and 243 nm of torque, is mated to a new eight-speed Direct-Shift automatic transmission (8AT), resulting in a quicker and smoother acceleration. On the other hand, a new electrified hybrid system combines two power sources consisting of a petrol engine and two electric motors producing 176 hp and 118 hp, respectively, with a combined power of 218 hp, and delivering 221 nm and 121 nm of torque, respectively. It is also mated to a Direct Shift Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT) that provides the lowest fuel consumption value of 22.2km/L while delivering a new level of driving pleasure.

The all-new RAV4 hybrid electric model can be driven entirely on electrical power with zero-fuel consumption and tailpipe emissions, or by combining the power generated from both the petrol engine and two electric motors, depending on the vehicle's speed and customer's driving behavior. Its hybrid electric batteries are continuously charged by either the petrol engine or when decelerating and braking, eliminating the need to plug in a power cord. Furthermore, the hybrid electric model features a host of advanced technologies, yet drives like any other conventional vehicle and does not require special fuel.

The launch of the all-new RAV4 hybrid electric model comes in line with Toyota's continuing commitment to playing a leading role in constantly innovating and developing technologies that protect the environment, which is also a strategic imperative that forms the cornerstone of the company's business. Electrification of vehicles has been an indispensable focus for Toyota since 1997 and the company has launched a variety of Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEV) in the past two decades, leading to a steady rise in the adoption of its environment-friendly vehicles and pushing its cumulative sales of electrified vehicles to over 12 million. This enormous sales record represents a reduction of more than 94 million tons of CO2 compared to the sales of equivalent conventional vehicles and underscores the tremendous support received from customers.

As with any other Toyota model, safety remains a top priority for the all-new RAV4 that comes with an advanced safety system, which is complemented by Toyota Safety Sense, an advanced safety technology package that includes Pre-Collision System (PCS), Dynamic Radar Cruise Control (DRCC), Lane Departure Alert (LDA), Lane Tracing Assist (LTA) and Automatic High Beam (AHB). In addition, the car features a comprehensive array of safety features to protect its occupants, such as 7 SRS airbags, Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Traction Control (TRC), Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Electronic Brakeforce Distribution (EBD), Brake Assist (BA), Electric Parking Brake (EPB) with Brake Hold function, Blind Spot Monitor (BSM), Active Cornering Assist (ACA), Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA), Downhill Assist Control (DAC) and among many others.

Available in nine distinctive exterior colors, the all-new RAV4 provides customers the opportunity to express their individuality. Four new colors, Cyan ME, Dark Blue MC, Attitude Black MC, and the newly-developed Urban Khaki, further express sophistication and strength. On the other hand, the interior is available in a total of three colors, such as Light Gray, Beige and Black. Drawing inspiration from the polygonal motif, the all-new RAV4 has been reamed with new 17-inch, 18-inch and 19-inch alloy wheels, created with a strong shape and a sense of precision, emphasizing the modeling theme present throughout the vehicle.



Business

NBK Money Markets Report

Brexit drags on while trade war delivers vague progress

MPs' efforts to prevent a no-deal Brexit comes under attack

KUWAIT: During the past week, markets were looking forward for a trade deal to be struck between the US and China. The deal was supposed to put an end to a year of friction between the two countries and give some rest to a lot of companies that were suffering as a result. Although an agreement was within reach, the two sides remained apart on two key issues.

The first issue was the fate of existing US tariffs on Chinese goods, while the second was the terms of an enforcement mechanism demanded by Washington in order to insure that China abides by the deal. Myron Brilliant, executive vice president for international affairs at the US Chamber of Commerce commented on Tuesday saying "We're getting to the end-game stage, 90 percent of the deal is done, but the last 10 percent is the hardest part, it is the trickiest part and it will require trade-offs on both sides."

After a meeting between president Donald Trump and the Chinese vice-premier Liu He (China's president Xi Jinping's top economic advisor) on Thursday, the two economies pushed back the timing of a possible trade deal. The deal was moved until May at the earliest, vaporizing hopes that the presidents of the two countries could hold a summit meeting this month to end their tariff wars. In a comment from Donald Trump, he said an agreement would be reached within four weeks with Beijing, where many of the biggest sticking points had been resolved.

Although, Trump refused to set a date for a summit with Xi Jinping in order to sign a possible deal. Trump's comments expressed positivity and confidence in a positive outcome. "This is an epic deal, historic. If it happens, it is the granddaddy of them all. It has a very good chance of happening," said Donald Trump.

The extension of the negotiations suggest that both Washington and Beijing are inclined to reach an agreement, yet nervous about the backlash that might occur if they are perceived to have made too many concessions. While Trump said that a lot of the most difficult points had been tackled, including how to enforce and implement a deal to ensure that China complied with its commitments. Peter Navarro, The White House's advisor on trade and manufacturing and a famous "China hawk", warned that the "last mile of the marathon" was the "longest and hardest."

Weaker durable goods orders

US durable goods orders came in weaker last week at

-1.6 percent, only slightly better than the -2.0 percent expected and overall a negative for the market. Earlier this week, fears of an economic slowdown soothed as positive data from China eased concerns regarding global growth. The trade war between the US and China has still seen no resolve, and an extension to negotiations is now in place.

US PMIs

US manufacturing saw a rebound in March up from its lowest level seen in more than two years. The ISM manufacturing PMI rose to 55.3 in March up from 54.2 in the previous month, when it hit the lowest level since November 2016. The sub-indices of the report also showed that the manufacturing sector was healthy as new orders, production and employment all rose. The positive data followed disappointing retail sales figures earlier in the day that showed the measure unexpectedly fell in February, raising further questions about a slowdown in the US economy.

Headline retail sales fell 0.2 percent month to month in February, a decline from the revised increase of 0.7 percent in January. The decline in February was led by drops in grocery and building materials sales. Looking at the ISM non-manufacturing index, the services sector recorded its weakest level since August 2017 falling to 56.1 in March. The figure came in slightly better than expectations of a dip to 58 following the 59.7 level recorded in February. Growth in the sector cooled off in March after strong growth in February, mainly attributed to a slowdown in production and new orders.

After raising interest rates four times in 2018, the US Federal Reserve took a turn and decided to take a halt on further rate hikes this year in response to the signals of slowing global growth. The US dollar has remained strong amidst the uncertainty given its safe haven appeal and widening rate differentials vs its peers.

An increase in US employment

US Nonfarm Employment increased by 196,000 jobs in March according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. The increase is mainly attributed to notable gains in health care and in professional and technical services. The employment rate remained the same at 3.8 percent, and the number of unemployed persons was essentially



unchanged at 6.2 million. Average hourly earnings increased 3.2 percent from the prior year, below all estimates. The data indicates that the labor market is sturdy enough to support growth in the coming months even though gains in employment have moderated from last year's pace. Unemployment remaining near historic lows appears promising for consumer spending, though weaker wage gains may suggest softer inflation.

A Brexit conundrum

The Brexit debacle has created apprehension all over the world and especially in the UK and Europe. As the drama drags on, so does the growing uncertainty across the continent.

In this week's episode, we will start with the Parliament's indicative votes. Two weeks ago, MPs voted to take control of the Parliament's agenda on Wednesday the 27th of March, they were able to schedule whatever votes and debates they wanted. First thing they did was to play the classic infinite wishes trick "what do you want to do with your one day in Parliament? Ask for more days in Parliament." MPs used their time on Wednesday to give themselves another day of control on Monday the 1st of April. On top of that, they held a series of indicative votes, 16 potential Brexit solutions were suggested and the speaker narrowed those down to 8, a total of zero of them received majority from the house. The votes made it pretty clear that some of the options were very unpopular with the MPs, some were actually even more unpopular than May's deal. None of the options got majority support, but a couple did come close. This is the reason why they held their second round of indicative votes on Monday, and in fact just before the indicative votes there

was a business motion like the one on Wednesday, which scheduled parliamentary time on Wednesday the 3rd of April, for another round of indicative votes.

The idea of the second round of indicative votes held on Monday was that with some of the options off the table, and the deadline of the 12th of April becoming even closer, MPs might be more flexible and back more options than before. 8 motions were tabled on this day and the speaker selected 4, and like the time before, Parliament has failed to commit to support any one proposal.

On Tuesday, May invited Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn to negotiate a Labor-Conservative Brexit deal. This has annoyed some of the Eurosceptic wing of her party, because a Labor influenced deal will probably just be a softer Brexit. In fact a couple of ministers have even resigned over this, with speculation of more to come. While it obviously annoyed Brexiters, it is worth looking at what May is actually offering here. She has made it clear that any concessions will only be put in the political declaration, and as such won't be legally binding. That being said, the Labor party were also worried that this might be some political trap, by associating Corbyn with this deal, and if it fails, May can put some of the blame on him. Or so if they can't agree on anything, then May can say that it's Corbyn's fault that no Brexit deal was agreed. Corbyn went ahead and had the meeting regardless, no one knows exactly what went on, but both Corbyn and May say that it went well.

On Wednesday, instead of having more indicative votes, MPs tabled a business motion on a bill demanding that the government request an extension to Article 50. The bill basically gives the Parliament power to tell the Prime Minister to ask for an extension, and tell her how long will it be, however it doesn't say what to do if the EU rejects her request, and it doesn't force the Prime Minister into asking for the extension immediately. Parliament voted on a business motion to rush the bill through the House of Commons, the vote passed with 312 for it and 311 against it. This meant that the bill was rushed through the house and was sent to the House of Lords for them to pass the bill into a law.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30435

The USDKWD opened at 0.30420 yesterday morning.

Under Trump, Fed faces politicization

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve has regularly faced criticism from Donald Trump, but in recent days the president took matters into his own hands-raising concerns that the Fed is being politicized. Not only did he again urge the Fed to lower interest rates, but he tapped two unconventional loyalists to fill two empty seats on the Fed board.

Stephen Moore, 59, is a controversial economist and former Trump campaign adviser. And Herman Cain, 73, previously served as a board member at the Kansas City Federal Reserve Bank and is the former CEO of a pizza restaurant chain.

Cain, a candidate for the Republican Party's nomination in the 2012 presidential election, suspended his campaign following allegations of sexual misconduct, which he denied.

With the 2020 election looming, Trump often praises the health of the US economy-but on Friday he said that he wants it to take off like "a rocket ship." To make that happen, he urged the Fed to restart its post-financial crisis "quantitative easing" program of buying bonds to add liquidity to the economy.

Trump's moves have alarmed some experts, but he is not alone in thinking the Fed went too far last year:



CHICAGO: Traders signal offers in the Five-Year Treasury Note Options pit at the Chicago Board of Trade following the announcement from the Federal Reserve meeting that it would maintain short-term interest rates at 5.25 percent in Chicago, Illinois. This is the seventh consecutive meeting the Fed has left the rate unchanged. — AFP

some economists such as Joseph LaVorgna from Natixis think it tightened too much. For Michael Gapen of Barclays Research, the president's choices "could raise questions about the independence of the Federal Reserve and could be perceived as an attempted politicization of monetary policy." Tim Duy, economics professor at the University of Oregon and an expert on the central bank, told AFP that he believes "the threats to the Fed independence are at the highest in decades."

Such pressure from the White House has not been seen since the 1970s. On the eve of his 1972 reelection, former president Richard Nixon pressed then Fed chair Arthur Burns to lower interest rates.

his concerns and called for action.

"The mortgage market is critical to the stability of the Swiss financial center. It is too big to fail," he said. He also stressed that mortgage crises have a proven history of rippling across the economies they infect.

FINMA's common practice of intervening to rein in individual institutions that take on too much risk "is not enough to counteract the generalized overheating trends we are currently seeing," Branson said. "As a result, action is needed now."

'Ghost town'?

FINMA's call came days after the International Monetary Fund issued its own warning about the Swiss financial sector's exposure to real estate lending. "Around 85 percent of banks' domestic assets are concentrated in mortgages," the IMF said in a statement following an official visit to the wealthy Alpine nation. It noted that aside from banks, Swiss pension funds and insurance companies also

had "significant exposure to real estate".

"Shocks to property prices could resonate through the economy," the IMF said. Rental properties in Switzerland have long been attractive investments, with purchase prices for such assets at record highs. Persistently low interest rates have helped fuel the buying spree.


But FINMA said it was worried about market imbalances because surging prices and continuing construction of new units were happening despite government figures showing that a record 70,000 residential units were vacant in mid-2018.

"To put this in perspective, imagine a ghost town of about the same size as Bern... with every single home empty," Branson said, referring to the Swiss capital with a population of roughly 140,000. As the FINMA boss noted, high purchase prices for units combined with high vacancies raises the risk of loan defaults, especially if interest rates rise. — AFP

Boom risks taking Swiss real estate off-piste

GENEVA: In a country that prides itself on economic stability, phrases like "too big to fail" can grab attention in Switzerland, especially when spoken by the head of the financial watchdog. But that warning this week about the country's mortgage market by Mark Branson, the chief executive of the Swiss market supervisor (FINMA), hardly came out of the blue.

In recent months, several red flags have emerged about the health of the Swiss real estate sector, as prices for buy-to-let properties have continued to rise amid stagnating rents and increasing vacancies. In his annual speech to the media, Branson outlined



شركة البترول الوطنية الكويتية
Kuwait National Petroleum Corporation

Announcement for Selling Coke

Based on Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's (KPC) intention to involve the private sector in oil sector activities and projects, Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) announces its determination to sell 300,000 metric tons of petroleum coke during the year to local private sector companies for the production of calcined petroleum coke inside the State of Kuwait through a long-term supply agreement.

Interested companies who are willing to build a calcined petroleum coke plant should notify KNPC in writing, noting that the closing date is **7 May 2019**. For more information about this announcement and project procedures, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned:

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Business

Huawei excites the crowds with the P30 Series pre-booking event

Huawei Experience Store hosts tech-lovers • The P30 Series officially arrives in Kuwait



KUWAIT: Huawei Consumer Business Group Kuwait (CBG) was honored to host all the tech-lovers who attended the pre-booking event, where plenty of them pre-ordered devices from the Huawei P30 Series and won valuable prizes. The event held at Huawei Experience Store (HES) in the Avenues Mall started at 6:30 PM demonstrating yet another step towards an innovatively connected world.

The Huawei P30 Series' pre-booking event in Kuwait gave consumers the opportunity to elevate their social media experience through the Snapchat video enhancement, and to cement memories with the quality of the living eyes through its Leica Camera. Beyond capturing moments as the human eyes do, the P30 Series takes it up a notch with the element of innovative technology through its dual video, night shot, and zoom. To top it all off, the P30 Series will not only last you throughout the day but will rise back to full charge with its supercharge.

"We are beyond pleased to bring more and more innovative technology to Kuwait and the world, to not only build a connected world, but have the world cherish quality captured memories," enthused Jason Jiang, General Manager of Huawei CBG Kuwait addressing the attendees in the pre-booking event. Huawei's pre-booking event gave attendees an evening to remember through raffle draws, the chance to pre-book the P30 devices, enjoying the live entertainment of star bands and valuable prizes. For further information on the P30 Series, don't hesitate to visit Huawei Experience Store (HES).



Jason Jiang



Africa's richest man withdrew \$10 million just to look at it

ABIDJAN: Nigerian billionaire Aliko Dangote, known as Africa's richest man, told a forum in Ivory Coast on Saturday how he once took \$10 million in cash out of the bank just to look at it and get it into his head that this was real money, not just figures on paper. "When you're young your first million is important, but after, the numbers don't mean much," Dangote, a manufacturing tycoon with a range of companies spanning cement to flour, told the Mo Ibrahim forum in Abidjan.

"One day, I cashed 10 million, put them in the boot of my car I put it in my room. I looked at them and thought 'now I believe I have money' and took it back to the bank the next day," he told his audience.

Anecdotes aside, Dangote said that the two most promising sectors for Africa's future were agriculture and new technologies. But he advised young African entrepreneurs not to get carried away by the first flush of success.

"Often in Africa we spend our projected incomes. There are ups and downs" in business, he warned.

Dangote said he regretted the customs and administrative problems that hamper business development throughout the continent. As an example he cited the difficulties his cement group faces in exporting to Benin from Nigerian factories 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the border. Benin imported "more expensive" cement from China instead. — AFP

Spire Solutions partners with Mimecast to make emails safer

DUBAI: Email is the number one application used by organizations around the world and the data being sent and received needs to be protected. According to Gartner's assessment on 'How to Build an Effective Email Security Architecture' in 2018, "email is the most commonly used channel for both opportunistic and targeted attacks on client endpoints, including advanced malware, phishing and spoofing".

To address regional customer challenges related to security of critical business information stored in digital form, 'Disruptive Distributor' Spire Solutions has partnered with email and data security company, Mimecast. Mimecast services are designed to provide comprehensive email security controls before, continuity during, and automated recovery after an attack. Through this partnership,

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.



Spire Solution's Sanjeev Wallia shakes hands with Mimecast's Jeff Ogden

joint customers can benefit from how the platform both helps safeguard employee communication and reduce risk with targeted threat protection, data leak prevention, and enforced security controls. "We at Spire, are very excited about this distribution partnership.

Mimecast's product offering will help us to enhance our local customers' cyber resilience and provide next generation protection against advanced email borne and internally generated threats", commented Sapan Agarwal,

The lucky winners are:

- Hamid Reza Abdolali Ameri
- Hanaa Abdullateef Saif Saif
- Mohammed Ali Mohammed Shamsah
- Mohammad Khaled Ahmad Alahmad

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a mini-

Deputy VP, Product Management at Spire Solutions.

"Our reselling partnership with Spire Solutions will help accelerate our rapid growth in the Middle East. Together we can help our joint customers better protect themselves from growing cyber threats with advanced protection, while at the same time improving their cyber resilience in the event of an attack with email continuity and archiving," said Jeff Ogden, General Manager Mimecast Middle East.

amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

Gulf Bank monthly salary draw to be held today

KUWAIT: Today, Gulf Bank will be holding its third monthly salary draw. The draw will be held in the Saad Al-Abdullah branch, in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce.

Commenting on the draw, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communications at Gulf Bank said: "Gulf Bank is committed to adding value to our loyal customers, and we are delighted to continue to play a role in making their dreams come true. The Salary account offers customers a range of benefits, including entry into monthly draws. We wish everyone luck and look forward to continuing to build relationships with existing and new Gulf Bank customers."

The salary account gives new customers the opportunity to receive either a KD 100 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank or an interest-free loan of up to KD 10,000. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and will be eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank.

Customers can also enjoy additional benefits like a free of charge Visa or MasterCard credit card for a year, as well as a chance to apply for a loan of up to KD 70,000, or a consumer loan of up to KD 25,000. With the new 2019 Kuwaiti Salary Offer existing and new customers, who transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank are automatically enrolled in the monthly draws, giving them the chance of winning cash prizes of up to 12 times their salary, and a yearly draw of Kuwait's largest salary prize of up to 100 times their salary.



Ahmad Al-Amir

What's On



Flow House: Kuwait's first water surfing center opens



Hamad Al-Khenaini

The 2019 Flow House Kuwait season has recently opened, said Flow House executive manager, Hamad Al-Khenaini noting that Flow House is the first water surfing center in Kuwait. It is located over a total area of 2000 square meters including two 22X16 meter surfing pools where 30,000 gallons are pumped with 60 kph speed.

Al-Khenaini added Flow House also includes the first oxygen pool in the Middle East. "This pool is 3 meters deep and as you descend the ladder, a high-tech Sea TREK(r) helmet will be placed on your shoulders. The helmet keeps you dry from the shoulders up, and provides a constant flow of cool, refreshing air enriched with oxygen and an aromatherapy scent of your choice". Al-Khenaini explained adding that the wave pool also fits all ages as its depth grades from zero to 1.9 meters. In addition, Al-Khenaini said that various other services are available including Surf & Fries restaurant and an outlet to sell oxygenated juices. "Flow house working hours are from 10 am to 10 pm", Al-Khenaini adding that there is a special school to teach surfing.



Under auspices of governor Sheikh Fawwaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Ahmadi governorate recently launched its 2019 power conservation campaign organized in collaboration with MEW and MOE. The campaign is one of the five pillars of the 'My Governorate is More Beautiful' long term development project, sponsored by CBK. It was launched by the governorate in 2015 with the aim of boosting students' awareness about the significance of saving water and power.

NBK welcomes its 7th batch of 'Yalla Watani' trainees for 2019

National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) welcomed a new batch of trainees attending "Yalla Watani" program for training newly hired employees to work in the bank's various branches. The training course covers numerous banking aspects including: banking principals, credit cards, loans, account types, insurance, fraud risks, money laundering and bank branches and systems evaluation. The program also includes a module on developing soft skills like self-esteem, self-evaluation, achieving outstanding performance, change and innovation, management and effective communication techniques, work ethics, and teamwork.

The training program, which was attended by 18 trainees over a period of two weeks, aims at providing the required training on bank branches working mechanism through skill development prior to embarking on the field training at the bank branches. The trainees were welcomed by NBK execu-



tives headed by Emad Ahmed Al Ablani, General Manager, Group Human Resources and Mohamed Al Othman General Manager of Consumer Banking Group, in addition to area managers, and executives from Group Human Resources.

'Yalla Watani' is one of the most important career developments programs held in the private sector for Kuwaiti fresh graduates. The course seeks to provide participants with professional train-

ing through covering various banking aspects arming them with the necessary qualifications required to work within the bank's professional system. The training program is an integral part of NBK's annual training programs aimed at attracting young national talents, as the program is tailored to meet the labor market's demands through providing training and developing opportunities to fresh graduates who have passed the prequalification exams to join the course.

LOYAC chairperson receives achievement award

In a special ceremony in Cairo, Cambridge International College recently awarded Achievement Awards to a number of Arab and African personalities for their remarkable achievements in various fields. Honorees included Dr Abdul Aziz Al-Kateeb and LOYAC's chairperson, Dr Fareah Al-Saqqaf who was awarded for her

achievements in women rights, development and voluntary activities.

The honorees also included Bahrain's ambassador to Egypt, Sheikh Rashid Bin Abdul Rahman Al-Khalifa, Dr Mustafa Al-Sayyed, the Egyptian major general, Khaled Foudah and the former assistant FM, Ali Al-Hefni, Saudi princess Rima Habib Al-Rowaisan, the owner of the Egyptian Tiba international school, Saboura Al-Sayyed, Yemeni Maj General Faraj Salmeen Al-Bohseni, the Egyptian novelist, Magdi Saber, the Lebanese actress Nour, the Egyptian actress and singer Mona Abdul Ghani, the Jordanian actress and writer, Marjo Haddad and a number of other celebrities from Egypt and other Arab countries.



Within its social responsibility activities, the commercial bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently sponsored the carnival organized by the Universal American School (UAS) for students and their parents. The carnival included a number of recreational activities and competitions all day long during which CBK presented a number of prizes in the form of opening 'My First Account' for the winners.



Health & Science

Dire future etched in the past: CO2 at 3-million year-old levels

Dramatic temperature, rising sea level, scientists warn

PARIS: Planet-warming carbon dioxide in Earth's atmosphere-at its highest level in three million years-is poised to lock in dramatic temperature and sea level rises over a timescale of centuries, scientists warned this week. The last time that CO2 hit 400 parts per million (ppm) Greenland was ice free and trees grew at the edge of Antarctica. It was long thought that today's greenhouse gas levels were no greater than those 800,000 years ago, during a period of cyclical planetary warming and cooling that would have likely continued but for manmade emissions.

But analyses of ice cores and ocean sediments in the coldest place on Earth have now revealed that 400 ppm was last surpassed three million years ago during the Late Pliocene, when temperatures were several degrees Celsius higher, and oceans at least 15 meters deeper. At the same time, state-of-the-art climate modeling by experts at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) have correlated directly with the CO2 levels found in these Antarctic samples. "The Late Pliocene is relatively close to us in terms of CO2 levels," Matteo Willeit, PIK member and lead study author, told AFP.

"Our models suggest that there were no glacial cycles-there were no big ice sheets in the northern hemisphere. CO2 was too high and the climate was too warm to allow big ice sheets to grow." Nations in 2015 struck the landmark Paris deal on climate change, promising to curb greenhouse gas emissions and limit temperature rises to "well below" 2 Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit). Yet 2017 saw emissions levels unsurpassed in human history, and climate experts warn that time has all but run out to drastically slash fossil fuel use and avert runaway global warming.

Seas 15-20 meters higher

Scientists gathered this week in London for a conference on the Pliocene epoch, and highlighted the lessons to be learned today embedded in its ancient ice and sediment samples. "The headline news is that temperatures were 3-4 degrees higher globally than they are today, and sea levels were 15-20 metres (50-65 feet) higher," Martin Siegert, professor of geoscience at Imperial College London, told reporters. With just 1C of warming so far, Earth is already dealing with floods, droughts and superstorms made

worse by rising seas. Siegert said that 400 ppm didn't mean that the severity of Pliocene sea-level rises was imminent. But unless humans figure a way to suck CO2 out of the air on a massive scale, severe impacts are inevitable, sooner or later. "There's a lag," he explained. "If you turn on the oven at home and set it to 200C, it doesn't reach that (level) immediately. It's the same for climate." Siegert said glaciologists, based on current CO2 concentrations, expect between 50 centimeters and one metre of sea-level rise this century. "It would be difficult for it to be much more than that because it takes time to melt," he added. "But it doesn't stop at 2100 - it keeps going."

Rocketing pace of CO2

In October, the UN concluded that greenhouse gas emissions must decline by about half within 12 years to preserve a chance of capping global warming at 1.5C, the level needed to avoid severe climate impacts. But despite these and earlier warnings, CO2 emissions from fossil fuel use, construction, aviation and agribusiness continue to rise, and are currently on track to heat up the planet 4C by century's end. Even without additional carbon pollution, the outlook remains bleak. "If we stay at 400 ppm, we stay on the course to a Pliocene-like climate," said Tina van De Fliedert, a professor of isotope geochemistry at Imperial. She warned that under similar conditions to the present day, the Pliocene saw the disappearance of the Greenland ice sheet-which today holds enough frozen water to raise sea levels by some seven meters worldwide.

"The West Antarctica ice sheet holds about 5 meters-that was probably gone," she added. As is happening today, Earth's poles warmed far quicker than the rest of the planet during the Pliocene, earlier research has shown, including a study in Nature Climate Change. During earlier periods, Earth has seen sustained concentrations of carbon dioxide was even higher than 400 ppm, but it took millions of years for those increases to occur. Manmade greenhouse gas emissions, on the other hand, have boosted CO2 levels by more than 40 percent in a little over 150 years.

'A crazy experiment'

At 412 ppm and rising, experts said temperature rises of

diseases, that it does not lead to autism, and that the practice of using fetal tissue to produce the vaccine ended decades ago. Pushing back against such "junk science" absorbs a good deal of her energy as she works to educate and persuade the 300,000 residents of Rockland County to cooperate with health authorities and alert them to any new cases of disease.

In 27 years of practicing medicine, Ruppert said, this is "one of the most challenging health crises I have had to deal with." As of Friday, measles - officially eliminated from the United States in 2000 - had struck 167 people in this county along the Hudson River, including nine new cases this week. Among the six regional outbreaks of measles reported by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the leading public health institute in the US, Rockland County's is the most concentrated. And yet the county has not skimped in throwing resources at the problem.



ROUEN: Demonstrators hold a banner reading 'Emergency for climate, social, democracy' as they stand in front of the Bataclan music hall during yellow vest protests, in Paris. — AFP

3-4C are likely now locked in. So what happened to Earth the last time CO2 was so prevalent? It was captured in the trees, plants, animals and minerals alive at the time and buried underground when they died. "And what we've been doing for the last 150 years is digging it all up and

putting it back into the atmosphere," said Siegert. "It's like a crazy experiment: Let's take that CO2 that took 100 million years to be sequestered and put it back-instantly, on a geological timescale-in the atmosphere and see what happens". — AFP

NY county measles outbreak spotlights vaccine religious exemptions

HAVERSTRAW: Patricia Schnabel Ruppert, the health commissioner of an outlying New York suburban county, is feeling "overwhelmed." Since October she has been waging an uphill fight to quell one of the worst US measles outbreaks in 20 years. Among her daily battles: having to constantly repeat that the vaccine does not cause other

Unprecedented measures

Since October, each case has been systematically investigated to determine how many people have been exposed to the ultra-contagious virus. Those exposed are then contacted to ensure they have been immunized, and if they haven't been, they are then vaccinated. Dozens of free vaccination clinics have been organized around the county - including one Friday in the town of Haverstraw - with 17,654 doses of vaccine administered to date. The objective is to raise the vaccination rate from the current 72 percent, Ruppert said.

A 95 percent vaccination rate is considered necessary to prevent epidemics. Today, county executives will meet with legal and health professionals to identify more possible new strategies to tackle the outbreak. It comes after the county took the unprecedented measure on March 26 of banning unvaccinated minors from schools and public

places for 30 days. Several public health specialists saluted the county's decision. But a dozen parents of public-school students sued the county, arguing that the measure was disproportionate to the danger, particularly as there have been no deaths to date. On Friday they obtained a partial victory: a judge issued an injunction requiring county officials to drop the ban against any child with a "religious exemption," at least until April 19. "Religious exemption": for many county residents, the words have become central to the debate over the resurgence of measles and the rise of the anti-vaccine movement. Like most American states - all but three, including California - New York requires a series of vaccinations for school-age children but grants exemptions on both medical and religious grounds. In Rockland County, the local Jewish community represents about one-third of county inhabitants, including a large number of Orthodox Jews. — AFP

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ENT Specialist

- ◆ Laryngology Fellowship - Canada
- ◆ Fellow of the European Board Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the British Laryngological Association
- ◆ Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the European Laryngological Society

Specialized in:

- ◆ Management of benign and malignant vocal cord lesions.
- ◆ Vocal cord augmentation.
- ◆ Treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
- ◆ Adenotonsillectomy using latest techniques.
- ◆ Thyroid surgery.
- ◆ Surgery for the deviated nasal septum.
- ◆ Endoscopic sinus surgery.
- ◆ Treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- ◆ Treatment of snoring.
- ◆ Treatment of vertigo.

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- ◆ Surgery for morbid obesity (sleeve, gastric bypass)
- ◆ Breast surgeries
- ◆ Hernia repair
- ◆ Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- ◆ Surgery for reflux disease
- ◆ Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- ◆ Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

Dr. Hani Haider **http://www.international-clinic.com** **Tel: 1886677** **ic_kwt**

Scope of Clinical Practice:

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

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

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

Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad
Surgery Department
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo - Rectal Surgeon

daralshifa
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

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

Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368 **Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B**

DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED
Consultant of General Surgery
Laposcopic and Bariatric Surgery

Academic Certificates - Training

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

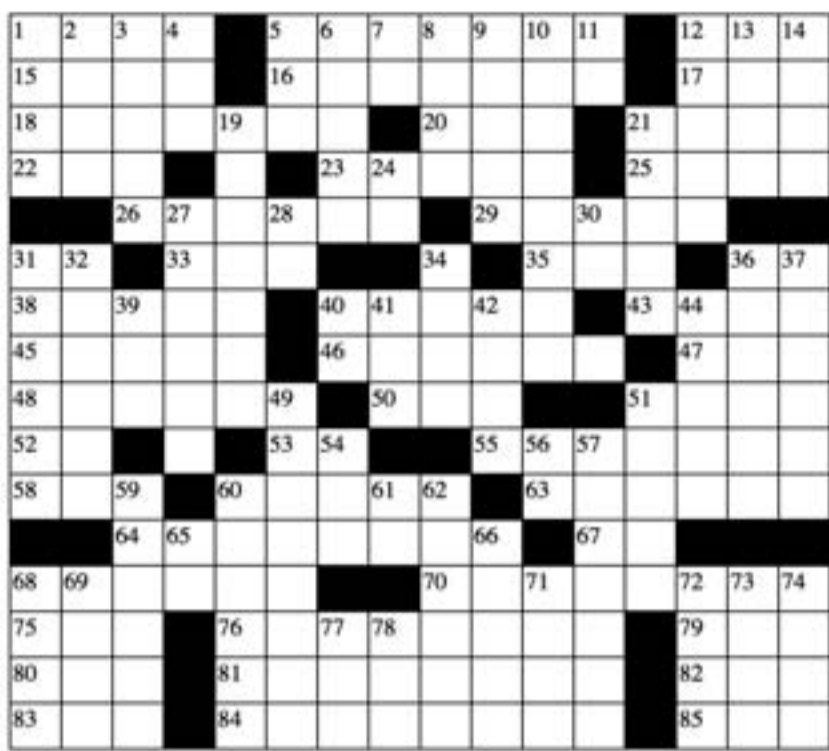
Scope of clinical Practice.

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

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com **Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228** Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building

Stars

CROSSWORD 2177



ACROSS

- 1. A quantity of no importance.
5. Basal part of a plant ovule opposite the micropyle.
12. An insecticide that is also toxic to animals and humans.
15. Advanced in years.
16. Battle in which the ruler of Afghanistan defeated the Mahrattas in 1761.
17. The 6th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
18. A bar of sand.
20. A unit of time equal to 60 seconds or 1/60th of an hour.
22. A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
23. A yellow quart.
25. (in Gnosticism) A divine power or nature emanating from the Supreme Being and playing various roles in the operation of the universe.
26. Capable of wounding.
29. (Sumerian and Babylonian) A solar deity.
31. A radioactive transuranic element produced by bombarding plutonium with neutrons.
33. A doctor's degree in dental medicine.
35. Any of various units of capacity.
38. The sound made by a cat (or any sound resembling this).
43. A member of an extinct North American Indian people who lived in the Pit river valley in northern California.
45. Lacking either stimulating or irritating characteristics.
46. French soldier said to be fearless and chivalrous (1473-1524).
47. The shape of a raised edge of a more or less circular object.
48. In or belonging to the air or operating (for or by means of aircraft or elevated cables) in the air.
50. Someone who is morally reprehensible.
52. A radioactive gaseous element formed by the disintegration of radium.
53. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
55. Having no jaw.
58. Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
63. A nap in the early afternoon (especially in hot countries).
64. Narrow and long and pointed.
67. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
68. A percussion instrument consisting of a pair of hollow pieces of wood or bone (usually held between the thumb and fingers) that are made to click together (as by Spanish dancers) in rhythm with the dance.
70. A substance derived from amygdalin.
75. Hormone secreted by the posterior pituitary gland (trade name Pitressin) and also by nerve endings in the hypothalamus.
76. Lying face upward.
79. Any of various dark heavy viscid substances obtained as a residue.
80. The basic unit of money in Romania.
81. Someone who imparts energy and vitality and spirit to other people.
82. A graphical record of electric currents associated with muscle contractions.
83. The part of the nervous system of vertebrates that controls involuntary actions of the smooth muscles and heart and glands.
84. Moths whose larvae are cutworms.
85. An enzyme that catalyzes the oxidation of many body compounds (e.g., epinephrine and norepinephrine and serotonin).

DOWN

- 1. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for aviation and spaceflight.
2. Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
3. The brightest star in Cygnus.
4. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
5. An accountant certified by the state.
6. United States writer noted for his stories about life during the California gold rush (1836-1902).
7. An associate degree in nursing.
8. Lacking in strength or firmness or resilience.
9. Relating to or having the characteristics of bees.
10. An island in the Indian Ocean off the east coast of Africa.
11. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
12. A person of unquestioning obedience.
13. Herb of the Pacific islands grown throughout the tropics for its edible root and in temperate areas as an ornamental for its large glossy leaves.
14. Being two identical.
19. A group of islands in the Atlantic off the Carolina coast.
21. Occurring or done each day.
24. A doctor's degree in optometry.
27. A verse line with a dactyl followed by a spondee or trochee.
28. A bachelor's degree in religion.
30. A soft gray ductile metallic element used in alloys.
32. Any plant of the genus Silene.
34. Common Indian weaverbird.
36. A physiological need to drink.
37. Evergreen Australasian tree having white or silvery bark and young leaves and yellow flowers.
39. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
40. A Russian river.
41. (British) A waterproof raincoat made of rubberized fabric.
42. A pilgrimage to Mecca.
44. A small zodiacal constellation in the northern hemisphere.
49. Small genus of tropical evergreen trees or shrubs having pods like those of the acacia.
51. Tired to the point of exhaustion.
54. (Babylonian) The sky god.
56. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
57. Evergreen shrubs or small trees of Australia and New Zealand.
59. Port city of Denmark in eastern Jutland.
60. A narrow zigzag ribbon used as trimming.
61. Being nine more than forty.
62. A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
65. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
66. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
69. Chief port of Yemen.
71. An organic compound that contains a hydroxyl group bonded to a carbon atom which in turn is doubly bonded to another carbon atom.
72. A distinct part that can be specified separately in a group of things that could be enumerated on a list.
73. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
74. (used as a sentenced connector) Therefore or consequently.
77. Be seated.
78. A benevolent aspect of Devi.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Do you feel as though you're the one who's always initiating plans with your friends? If you think that nothing would ever happen unless you made all the arrangements and sent all the emails, then test your theory. Stop being the social director for your people, and see what happens. Your suspicions will either be proved wrong (and you'll get to take a break) or be proved right (and you may realize that you're being taken advantage of).



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Don't be surprised if you feel as though the world is moving too quickly for you today. But even if you lag far behind everyone else, you won't mind a bit. Right now, you're in the mood for a leisurely pace, and you should have one—it will make for a pleasant day. Taking time to smell the roses, and really noticing your surroundings, will be especially enjoyable today. And everyone else will miss out.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Are you hesitant to take the advice of friends and associates right now? It's true that they have something to gain in this situation, but it's also true that they know more about what's going on than you do. Proceed with caution, and weigh everything they say against what your gut is telling you. This is a time for careful movement; you mustn't be impetuous about anything, especially if it involves your heart.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You will be very useful to someone (perhaps without even realizing it) today, thanks to your quick mind and your even quicker reflexes. Being in the right place at the right time will result in much gratitude showered on you today. It seems that you are developing quite a fan club, and it has one or two very powerful members! Be careful not to rest too long on your laurels, though. People are raising their expectations of you, and you mustn't let them down now!



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Even very attractive people sometimes have ugly personality quirks—keep this in mind when you meet someone who seems too good to be true. Just because something glitters does not mean that it is gold! Some people turn on the charm when they want to mask character deficiencies—the brighter they sparkle, the darker they are inside. Your intelligence will intimidate people like this, so don't be surprised if a charmer who's new in your social circle seems to avoid you.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Your energy is positively nuclear today, which is going to help you out—you'll have a lot of fun juggling a lot of different tasks that others might find boring. An accidental double booking will force you to make a quick decision—let intuition be your guide. Would you rather make headway on a work project or chill out with some people who make you feel like a superstar? Whatever you decide, stick to it.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Starting off the day with a big business transaction is not wise—try to put major deals off for as long as you possibly can. If you wait until later in the day, you may uncover some hidden information that will alter your plans. Right now, you need to focus on caution, certainty, and forethought. Your career is also a priority now—and your ambitions could set the stage for an important conversation with your boss.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

A sticky situation could get pretty ugly today, but there is a surefire way to avoid it. If you mind your own business, you can stay out of all this drama and have a happy, mellow day. So try not to stick your nose into anything that does not concern you, and keep your eyes on your own paper, so to speak. There are a few personal errands you should get out of the way today—after all, they are not going to take care of themselves, are they?



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Try to have as much fun as you can possibly have today, but try to avoid being too immature on the playground. Do not pout or have a temper tantrum if things don't go your way or if you can't get attention from the people you like. Remember important childhood lessons such as sharing and cooperation. Do not think that you can't have fun and share your toys, too! You have some fun stuff that people want to play with, so be generous and let them!



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

A few wonderful things in your life are ending, it's true—but if you take a moment to look around today, you will also see that some very beautiful things are beginning. A relationship between two people close to you is coming to an end, and this may affect you deeply. It's okay to ask for the time you need to process your feelings—you know how long it will take you to adjust, and your loved ones will understand. Trust yourself.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

By asking probing questions today, you could transform a casual conversation into a great new opportunity. Showing a genuine interest in what someone else says will open doors, so find out what makes this powerful person tick. Your curiosity could lead you to a new job, great financial advice or even a new romance. Don't adopt an overly formal communication style today—adjust your behavior to suit the environment you're in.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Today, people you have to deal with will respond a lot better to concrete examples than to ambiguous concepts. So if you need to communicate anything complicated or flirt with a particularly tough cookie, try to integrate a physical example or item in your conversation. A freshly baked chocolate chip cookie does a wonderful job of melting an icy personality, and one or two charts can help simplify a complex set of data. You should exercise your creativity as much as possible.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Free Printable Word Search Puzzles

Australia

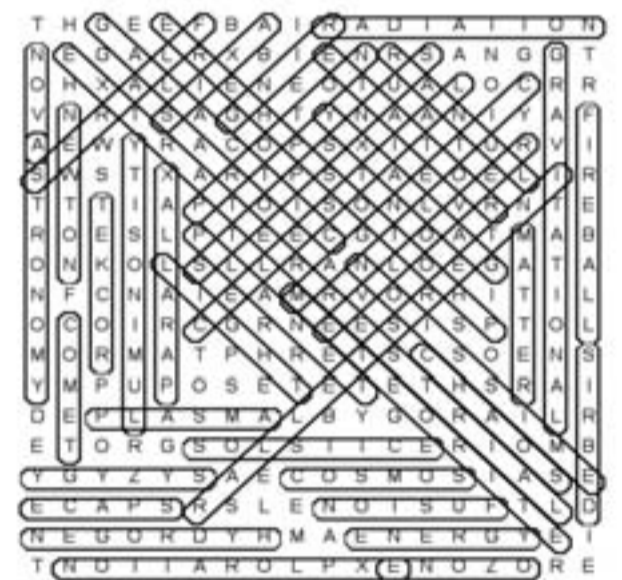
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 49 letters spell a secret message.



- ADELAIDE, AUSSIE, BEACHES, BOOMERANG, BRISBANE, CANBERRA, COMMONWEALTH, CONTINENT, CORAL SEA, CROCODILES, DESERTS, DIDGERIDOO, DINGO, DOWN UNDER, EMUS, EUCALYPTUS TREES, HUGH JACKMAN, KANGAROO, KEITH URBAN, KODALA, KOOKABURRA, KYLIE MINOGUE, MARSUPIALS, MELBOURNE, MONARCHY, NEW SOUTH WALES, NICOLE KIDMAN, OCEANS, OUTBACK, PARLIAMENT, PERTH, PLATYPUS, PRIME MINISTER, QUEENSLAND, RAINFORESTS, RUSSELL CROWE, SEAFOOD, SHRIMP, SURFING, SYDNEY, TASMANIA, VEGEMITE, VICTORIA, WOMBAT

Yesterday's Solution

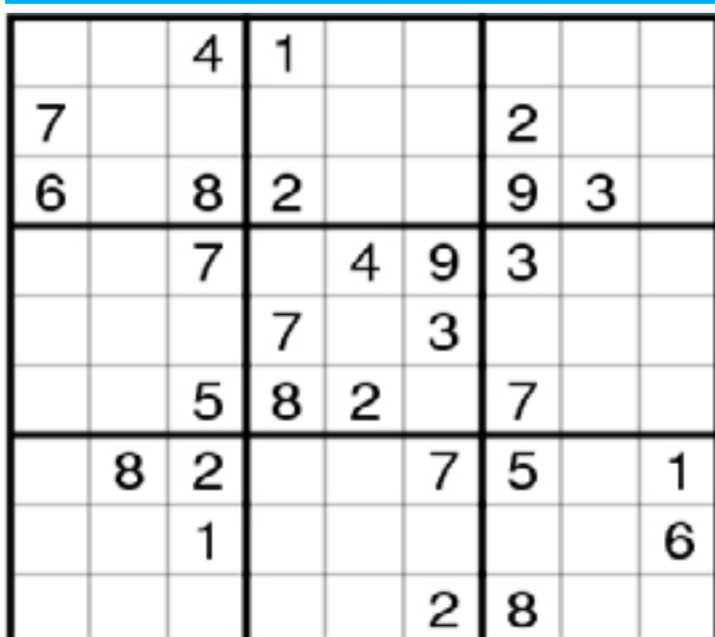
Astronomy 2



- ASTRONOMY, AXIS, CELESTIAL, CHAOS, COMET, COSMOS, DEBRIS, EMISSION, ENERGY, EXPLORATION, EXTRATERRESTRIAL, FIREBALL, FLARES, FUSION, GALACTIC, GALAXY, GRAVITATIONAL, HYDROGEN, INTERSTELLAR, LIGHT, LUMINOSITY, EXTRATERRESTRIAL, LUNAR, MAGNETIC, MATTER, METEORITE, NEWTON, NOVA, PARALLAX, PHOTOSPHERE, PLANET, PLASMA, PROTON, RADIATION, REVOLVE, RING, ROCKET, GALAXY, ROTATE, SOLSTICE, SPACE, SUNSPOTS, SYZYGY

The hidden message is: THE BIG BANG THEORY WAS FIRST PROPOSED BY GEORGES LEMAÎTRE

Daily SuDoku



medium

Yesterday's Solution



hard

Lifestyle

MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2019



Colorful masks made by students of the Art Institute of Dhaka University lie on the ground in preparation for the Bengali New Year celebration, in Dhaka yesterday. The Bengali calendar is solar, with the year beginning on Pohela Boishakh, which falls on April 14 this year, in Bangladesh. — AFP

China's virtual reality arcades aim for real-world success



In these photos men play video games at an arcade in Shanghai. —AFP photos

When Jiuxiao puts on virtual-reality goggles and is immediately transported to a snow-covered ski slope, down which she slaloms without ever leaving Shanghai. "I felt weightless skiing down the mountain," Chen, 25, gushes after re-emerging in the material world. "The scenery around me was so authentic," she adds. Chen, a hospitality worker, said she ventured into one of Shanghai's VR arcades due to word of mouth from her tech-savvy friends. China had an estimated 3,000 VR arcades in 2016, and the market was forecast to grow 13-fold between then and 2021 to amount to 5.25 billion yuan (\$782 million), according to a joint report by iResearch Consulting Group and Greenlight Insights.

Add in the profits to be made from headsets, equipment, games and other products, and it's little wonder that augmented-reality and virtual-reality industries are excited about China. "Chinese growth in the next five

years could see it dominate AR/VR long-term-and not by a small margin," Silicon Valley consultancy Digi-Capital said in a report last year. "China has the potential to take more than \$1 of every \$5 spent" in the industry globally by 2022, it added.

Quality shortage

One key factor is China's government. Tens of millions of Chinese have become obsessive players of mobile video games, causing concern that China was raising a generation of myopic youngsters addicted to battle games. Authorities imposed curbs last year on the number of new game releases and playing time for youths, rattling the industry and shaving billions off the market value of big players including gaming giant Tencent. But the government is pushing hard for China to become a world leader in next-generation technologies including

artificial intelligence and autonomous vehicles. VR has been lumped into that favored class, benefitting from a slew of preferential policies.

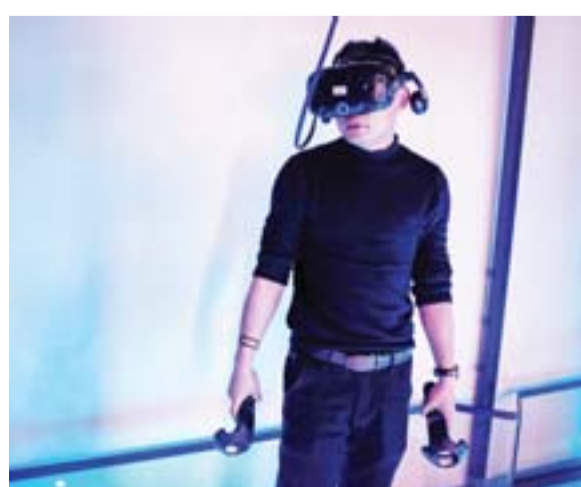
Chen Wei, manager of Shanghai VR arcade Machouse said VR was likely to avoid the fate of mobile video games in China. He cites the relatively high cost of arcade play-up to 70 yuan (\$10) or more for a 15-minute game-and of setting up home systems. "It's hard for minors to get addicted," he said. The nascent VR games industry suffers from a shortage of high-quality games, however. At Shanghai's VR+ Amusement Park, a new game lands only once every three months, officials there said.

VR explosion

Firms such as Tencent remain hesitant to dive in to the arcade scene until the sector reaches critical mass, analysts explained. But the company, along with fellow Chinese giants Alibaba and Baidu, is investing in virtual online shopping and VR entertainment, all of which could trickle down into gaming. Already a number of towns and cities in China have declared themselves incubator zones that are integrating VR into research, manufacturing, education and other spheres, luring in capital, according to Chinese reports. Seekers VR, which is based in the eastern city of Wenzhou and owns a franchised chain of 200 arcades in more than 70 cities across China, is working with the Wenzhou government to establish a college focused on educating students about VR and using the technology in lessons. "There is no dominant competitor in the VR industry since it is so immature, and we will bring more and more opportunity," said Seekers VR's CEO Belle Chen. The expected wide-scale adoption in China of ultra-fast 5G networks is expected to further boost VR development, and foster growth in areas such as education and training, said Chen Wei. He said: "There is no better way to learn skills, and at a lower cost, than VR. Even though VR is still educating users about what it is, it could explode someday." — AFP



A woman plays a video game using a virtual-reality headset at an arcade in Shanghai.



A man plays a video game using a virtual-reality headset at an arcade in Shanghai.

Iron Maiden's singer Dickinson honored in Sarajevo

Bruce Dickinson, lead singer with heavy metal group Iron Maiden, received the honorary citizenship of Sarajevo Saturday, in recognition of a concert he played there during the siege of the city. Dickinson took his band to the Bosnian capital in December 1994, travelling with an aid convoy escorted by UN peacekeepers. At the time, the city was still caught in the 44-month siege by Bosnian-Serb troops that eventually cost more than 11,000 lives.

"It took a lot of courage and humanity to come to a devastated and besieged Sarajevo in 1994, to say no and to speak out for the halting of the worst war in Europe since World War II," Igor Gavric, head of the city council, said at the ceremony. The concert had allowed the people of the city to believe that they and the city would survive, said the citation. "We didn't stop the war but what we did do was we made people feel better about being there-and that's all musicians can do," Dickinson told journalists after the ceremony.

"It's politicians and armies and generals that stop wars. Music speaks to people and makes them feel better about their lives get their emotions." A new generation discovered the concert via a recent documentary about it, "Scream for me, Sarajevo!", the title taken from what Dickinson shouted to his audience. During the siege, between 1992 and 1996, the city's 350,000 residents struggled to get basic necessities and thousands were killed by sniping and shelling. — AFP



British author, musician and front man of the hard-rock and heavy-metal band Iron Maiden, Bruce Dickinson (left) autographs an Iron Maiden vinyl record for a fan after ceremony during which he received "Honorary Citizen of Sarajevo" award in Sarajevo. — AFP



Drake reveals J Hus has been released from prison

Drake used his concert at the O2 Arena to reveal fellow rapper J Hus has been released from prison. The British rapper was believed to be remaining in jail until this summer after being sentenced for eight months in jail for carrying a knife in public last December, but during Drake's concert at the London venue on Friday (05.04.19) he brought J Hus on stage to reveal he's been released. Speaking on stage, the 'Hotline Bling' hitmaker said: "These are the type of things in my career that I'm just blessed to even be a part of. This is something I've wanted to make happen for the whole week, and I'm just glad I could make it happen with this group of people in this building because y'all been going crazy all night ... I need you to stand up, because [we're] about to celebrate one of our brothers tonight." The words "welcome home" then flashed across the venue's screens as the 22-year-old rapper walked on stage to cheers from the crowd. He told fans: "I've missed you so much, I swear." Before Drake then added: "I wanna give you this stage so you can do what you've been waiting to do." J Hus then performed his 2017 hit 'Did You See'. Earlier this week, Drake stopped another concert at the O2 Arena to pay tribute to late rapper Nipsey Hussle, after he was shot dead outside his clothing store in Los Angeles on March 31. He said: "He [Nipsey] was somebody that provided for his people, somebody that always treated you with respect when he saw you, somebody that commanded respect when he walked in the room. "So I really want to do this shout out for Nip tonight and I just want everybody to look around and be grateful and happy that we're all here together, alive and well, because life can end at any moment. I just want to say I love you, I'm thankful to be with you tonight, London, as long as you'll have me back I'll stand in the middle of this building and give you everything I've got. Cheers to my brother, rest easy my g. London, I love you."

The Black Keys pull out of Woodstock 50

The Black Keys have pulled out of Woodstock 50. The 'Gold on the Ceiling' hitmakers - made up of Dan Auerbach and Patrick Carney - have been forced to cancel their slot as headliners on the Love Stage at the 50th anniversary of the original Woodstock festival in August, because of a "scheduling conflict". Taking to Twitter to announce the news, the band wrote: "Due to a scheduling conflict, The Black Keys will unfortunately need to cancel their set at @woodstockfest. The band wants to let fans know as soon as possible and before tickets go on sale. (sic)" Woodstock 50 will take place at Watkins Glen in New York between August 16 and 18, and will feature a line-up of both current acts, and those who played at the festival in 1969. As of the time of writing, a replacement for The Black Keys has not been announced, but the line-up is set to including acts such as Jay-Z, Miley Cyrus, The Killers, Run The Jewels, Vince Staples, The Raconteurs, Chance The Rapper, and Halsey. Meanwhile, Woodstock's co-founder and co-producer Michael Lang recently said that this year's festival is more than just a "concert". He shared to the New York Times: "Coachella's got its thing, as does Bonnaroo and Lollapalooza. But I think they're all missing an opportunity to make a difference in the world. They're all perfect places for social engagement and for fostering ideas, and I think that's lost. We want this to be more than just coming to a concert. And hopefully a lot of the bands will become part of this effort to get people to stand up and make themselves heard, to get and out vote. And if they don't have a candidate that represents their feelings, to find one - or to run themselves."



Zara Larsson only writes songs with 'another girl in the room'

Zara Larsson will only write songs with "at least one with girl in the room". The 21-year-old singer admitted that she finds it difficult to relate to "middle-aged men" while she's making music and so she and her manager always ask for another woman to be present in the studio. In an interview with NET-A-PORTER's digital magazine PorterEdit, she said: "When I write, me and my manager always make sure that there's at least one other girl in the room. "Cause it's weird when it's middle-aged men and they're like, 'So, we're gonna write a little song about teenage love', and you're like, you can't relate to me!" The 'Ruin My Life' hitmaker went on to explain that she thinks women in music should "uplift" each other rather than competing and says she feels inspired by the likes of Zendaya, Dua Lipa and Bebe Rexha. She said: "Yara Shahidi, she's so cool. Zendaya's super cool, Dua Lipa, Bebe Rexha... I feel like [for] all of us, [our industries are] way more collaborative and people are really uplifting each other more than competing. We see each other as colleagues more than competition." As for where she wants to be in 20 years time, the 'Lush Life' singer wants to keep performing but hopes to do it "in stadiums" and also revealed her wish to own her own record label one day. When asked what her bio will read in 20 years, she said: "Hopefully it will say, 'I still do what I love, but in stadiums!' I wanna have my own record label and I would love to learn how to produce so I can really take control."

Tulisa says X Factor stopped her from being authentic

Tulisa has blamed 'The X Factor' for the delay in releasing new music. The former N-Dubz star recently resigned with record label Xploded Music and released her comeback single 'Daddy', the follow-up to 2016's 'Sweet Like Chocolate' with WSTRN's Akelle. Tulisa says her new single is more authentic than previous releases - including her first solo single 'Younger' - and admits 'The X Factor' negatively influenced her career. She told NME: "If it hadn't been for 'X Factor', I don't think 'Younger' would have been my first [solo] single. On a family show, you have to keep up appearances, and fit into a mould. I definitely adapted myself a lot and played a version of myself for a long time. And this is why I'm so excited about moving forward: there's gonna be none of that now. This is the Tulisa that would have come out as a solo artist straight off of N-Dubz. Take X-Factor out of the equation and this is the kind of artist I would always be." Tulisa also believes that she lost her "swag" when she first went solo. She said: "When you're a singer, you can come across as quite generic. But back in the old days, when I did something like [N-Dubz hit] 'Girls', I always had more of a rappy-singing swag. I was putting my stamp on it: I had a style. And I stopped doing that for a long while. What I'm doing with my new material is bringing it back - bringing back that slight rappy edge. When I was releasing pop songs, I lost that swag. It was a conscious decision: I was trying to play the pop game, and I wanted to be as far away from urban as possible, because of the reputation I'd gained after all the... all the shit. So I was kind of trying to dress up in suits every day and play the prim and proper princess, which wasn't me at all. But I just wanted everything to calm down and fade out before I started rocking out in my hoodies and bomber jackets again and letting people know what I was about."



Avicii single to be released next week

Avicii's first posthumous track will be released next week. The Swedish DJ - whose real name was Tim Bergling - died by suspected suicide in Oman in April last year, at the age of 28 and his family are set to release a 16-track album of previously unheard material in June. The album 'Tim' will be preceded by a track 'SOS', which is set to drop on Wednesday and features vocals by soul singer Aloe Blacc. A message from his representatives stated: "He left behind a collection of nearly finished songs, along with notes, email conversations and text messages about the music. The songwriters that Tim was collaborating with on this album have continued the process to get as close to his vision as possible. "Since Tim's passing, the family decided not to keep the music locked away - instead they wanted to share it with his fans all around the world." Coldplay's Chris Martin - who previously worked with Bergling - will sing on a song named 'Heaven'. Net proceeds from the album will benefit the Tim Bergling Foundation, which has been set up by his family to help those struggling with mental illness and also to support the prevention of suicide. His family said in a statement: "Tim wanted to make a difference. Starting a foundation in his name is our way to honor his memory and continue to act in his spirit." At the end of April 2018, Avicii's family released a statement which seemingly confirmed the star had taken his own life. It read: "Stockholm, 26 April 2018. Our beloved Tim was a seeker, a fragile artistic soul searching for answers to existential questions. An over-achieving perfectionist who travelled and worked hard at a pace that led to extreme stress. When he stopped touring, he wanted to find a balance in life to be happy and be able to do what he loved most - music. He really struggled with thoughts about Meaning, Life, Happiness. He could not go on any longer. He wanted to find peace. Tim was not made for the business machine he found himself in: he was a sensitive guy who loved his fans but shunned the spotlight. Tim, you will forever be loved and sadly missed. The person you were and your music will keep your memory alive. We love you, Your family."



Richards was glad to reunite Berry and Johnnie Johnson



Keith Richards says getting Chuck Berry back with his longtime collaborator Johnnie Johnson was a great "triumph". The Rolling Stones guitarist worked with the iconic musicians when he served as the musical producer and band leader for the 1987 film 'Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll', and despite the pair falling out they were convinced to come together for rehearsals for the project. Speaking to Steven Van Zandt at the YouTube Space about the moment Johnnie joined them in the studio, he said: "Suddenly I realized I had the original makings of all of Chuck Berry's great stuff together. I had the two of them. "Because I know how important Johnnie was in the making of Chuck Berry's records - 'Sweet Little Sixteen', 'Maybellene' - from the beginning. To put them back together was like a triumph." Keith, now 75, took on the project after going solo in the 1980s when The Rolling Stones took a break when relations between himself and the iconic rock 'n' roll group's frontman Sir Mick Jagger, also 75, reached an all time low during the making of their album 'Dirty Work', which the former described as "forget about it times". The guitarist previously admitted that he had no idea how difficult it is to front a band, until he decided to do his own thing. He said: "All that pressure of being the frontman. I mean, I remember some disastrous shows, Vegas, I'd blown the throat out totally and somehow we managed to do it and there was still a standing ovation. "But you learn a lot about being the frontman, that nonstop ... with the Stones I can poke myself out in the front when I want and retire with Charlie with the music. "Not to have that option ... I did understand a lot of the pressure on a frontman."



Gray has reinvigorated his old hits

David Gray says bringing back the electronic elements to his old hits has made performing them much more interesting for him to perform. The 50-year-old English singer/songwriter is currently touring his eleventh studio LP 'Gold in a Brass Age' - which he recorded with producer Ben de Vries, the son of composer and studio wizard Marius de Vries - and he has made the decision to play the majority of that record at the beginning of his concerts and then he gives his fans the tracks they love from 1998's 'White Ladder' and his other albums later in the setlist. Gray may have played songs like 'Babylon' and 'Please Forgive Me' thousands of times but due to the set-up of his current band he's now been able to once again add the often overlooked electronic parts to those tracks and he admits it's been great to play them once again how they sound on the records. Speaking to website MusicFeeds, he said: "We play for like 45 minutes at the start, and it's all songs from the new album. Then, for the next hour 15, we circle back around to the past and work backwards chronologically. Because of the electronic elements in the new songs, and the way we've had to construct the live set, we've been able to bring back electronic elements into my previous songs like 'Babylon' and 'Please Forgive Me'. The sonics from the original songs are back, and it's the first time I've rendered them like that in many years. People seem to have been really enjoying the new songs, but to be able to play the old songs in their original form feels like a series of detonations among the audience."

Taron Egerton's Rocketman fears

Taron Egerton worries 'Rocketman' is "doomed to fail". The 29-year-old actor portrays Sir Elton John in the upcoming biopic and though his only concern was to make a "good film", he knows it will be compared with award-winning Queen movie 'Bohemian Rhapsody'. He told Britain's GQ magazine: "I often feel a bit like we're doomed to fail by comparison. Because we'll always be the guys who came after. But such is life. You know all I care about? That it's a good film." The movie's producer is Elton's husband David Furnish, and he admitted the project was in the works for over 12 years but it took the success of musicals such as 'La La Land' and 'The Greatest Showman' for it to come to fruition. He said: "Everything in the film business takes a while and we're lucky that right now there's a real appetite for cinema that has music at its heart. During the time when we were developing our film, the industry was geared towards big blockbusters - superhero movies and tent-pole movies. We didn't fit into that box... "We kept our heads down and worked away, but really it wasn't until 'La La Land' cleaned up on the awards circuit and became a huge, buzzed-about film that we realized there was an audience for these kinds of stories. "The key to that was someone taking contemporary music and bringing it to life cinematically. They found a connection with the audience. You can see it in 'The Greatest Showman' too [and] 'A Star Is Born'. Hollywood's the sort of town that, because everything is so expensive, people like to get an indication that something's really going to fly." One of the reasons why Taron was cast was his singing ability, but he's modest about his talents. He said: "That's the calling card for the film, I suppose. That's kind of been the root of everything, the fact that I can just about hold a tune. I'm probably being... I love it, but... I just hope I'm good."



Nicholas Hoult's X-Men success still feels weird

Nicholas Hoult still thinks it's "bizarre" that he's part of the 'X-Men' franchise. The 29-year-old actor - who portrays Beast/ Hank McCoy in the franchise - was a huge fan of the movies when he was younger so being cast in 2010's 'X-Men: First Class' and then getting to walk. He said: "It's mad - you don't expect that. Also, as well as 'Lord of the Rings' being really influential movies when I was 11 and 12, the 'X-Men' movies were equally so. "So then you find yourself a couple of years down the road doing 'Days of Future Past' and you're in those corridors that you grew up watching, with Hugh Jackman. "I had to pinch myself. I was looking over thinking, 'This is mad. I'm walking down the corridor with him and we're going to Cerebro. Bizarre. "And then you grow and have these friendships and all these things with the people involved. It's a little family unit." With his fourth 'X-Men' movie, 'Dark Phoenix', released next month, Nicholas is pleased with the way his character has evolved over the years. He told Empire magazine: "He started off as a student in that first film, ashamed of his mutant capabilities and then that changed and he became an enabler and carer for Charles, and there's his relationships with Mystique, with Raven, and then becoming a teacher, and now in this film we take that to a different level again, where he starts to question the authority figures. "His beliefs change, and his understanding of how things should be handled. "Also he's dealing with trauma. It's a lot. That's a really nice thing, because you grow up playing him and it also feels like it's changing."

Elba to play new character in Suicide Squad sequel

Idris Elba will play a new character in the 'Suicide Squad' sequel, rather than replacing Will Smith as Deadshot. The 46-year-old actor was previously believed to have signed on to the sequel of the 2016 DC ensemble movie as the gunslinging adversary of Batman after Will Smith exited the project in February. But according to Variety, bosses involved with the sequel, including director James Gunn, have decided to move on from the Deadshot character and axe him from the movie, with Idris instead taking on a new character. As of the time of writing, it's not known what DC villain Idris will take on instead, but Variety claims the decision was made as bosses didn't want to disrespect Will by replacing him, as he'd helped to bring Deadshot to life on screen for the first time. The publication also claims the decision leaves the door open for Will to return to the role in the future, since his reason for departing the franchise was simply a scheduling conflict, rather than creative differences. Meanwhile, the likes of Margot Robbie and Jared Leto are set to reprise their roles as Harley Quinn and The Joker respectively. James Gunn is back at the helm of the sequel flick after it was previously revealed he is writing the script. Production on the follow-up - which has been titled 'The Suicide Squad' and is thought to be a reboot of sorts rather than a direct sequel - is planned to start later this year. The film's release date is currently set for August 2021.



Boyle won't make comic book movie

Danny Boyle doesn't think he'd be "very good" at directing a comic book movie. The 'Trainspotting' filmmaker usually finds himself pondering how he would have tackled a script when he sees a film he likes but he thinks superhero films need to someone at the helm who has the genre in "their bloodstream". Asked if he'd consider directing a comic book movie, he told Empire magazine: "I wouldn't be very good at it. "I saw the 'Spider-Man' movie, the animation, and I thought it was wonderful, but out of my league. "Normally when you see a movie like that, you think, 'I could maybe do that.' I didn't think, 'Maybe' with this. "It had a sensibility that felt truthful to its origins. "Whoever made this, it is part of their bloodstream. You've got to recognize that you have no idea how to get there. "I don't think you should attempt one unless it's in your bloodstream... Comics really aren't in my bloodstream." And Danny admitted he ruled himself out of directing 'Alien: Resurrection' for similar reasons. He said: "Wonderfully, I got to meet Sigourney Weaver and Winona Ryder as a prospective candidate [to direct]. "That meant to very nice lunches, one in Prague with Sigourney Weaver and then one in Los Angeles with Winona Ryder I was living the life. "They didn't bar me from directing them so I barred myself. "I loved the script. It was a Joss Whedon script before Joss Whedon was a real name. It was a really good script, I thought. "It went through a whole process. Those 'Alien' films after Ridley [Scott] and James Cameron had a history of going through the mangle of the studio system. "The problem was the industry was in a transition point How much were you going to do for real, as Ridley had done, where people wear suits? How much would you need to learn about emerging technologies that could portray this world? "I realized I was not the person to be in that transition between the two forces. If CG hadn't arrived, I would have been a decent person to say, 'We are going to do it with wrestlers or athletes who have a physicality.' "My analogue mind does not work nimbly in that CG world."

MADONNA WANTS TO DIRECT HER OWN BIOPIC

Madonna reportedly wants to direct the biopic about her life she previously dismissed. The Queen of Pop previously branded a script written about her journey by Elyse Hollander called 'Blond Ambition' as a "disease in our society" and insisted that she was "the only one" who would be able to tell her story. Taking to Instagram, she previously fumed: "Nobody knows what I know and what I have seen. Only I can tell my own story. Anyone else who tries is a charlatan and a fool. Looking for instant gratification without doing the work. This is a disease in our society." The project was put into development by producer Michael De Luca and Universal Pictures, however the 60-year-old singer wouldn't grant the rights to any of her original songs from early in her career. Now, however, the cultural icon has decided that she does want a film documenting her rise to fame and, according to Baz Bamigboye's column in the Daily Mail newspaper, she feels if she can't shut the project down, she'd rather "control it from within and make a film to her specifications." This isn't Madonna's first foray into directing, and in 2018 it was announced the 'Like A Prayer' hitmaker would helm a Michaela DePrince biopic called 'Taking Flight'. The movie - which is based on the 23-year-old ballerina's memoir 'Taking Flight: From War Orphan to Star Ballerina' - follows DePrince's life as an orphan in Sierra Leone and her journey to being a world-renowned dancer. The production marks Madonna's third time directing a movie after helming the 2008 comedy 'Filth and Wisdom' and 2011's 'W.E.' The 'Hung Up' hitmaker also produced and wrote the documentary 'I Am Because We Are'.



Ferrell ends partnership with McKay

Will Ferrell has ended his production partnership with Adam McKay. The 51-year-old actor has been working with Adam under their production banner Gary Sanchez for more than a decade on films including 'Vice', 'Step Brothers', 'Talladega Nights', and the 'Anchorman' and 'Daddy's Home' franchises, but on Saturday they announced they would be bringing an end to their partnership. In a joint statement, the pair said: "The last 13 years could not have been more enjoyable and satisfying for the two of us at Sanchez Productions. We give massive thanks to our incredible staff and executives and all the writers, directors and actors we worked with through the years. The two of us will always work together creatively and always be friends. And we recognize we are lucky as hell to end this venture as such." The announcement states that Gary Sanchez Productions - as well as its sister label Gloria Sanchez, which was set up in 2014 by Jessica Elbaum and focuses on female voices in comedy - will continue with all existing projects through completion and that all current projects will continue to be developed by the attached producers. According to Variety, the statement continued: "The duo is committed to working together creatively on their extensive slate of shared projects. They will continue to support each other both personally and professionally as they explore new endeavors as well as their own individual projects. Moving forward, any future projects they may partner on will go through their yet to be announced new ventures." Existing projects include a three-year first look deal that both Ferrell and McKay jointly signed with Paramount in 2018, as well as Netflix comedy 'Eurovision', which Ferrell is also starring in. Gloria Sanchez, meanwhile, is producing the strip-club drama 'Hustlers', which stars Jennifer Lopez and Cardi B.

Whitehall to join Elba in Mouse Guard



Jack Whitehall is set to join Idris Elba in 'Mouse Guard'. The 'Jungle Cruise' actor is reportedly in discussions to join Elba, Andy Serkis, Samson Kayo 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. According to The Hollywood Reporter, Jack is in talks to play Kenzie, "the calm and measured staff wielder who is often paired with Kayo's character, Saxson". As previously reported, 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". The on-screen pairing is expected to have a comedic element as the polar opposites work together. Meanwhile, Idris is set 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 and Brodie-Sangster will play the role of Lieam, who has to prove his bravery throughout the movie. Production work on 'Mouse Guard' - which is based on the comics and graphic novel by David Petersen and will be shot using motion capture - is expected to begin in May. — BangShowbiz



Hungarian Roma fashion designer and founder of "Romani Design" Erika Varga looks at her creations at her workshop in Budapest. — AFP photos



Erika Varga (right) talks with a model before a video and photo shooting.



Erika Varga adjusts a necklace on her sister and fashion designer Helen Varga before a video and photo shooting.

Hungarian Roma designer fights stereotypes with fashion

Hungarian Roma fashion designer Erika Varga says her label is about stitching together cultural traditions and snipping through stereotypes as much as it's about dressmaking. "Fashion is a branch of art that interests and connects people, non-Roma and Roma," the founder of Romani Design said. Often blamed for petty crime, the Roma, Hungary's largest ethnic minority, face widespread discrimination, poverty and exclusion from mainstream society. "In most cases, Roma appear in a pejorative way in the media.

"Many turn away from their own culture... But people need positive role models, not just the majority in society but also Roma people themselves," the 47-year-old designer said. Founded in 2010 by Varga to promote Roma fashion and identity, her Romani Design studio brought out its first collection the same year. Now, her evening dresses can sell for up to 1,000 euros (\$1,100). "As a Roma-run social enterprise, it's unique in the world," Varga told AFP, ahead of International Roma Day on Monday. "We don't make mass-produced T-shirts but clothes that carry messages, like on minority rights and integration," she added.

'Rebel Spirit'

Varga's latest range, called Rebel Spirit, is inspired by strong female figures, including her mother, late grandmother and 20th century Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, a hero of hers. The small, long-haired designer said she asked "nonconforming women who have overcome challenges in their lives" to model the range. "It's important to express openness in what you wear," said one of the models, Adel Onodi, 23, who became the first transgender woman to appear on the front cover of a Hungarian fashion magazine last year. After leaving school in eastern Hungary, Varga soon set up



Hungarian Roma fashion designer and founder of "Romani Design" Erika Varga poses at her workshop.

her own jewellery-making business before branching out into fashion design.

Now, she employs five staff, including her folk-singer sister, who design and make the frocks at Varga's home studio on the outskirts of Budapest where she lives with her husband and two dogs. Varga says that she is not put off running a business by conventional attitudes in the Roma community on women's role in society. "My own mother all her life was involved in trading clothes, so for me it's completely normal to be both Roma and a businesswoman," she said.

Traditional Roma motifs like flowers are a typical feature of her designs, particularly one of her favorites, the rose—a symbol of femininity—which adorns even the slippers she wears

while pedaling her sewing machine. Most of her skirts and dresses are long, in line with Roma tradition.

Daring combinations of bright colors—"brought by the Roma over the centuries from India and Asia," she says—also characterize her outfits. Rozina Patkai, a Hungarian singer who wears Varga's clothes during her performances, says they often attract compliments. "The main thing is that I feel confident in these clothes," she tells AFP.

Mentoring Roma youth

Roma make up around an estimated seven percent of Hungary's 10 million-strong population, but Varga says that they are "thinly represented within the industry among models,



Hungarian transgender actress and model Adel Onodi poses with a creation by Hungarian Roma fashion designers of "Romani Design" during a shooting for a campaign.

hairstylists or photographers". Her studio organizes mentoring programs aimed at helping more Roma youngsters get into the fashion business. She says that many in the local rag trade dismiss the firm as a "gypsy brand", even though, for centuries, Hungarian and Roma clothing traditions and motifs have overlapped. Most of its buyers are "socially-conscious", middle-class, non-Roma, who buy online, she says, or foreigners at the three or four trade fairs abroad attended by the studio every year.

A recent event in Qatar was particularly fruitful as Arab women snapped up the colorful garments for indoor wear, Varga says. The small business also relies on funding it receives for its educational projects from public and

private donors and other sources.

Insight

In Budapest, clients are invited to the workshop to be fitted for custom-made clothes. "They get a glimpse into the life of a Roma family, so it's a cultural interaction to buy a piece in person," Varga says. "That is also part of our social mission, that people get to know and meet Roma women." After her clothes appeared at a glitzy fashion show in Budapest last week, Hungarian TV celebrity stylist Mark Lakatos enthused about the designs. "For me, they represent tradition and the freedom to experiment," he tells AFP. "The colors are exciting and vibrant, I'm a big fan." — AFP



Eric Holder (right), who is charged with the shooting death of rap artist Nipsey Hussle, appears at his arraignment with his attorney Christopher Darden (left), in California Superior Court, in Los Angeles, California. — AFP photos



Dozens of Ethiopian and Eritrean living in Addis Ababa gather for the memorial service to honor Eritrean American rapper, Nipsey Hussle in Addis Ababa.

Ethiopians bid farewell to slain rapper Nipsey Hussle

With poems and speeches, Ethiopians have held an emotional farewell for murdered rapper Nipsey Hussle, whose roots in neighboring Eritrea won him admirers in both countries. Known for his Grammy-nominated debut album, Hussle was shot dead last week in front of the clothing store he owned in the US city of Los Angeles, whose violence-plagued neighborhoods he had tried to revitalize. On Friday, 29-year-old Eric Holder pleaded not guilty to murder and attempted murder over the shooting that also wounded two other men.

At the Saturday evening memorial in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, Hussle was remembered as a rare entertainer who bridged his American upbringing with his roots in the Horn of Africa. "When we heard there's an Eritrean rapper out there, we were fans before we heard his music," said Ambaye Michael Tesfay, who eulogized Hussle at the event held in a darkened parking lot. "He was an icon for us." Before his 2018 debut album "Victory Lap" scored a Grammy nomination for Best Rap Album, Hussle, born Ermias Asghedom, had won the attention of rap fans from both Ethiopia and Eritrea for his embrace of his father's Eritrean heritage.

Eritrea was a province of Ethiopia until 1993, when it voted for independ-

ence after a decades-long independence struggle, but both countries still have close cultural and family ties. "It's just really tragic what happened," said Tezeta Solomon, an Ethiopian living in Los Angeles who attended the memorial in Addis Ababa. "When he first came out, we were all so excited. To know there was a habesha rapper out there definitely sparked some pride," she said, using a common term to describe people from the Horn of Africa.

Hussle embraced his Eritrean heritage, visiting the country last year and telling state media, "More than anything I am proud of being Eritrean." The relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea has often been tortuous, and the countries were not on speaking terms for years following a 1998-2000 border war that ground into stalemate. That ended with the signing of a peace agreement last year that restored ties between the neighbors. The frosty relations did little to dampen Ethiopians' pride in Hussle's success. "We're all one people," said Nemanay Hailemeleket, an organizer of the memorial. The crowd of hundreds gathered in the parking lot observed a moment of silence for the slain rapper, who was 33. Then by the light of candle-like sticks known as twafes held by attendees, speakers came onto a stage erected before the crowd to eulogize Hussle and read poems in his honor. — AFP

Thousands-year-old Egypt sarcophagus to be opened on live TV

A sarcophagus believed to contain an Egyptian nobleman will be opened on live TV during a special broadcast by the American channel Discovery. The two-hour "Expedition Unknown: Egypt Live" will air tonight from the site outside Minya, which is along the Nile River south of Cairo and its Giza pyramids. Egypt has sought to promote archeological discoveries across the country in a bid to revive tourism hit by turmoil after the 2011 uprising against Hosni Mubarak. The country's Supreme Council of Antiquities declined to comment, even though Discovery announced that council head Mostafa Waziri would be present for the event. The site containing the sarcophagus was discovered in February last year, and a Discovery spokesman told AFP that the project was set up in collaboration with Egypt's antiquities ministry.

Archeologists at the site recently discovered a network of vertical shafts leading to a network of tunnels and tombs containing 40 mummies "believed to be part of the noble elite." In one of those, a limestone sarcophagus holding a 3,000-year-old mummy is to be opened during the show. Discovery declined to disclose the identity of the mummy prior to the broadcast.

Prominent Egyptian archaeologist and former antiquities minister Zahi Hawass will also participate, Discovery previously announced. Asked by AFP about a possible financial deal between the channel and the Egyptian state for permission to film and open the grave, the spokesman for Discovery refused all comment. "It's a media spectacle in the end—but it could make people love antiquities and is a good promotional opportunity for tourism, if done right," an Egyptian archeologist who asked to remain anonymous told AFP.

She said the broadcasters should not open the tomb without providing solid archeological context, but "the main problem" is something else. "If money is being paid by a major channel to the ministry to show antiquities, where is it going to end up?" the archeologist asked. "Will it go in the state's purse-strings or end up elsewhere? We need more transparency on where the money is going."

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has overseen a crackdown on dissent, banning protests and jailing Islamists as well as liberal and secular activists. He regularly evokes political stability to draw foreign investment. The tourism sector has begun to return, with arrivals reaching 8.3 million in 2017, according to government figures. That still falls far short of the 14.7 million tourists in 2010.

Discovery's broadcast also comes with global interest in Egyptian archeology generated by a "once in a generation" exhibition about the pharaoh Tutankhamun, which opened in Paris last month and will tour the world. In Washington, a separate exhibition has opened focusing on the "Queens of Egypt." Discovery said that its broadcast will be simulcast on the Travel and Science channels. — AFP

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Relatively hot and Cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times north easterly wind to northerly wind, with speed of 15 - 50 km/h causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery

BY NIGHT: Fair and Cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate north easterly wind to north westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 38 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

WEATHER WATCH			Thunder Rain			
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 07/04/2019 0000 UTC			
KUWAIT CITY	29 °C	23 °C				
KUWAIT AIRPORT	31 °C	22 °C				
ABDALY	33 °C	22 °C				
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C				
JAHRA	33 °C	22 °C				
FAILAKA ISLAND	28 °C	22 °C				
SALMIYAH	24 °C	22 °C				
AHMADI	25 °C	22 °C				
NUWAISIB	31 °C	22 °C				
WAFRA	32 °C	20 °C				
SALMY	34 °C	19 °C				

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	04/08	Relatively hot and Clouds will increase gradually	30 °C	19 °C	N-VRB	08 - 28 km/h
Tuesday	04/09	Warm and Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	28 °C	23 °C	SE-S	08 - 32 km/h
Wednesday	04/10	Relatively hot and Partly cloudy with a chance for rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery	30 °C	18 °C	SW-S	08 - 35 km/h
Thursday	04/11	Relatively hot and Partly cloudy to cloudy causing rising dust over open areas later on with	32 °C	20 °C	SE-S	12 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:10
Sunrise	05:31
Zuhr	11:50
Asr	15:23
Sunset	18:10
Isha	19:28

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	30 °C
MIN. Temp.	21 °C
MAX. RH	87 %
MIN. RH	39 %
MAX. Wind	SE 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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Flight Schedule

Arrival Flights on Monday 8/4/2019				Departure Flights on Monday 8/4/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
FEG	441	Asyut	00:05	AIC	982	Ahmedabad/Chennai	00:05
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	JZR	713	Sohag	00:10
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	MSR	615	Cairo	00:30
JZR	254	Amman	00:30	FDB	072	Dubai	00:30
KAC	102	London	00:50	BBC	044	Dhaka	00:40
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	PIA	206	Lahore	00:55
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	FEG	342	Sohag	01:05
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	KAC	677	Dubai	01:40
RJA	642	Amman	01:20	THY	773	Istanbul	01:50
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	DLH	625	Frankfurt	01:50
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	417	Manila	02:00
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	KAC	285	Dhaka	02:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	JZR	701	Asyut	02:00
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	JZR	111	Doha	02:10
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:50
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	KKK	1269	Istanbul	02:55
JZR	502	Lahore	02:55	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
JZR	406	Kochi	03:05	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:10
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	UAE	854	Dubai	03:30
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	OMA	644	Muscat	04:05
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	JZR	101	Bahrain	04:05
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:00	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:20
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:00
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	04:15	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	QTR	1077	Doha	05:15
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:30	KAC	303	Mumbai	05:25
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	JZR	215	Jeddah	05:25
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	FDB	070	Dubai	06:00
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	THY	771	Istanbul	06:30
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	GFA	212	Bahrain	06:50
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	KAC	167	Paris	07:15
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:45	JZR	121	Dubai	07:15
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	BAW	156	London	07:40
BAW	157	London	06:10	KAC	173	Munich	07:45
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	JZR	211	Jeddah	08:00
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	IGO	1756	CNN	08:10
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	RBG	214	Sohag	08:15
KAC	204	Lahore	06:45	JZR	151	Mashhad	08:15
JZR	102	Bahrain	07:00	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:05	KAC	163	MXP	08:35
IGO	1755	CNN	07:10	KAC	501	Beirut	08:50
RBG	211	Luxor	07:25	KAC	545	Cairo	08:50
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	MSC	402	Alexandria	09:00
MSC	401	Alexandria	08:00	KAC	117	New York	09:00
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	IRA	666	Esfahan	09:10
IRA	601	Tehran	08:10	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:15
KAC	352	Kochi	08:20	KAC	671	Dubai	09:15
JZR	702	Asyut	08:25	KAC	561	Amman	09:20
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	KAC	773	Riyadh	09:40
KAC	334	Dubai	09:00	KAC	741	Dammam	09:40
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	JZR	731	Cairo	09:45
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	UAE	856	Dubai	09:50
GFA	209	Bahrain	09:05	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	JZR	301	Istanbul	09:55
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	OMA	642	Muscat	10:00
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	GFA	210	Bahrain	10:05
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	KAC	101	London	10:05
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	515	Tehran	10:35
AXB	395	Kozhikode	10:40	QTR	1071	Doha	10:40
JZR	216	Jeddah	10:55	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	FDB	056	Dubai	10:40
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC	617	Doha	10:40
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	AXB	890	Mangalore	11:20
THY	1282	Trabzon	11:05	JZR	221	Riyadh	11:20
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
AXB	789	CNN/Bahrain	12:10	AXB	396	Kozhikode	11:50
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	MEA	405	Beirut	11:55
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:30	SYR	342	Damascus	12:00
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	THY	1283	Trabzon	12:00
KAC	742	Dammam	12:55	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:05

Thousands of Sudanese press on with rally outside army HQ

KHARTOUM: Sudanese police fired tear gas yesterday at thousands of protesters who rallied outside the army headquarters for a second day urging the military to back them in demanding President Omar al-Bashir resign. Chanting "Sudan is rising, the army is rising," crowds massed outside the Khartoum complex that also houses Bashir's official residence and the defense ministry, many having spent the night there, witnesses said. "We won't leave this area until he steps down," said demonstrator Osama Ahmed.

Bashir chaired a meeting of the security council as protesters continued to chant slogans outside the compound. "The security council confirms that the protesters are part of the Sudanese community and their vision and demands have to be heard," the presidency said in a statement afterwards. "The council will take measures to enhance peace

and security across the country."

Protesters whistled and waved at military vehicles entering the compound, prompting some soldiers to wave back, a day after demonstrators said they were gathering to ask the army to "come join us". Riot police deployed near the complex yesterday morning, firing tear gas in an unsuccessful attempt to disperse the crowds, a witness told AFP. Protest organizers chose April 6 to begin the rally outside the army headquarters to mark the 1985 uprising that toppled the regime of then president Jaafar Nimeiri. Since the start of the protests, security agents and riot police have cracked down on demonstrators but the army has not intervened.

The rally was the biggest since protests erupted on Dec 19 in the central town of Atbara, quickly spreading to the capital and towns and cities across the country.

Witnesses said protesters arrived in cars, buses and on foot to the army complex yesterday. Many offered afternoon prayers on the road outside the complex, while others raised Sudanese flags over their heads to protect against the afternoon sun. "Overthrow, overthrow," chanted young men and women. Many climbed on roofs of cars and buses flashing the victory sign, onlookers said. "Many people have come with food and water as if they plan to camp here for days," a witness said.

Yesterday's protests coincided with a nationwide blackout that the electricity ministry blamed on a technical glitch. Outside the army complex, protesters sang nationalist songs, whistling and clapping as they pressed on with the rally. Some protesters blocked a nearby bridge linking Khartoum with the northern Bahari district with rocks causing

huge traffic jams, onlookers said. Several private companies declared a holiday at their offices, while some arranged to ferry water, snacks and juice to the protesters, according to witnesses.

In a separate demonstration on Saturday a protester was killed in Khartoum's twin city of Omdurman, police said. Officials say 32 people have died since protests erupted in the east African country after a government decision to triple the price of bread. Human Rights Watch has put the death toll at 51 including medics and children. The rallies quickly morphed into protests against Bashir's government, with demonstrators accusing it of mismanaging the economy, leading to soaring food prices and regular shortages of fuel and foreign currency.

Bashir has acknowledged that the economic concerns raised by protesters are

"legitimate", though he imposed emergency rule on Feb 22 after an initial crackdown failed to rein in the protests. The scale and intensity of protests have shrunk since the emergency rule went into effect. But with Saturday's rally analysts say the protest movement has gained new momentum. "The scale of protests on Saturday illustrate that Bashir's gamble that he can save his regime through repression is proving to be a losing bet," said Murithi Mutiga of the International Crisis Group.

Bashir, wanted by the Hague-based International Criminal Court for alleged war crimes and genocide in the conflict-ravaged region of Darfur, swept to power in an Islamist-backed coup in 1989. He has remained defiant, introducing tough measures that have seen protesters, opposition leaders, activists and journalists arrested. — AFP

Dutchman ends 'world's longest electric car trip'

SYDNEY: A Dutchman completed an epic 95,000 km journey by electric car in Sydney yesterday in a bid to prove the viability of such vehicles in tackling climate change. Wiebe Wakker drove his retrofitted station wagon nicknamed "The Blue Bandit" across 33 countries in what he said was the world's longest-ever journey by electric car.

The trip from the Netherlands to Australia took just over three years and was funded by public donations from around the world, including electricity to charge the

Bandit, food and a place to sleep. Wakker drove across a variety of countries and environments including Turkey, Iran, India, Myanmar, Malaysia and Indonesia, with the route determined by the offers he received on his website.

"I wanted to change people's opinions and inspire people to start driving electric by showing the advantages of sustainable mobility," Wakker said. "If one man can drive to the other side of the world in an electric car, then EV's (electric vehicles) should definitely be viable for daily use." Wakker said before the car was modified, it would have used 6,785 liters of petrol to complete the journey. The modified vehicle can travel 200 km on a single charge, with Wakker saying he spent just US\$300 on electricity, much of it in the remote desert Outback of Australia. — AFP



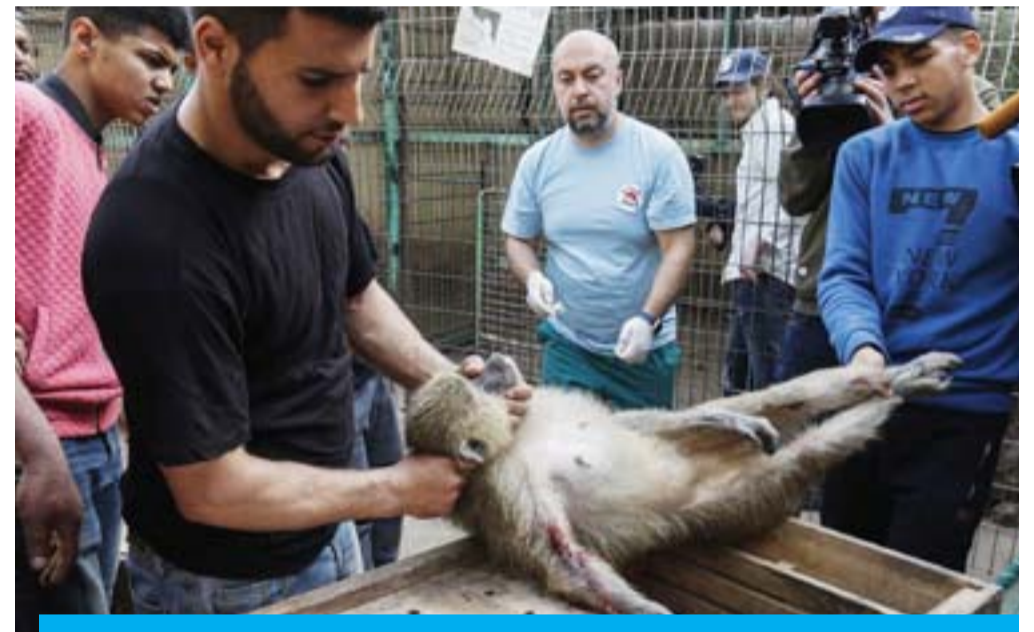
This handout photo taken on Oct 28, 2018 shows Dutch driver Wiebe Wakker on the Stuart Highway in Australia with his retrofitted station wagon during his round-the-world trip in the electric car. — AFP

More than 40 zoo animals evacuated from Gaza Strip

GAZA: More than 40 animals, including five lions, were evacuated from squalid conditions in a Gaza Strip zoo yesterday to be taken to Jordan, an animal welfare group said. Thin and weakened, the 43 animals, including a wolf and monkeys, had been living in "terrible conditions," said the Four Paws association, which organized the transfer. The Rafah zoo in the southern Gaza Strip is the oldest in the enclave, which has been under an Israeli blockade for more than 10 years.

The animals were not in great shape, but were stable enough to be transported to a reserve in Jordan, some 300 km from the Palestinian enclave, said Martin Bauer, spokesman for the Vienna-based welfare group. The animals were sedated to be put in cages for the transfer through Israel. Two of the lions would eventually be sent to South Africa.

Four Paws was supposed to move ahead with the transfer in late March, but the organization could not enter the enclave since the crossing was closed that week due to a flare-up of violence between Gaza militants and Israel. Bauer said the mission had the support of the authorities in Gaza, run by Islamist movement Hamas, and of the zoo's owner,



GAZA: Members of the international animal welfare charity "Four Paws" carry a sedated monkey at a zoo in Rafah yesterday. — AFP

who has said he could no longer afford the upkeep for the animals. Israel's permission was also received for the mission.

He said it was the biggest such mission carried out by Four Paws and intensive negotiations were required. The zoo received attention recently when the owner revealed he had declared one of its lions so customers could pay to play with her. In January, four lion cubs died of cold in the zoo. The Gaza Strip suffers from poverty and a lack of infrastructure,

including a severe electricity shortage.

Israel and Palestinian militants in the strip have fought three wars since 2008. Four Paws says a number of animals at the zoo have died in bombings since its 1999 opening. In 2016, Four Paws helped facilitate the transfer of the sole tiger in the Gaza Strip, eventually relocating it to South Africa. The organization in 2017 rescued a lion and a bear from a zoo in Mosul in northern Iraq, a former stronghold of the Islamic State group. — AFP

Netanyahu vows to annex West...

Continued from Page 1

crimes and foolishness will be met by popular resistance, armed resistance and by all our might".

In an interview broadcast Friday, Netanyahu said he told US President Donald Trump he would not remove settlements or people as part of a future American peace plan. "I said there shouldn't be the removal of even one settlement" from the West Bank, Netanyahu told Israel's Channel 13 television. More than 400,000 Israelis live in West Bank settlements as part of Israel's military occupation of the territory, where more than 2.5 million Palestinians live. A further 200,000 Israelis live in settlements in occupied east Jerusalem, over which Israel has already implemented full sovereignty. The Palestinians hope to establish a state of their own in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

Washington is expected to unveil proposals for Israeli-Palestinian peace sometime after tomorrow's Israeli election in which Netanyahu is seeking a fifth term. The Israeli prime minister was asked by Channel 13 if he was familiar with the details of the US plan, replying he knew "what should be in it". Along with settlements, "our ongoing control of all the territory west of the Jordan" River was a further condition set by the Israeli premier for any US-led peace initiative.

He was referring to Israel maintaining security control over the entire West Bank - a demand he has repeatedly made. Netanyahu, who is running for re-election while facing the possibility of indictment on corruption charges, said he informed Trump not "even one person" would be evicted from a settlement. The US president on Saturday was cautious about the outcome of Israel's upcoming election. "Well, it's going to be close - I think it's going to be

close. Two good people," he said, referring to Netanyahu and his rival Benny Gantz. The latest polls place Netanyahu and ex-military chief Gantz neck and neck, but give the former the advantage in his ability to form a coalition government.

Gantz condemned the premier's remarks in an interview with Israeli news site Ynet. "Why not ask how in 13 years Netanyahu could have annexed and didn't?" said Gantz, in reference to Netanyahu's time as premier. "I think that releasing a strategic and historic decision in an election campaign bubble is not serious and (is) irresponsible." Pressed on his personal position, Gantz said he opposed "unilateral" moves. "We said we will strive for a regionally and globally backed peace agreement while maintaining our basic principles," he said.

Those principles include keeping security control of the Jordan Valley, parts of which are in the West Bank, and maintaining the large settlement blocs in the West Bank. Gantz has in the past signalled openness to withdrawing at least some settlers from other areas. He labelled Netanyahu's remarks as "a meaningless statement". "It's a shame to play with people like that," he said.

Turkey meanwhile accused Netanyahu yesterday of raising annexation as a means of improving his standings in the elections. "West Bank is Palestinian territory occupied by Israel in violation of int'l law," Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Twitter. "Prime Minister Netanyahu's irresponsible statement to seek votes just before the Israeli general elections cannot and will not change this fact."

While Netanyahu has a close relationship with Trump, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas cut off relations with Washington after the US president declared the disputed city of Jerusalem Israel's capital in December 2017. The Palestinians say the US government's pro-Israel bias meant it could no longer lead peace negotiations between them and Israel, while US officials argue their plan will be fair. Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts have been at a standstill since 2014, when a drive for a deal by Barack Obama's administration collapsed. — Agencies

standoff led Pakistan to close its airspace but most commercial air traffic has since resumed and major airports have opened.

As strains between the two neighbors apparently eased, Pakistan said on Friday it would release 360 Indian prisoners this month. The first hundred were released yesterday. Because relations are so rocky, prisoners who have completed jail terms, many of them fishermen convicted of straying into each other's territory, often languish in prison for months, if not years, afterwards. "These are 100 Indian fishermen released from jail as a goodwill gesture by Pakistan," Saad Edhi, an official with Pakistan's largest charity, the Edhi Foundation, told Reuters at Karachi's Cantonment Railway Station yesterday. "They are going to Lahore from where they will be released into India across the Wagha border crossing." — Reuters

Ghosh to name names as wife...

Continued from Page 1

Other reports in Japan say that investigators are looking into allegations that company money allegedly misused by Ghosh could have transited through a business that was run by his wife. Carole intends now to try to pressure the French government to do more for her husband whose 108-day imprisonment in Japan between November 19 and March 6 had left him a "different person", she told The Financial Times in a separate interview.

France's foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said Saturday he had raised the case during talks with his Japanese counterpart Taro Kono on the sidelines of the meeting of Group of Seven (G7) foreign ministers in the

French resort of Drian. Le Drian said he had "reminded him of our attachment to the presumption of innocence and the full rights of consular protection".

Japanese authorities are looking into new allegations that Ghosh transferred some \$15 million in Nissan funds between late 2015 and mid-2018 to a dealership in Oman. They suspect around \$5 million of these funds were siphoned off for Ghosh's use, including for the purchase of a luxury yacht and financing personal investments. Prosecutors say Ghosh "betrayed" his duty not to cause losses to Nissan "in order to benefit himself".

Ghosh denies the allegations and says he is also innocent of the three formal charges he faces: Two charges of deferring his salary and concealing that in official shareholders' documents, and a further charge related to investment losses. The man previously seen as the most powerful figure in the global car industry told French channel TF1 last week that he was "a combative man and an innocent man" and vowed to "defend myself to the bitter end". — AFP

Escalating Libya conflict prompts...

Continued from Page 1

reporters that operation "Volcano of Anger" was aimed at "purging all Libyan cities of aggressor and illegitimate forces", in reference to Haftar's fighters. The LNA said it had carried out its first air raid on a Tripoli suburb, defying calls by the international community to halt hostilities.

The unity government's health ministry said Sunday at least 21 people had been killed and 27 wounded since the fighting began, without specifying whether civilians were among the dead. Haftar's force said Saturday that 14 of its personnel had been killed, while the Libyan Red Crescent reported the death of one of its doctors. GNA head Fayez Al-Sarraj warned Saturday of a "war without a winner" and said reinforcements were pouring into Tripoli to battle Haftar's forces.

Powerful armed groups from the western city of Misrata and fighters from Zintan and Zawiyah - battle-hardened militiamen who took part in the 2011 uprising against Gaddafi - have joined the battle. At least one armed group from Misrata, Brigade 166, arrived Saturday in eastern Tripoli to join the counteroffensive with dozens of vehicles, some mounted with anti-aircraft guns, an AFP photographer said. "We are waiting for orders to repel any advance by the enemy towards Tripoli," said the group's spokesman Khaled Abu Jazia.

Misrata fighters ousted the Islamic State group from Libya's coastal city of Sirte, Gaddafi's hometown, in 2016 after months of fighting. Haftar has also presented himself as the scourge of Islamist extremists, pushing hardline militias out of the eastern city of Benghazi in 2017 after a deadly three-year battle. Yesterday's LNA air raid came a day after pro-GNA forces launched

their own air strikes for the first time since the offensive began, targeting at least one LNA position south of Tripoli. LNA spokesman Ahmed Mesmari had vowed the force would retaliate.

On Saturday he said pro-Haftar fighters were "progressing on several fronts... as planned" and that Tripoli would soon be captured. The US military said yesterday it had temporarily pulled an unspecified number of its troops out of Libya "in response to security conditions on the ground". Analysts say Haftar has been buoyed by a series of successful operations that have brought all of the east and much of southern Libya under his control.

A field marshal who served under Gaddafi and now backs an administration in eastern Libya opposed to the GNA, Haftar was counting on a swift battle to capture Tripoli. But some experts say he miscalculated. "To date, Haftar's operation has mostly failed to go according to plan, and it has now galvanized western Libyan forces against him," said analyst Wolfram Lacher. "He now faces the prospect of a protracted war south of Tripoli, or of a decisive defeat," said Lacher, a researcher with the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. As the tension mounted, Tripoli residents queued Saturday outside petrol stations and supermarkets.

Haftar's offensive came as UN chief Antonio Guterres visited Libya Thursday days ahead of a planned UN-backed conference aimed at uniting Libya's rivals and paving the way for elections. The UN Security Council has called on Haftar's forces to halt their advance, warning it would further destabilise Libya. Envoy Ghassan Salame insisted Saturday the UN was "determined" to go ahead with the April 14-16 conference. Sarraj accused Haftar of "betraying" a February deal to hold elections and create a new unity government before year's end. Haftar is "motivated by personal interests and his own delusions" and is trying to "plunge the country into a cycle of violence", said Sarraj. — AFP

Pakistan claims India planning...

Continued from Page 1

information with the country. Khan blamed India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for "whipping up war hysteria" over claims that India shot down a Pakistani plane during the February standoff. The Indian air force had displayed pieces of a missile that it said was fired by a Pakistani F-16 before it was downed. Satellite images showing little sign of damage have also cast doubt on the success of Indian air strikes on a camp of the Jaish-e-Mohammed militant group in northwestern Pakistan. The

Sports

Predators beat Blackhawks 5-2 to win Central Division crown

Kings finish disappointing season with win over Knights

NASHVILLE: Viktor Arvidsson completed the comeback-and set a franchise record in the process-as host Nashville scored five unanswered goals to beat Chicago 5-2 on Saturday night and claim the top spot in the Central Division on the final night of the regular season. The Predators (47-29-6, 100 points) will face the Dallas Stars in the opening round of the Stanley Cup playoffs. They are on a roll, having won eight of their last 11 games down the stretch to claim a second consecutive division crown. Arvidsson-with his 34th goal of the season, a new standard for a Predators skater-broke a 2-2 deadlock with a power-play goal 3:33 into the third period. As the Predators rushed up the ice, Arvidsson received a cross-ice pass inside the blue line and wired a shot that ended up the game winner. Late goals by Colton Sissons, his into an empty net, and Nick Bonino rounded out the scoring for Nashville, which received a 31-save performance from goalie Pekka Rinne.

JETS 4, COYOTES 2

Mark Scheifele and Kyle Connor collected a goal and an assist as visiting Winnipeg posted a win over Arizona in both teams' regular-season finale at Glendale, Ariz. Nikolaj Ehlers and defenseman Jacob Trouba also tallied, and Connor Hellebuyck made 19 saves for the Jets (47-30-5, 99 points), who recorded just their second win in their last seven games (2-4-1). Winnipeg, which finished second in the Central Division, will have home-ice advantage when it faces St. Louis in the first-round of the playoffs. Nashville's victory over Chicago earlier on Saturday ended the Jets' bid to claim the Central title.

KINGS 5, GOLDEN KNIGHTS 2

Ilya Kovalchuk scored two goals and Anze Kopitar had a goal and an assist to lead host Los Angeles to victory over Vegas. Jeff Carter and Matt Roy also scored goals for Los Angeles, which finished last in the Western Conference for the first time since 2007-08 with 71 points and a 31-42-9 record. Dustin Brown added a pair of assists. Jonathan Quick finished with 29 saves to pick up his 309th career victory, fourth best among U.S. born goaltenders in NHL history. Quick, pulled after giving up seven goals on 25 shots in a 7-2 loss to Calgary in his previous start on April 1, finished the season with a 16-23-7 record.

BLUES 3, CANUCKS 2 (SO)

Ryan O'Reilly and David Perron scored goals in a shootout as host St. Louis beat Vancouver. The Blues (45-28-9, 99 points) briefly moved into first place in the Central Division, but the Predators wound up as division winners for the second straight season after defeating Chicago. St. Louis was in last place in the NHL on Jan. 3 but finished in third and has become the hottest team in the league since then. They will face second-place Winnipeg (47-30-5, 99 points) in the first round of the playoffs. The Canucks, who will miss the playoffs for the fourth straight year, completed 2018-19 with a 35-36-11 mark for 81 points.

LIGHTNING 6, BRUINS 3

Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov each scored to reach career milestones as visiting Tampa Bay matched an NHL record with their 62nd victory, a win over Boston. The Presidents' Trophy-winning Lightning (62-16-4, 128 points) equaled the 1995-96 Detroit Red Wings' mark for single-season wins. They also posted the fourth-most points ever in a season and became the second team in league history to win 30 road games. While the Lightning rested key performers Brayden Point and goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy, Stamkos posted his

45th goal for a career-high 98th point, and Kucherov scored his personal-best 41st goal as the visitors scored four straight to erase a 2-0 deficit. Kucherov, who added an assist, finished with an NHL-leading 128 regular-season points-the most by a Russian-born player in league history.

CANADIENS 6, MAPLES LEAFS 5 (SO)

Ryan Poehling scored three goals in regulation, including the tying goal in the third period in his NHL debut, then added the winner in a shootout as Montreal ended its season by defeating visiting Toronto. Jordan Weal and Andrew Shaw each had a goal and an assist for the Canadiens, who had been eliminated from the playoffs. Nicolas Deslauriers and Artturi Lehkonen each added two assists. Zach Hyman had a goal and an assist for Toronto. Jake Gardiner, Trevor Moore, William Nylander and Kasperii Kapanen also scored for the Maple Leafs, who will face the Boston Bruins in the first round of the playoffs.

BLUE JACKETS 6, SENATORS 2

Pierre-Luc Dubois scored twice as Columbus defeated host Ottawa in the regular-season finale. The Blue Jackets, who had already clinched one of the Eastern Conference's two wild-card playoff berths, hoped to gain the top wild-card slot and avoid Tampa Bay in the first round of the postseason. But those hopes were dashed when Carolina beat Philadelphia to edge the Blue Jackets (47-31-4, 98 points) by one point in the standings. Markus Nutivaara, Alexandre Texier, Oliver Bjorkstrand and Riley Nash also scored for the Blue Jackets, and goaltender Joonas Korpi made 27 saves.

SABRES 7, RED WINGS 1

Jeff Skinner scored twice to reach the 40-goal mark and Buffalo closed out its season with a thumping of host Detroit. Rasmus Dahlin supplied a goal and an assist. Sam Reinhart, Connor Sheary, Zemgus Girgensons and Brandon Montour also scored for the Sabres (33-39-10, 76 points). Linus Ullmark made 23 saves. Skinner reached the 40-goal mark for the first time in his nine-year career. He also had 32 even-strength goals this season. That gave him the most even-strength goals by a Sabre since Alexander Mogilny (49) in the 1992-93 season.

DEVILS 4, PANTHERS 3 (OT)

Travis Zajac scored a power-play goal 56 seconds into overtime as New Jersey defeated host Florida. Nathan Bastian, a 21-year-old who was New Jersey's second-round pick in 2016, scored twice for the Devils and now has three career goals in seven NHL games. Pavel Zacha scored New Jersey's other goal, and 22-year-old rookie Mackenzie Blackwood made 37 saves. The Panthers got goals from Jonathan Huberdeau and Mike Hoffman in the final four minutes to send the game to overtime. Aleksander Barkov also scored for the Panthers. It marked his 35th goal of the season, and he set the franchise record with his 95th point to break the previous record set by Pavel Bure (94) in the 1999-2000 season.

HURRICANES 4, FLYERS 3

Jordan Staal scored the go-ahead goal in the second period as visiting Carolina completed a season sweep of Philadelphia. Staal joined Teuvo Teravainen in collecting a goal and assist for the Hurricanes (46-29-7, 99 points), who clinched the top wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference and will face Metropolitan Division champion Washington in the first round of the playoffs. Warren Foegele and defenseman Justin Faulk scored for



MONTREAL: Max Domi #13 of the Montreal Canadiens skates after the puck against Auston Matthews #34 of the Toronto Maple Leafs during the NHL game at the Bell Centre in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. The Montreal Canadiens defeated the Toronto Maple Leafs 6-5 in a shootout. — AFP

the second consecutive contest, Brock McGinn notched a pair of assists and Curtis McElhinney made 28 saves in the win.

RANGERS 4, PENGUINS 3 (OT)

Ryan Strome scored on a wrist shot from the left dot at 2:09 of overtime to give visiting New York a win over Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh's playoff lot came down to Saturday's results on the final night of the regular season. The Penguins (44-26-12, 100 points) finished third in the Metropolitan Division and will be the road team in a first-round series against the New York Islanders. Brendan Smith, Brady Skjei and Vladislav Namestnikov also scored for the Rangers, who are out of the playoffs and finished 32-36-14 for 78 points. Goaltender Alexandar Georgiev made 36 saves.

ISLANDERS 3, CAPITALS 0

Valtteri Filppula, who missed the previous eight games due to injury, scored twice and goalie Robin Lehner stopped all 29 shots he faced as New York clinched home-ice advantage in the playoffs for the first time in more than 30 years with a win over host Washington. With the win, the Islanders (48-27-7) locked up third place in the Metropolitan Division and home ice against Pittsburgh for a first-round postseason series. It is the first time New York has held home ice since the 1987-88 season, which was the longest active home drought among the four major North American sports leagues. The shutout also ensured the Islanders would allow the fewest goals in the league after allowing the most last season, when they missed the playoffs by 17 points. Lehner's shutout was his career-high sixth and the team-record 11th of the season.

STARS 3, WILD 0

Tyler Seguin scored twice in the first nine minutes of the third period, and that's all goaltender Ben Bishop needed as Dallas defeated visiting Minnesota to clinch the Western Conference's first wild-card spot. The Stars (43-32-7, 93 points) are in the post-season for the first time since 2016 and enter the

Stanley Cup playoffs as the seventh seed in the West. Dallas won five of its final seven games and will play Nashville, the Central Division champion, in the first round, with the schedule to be determined. The Wild (37-36-9, 83 points) won only four of their final 14 games and missed the playoffs for the first time in seven seasons. Minnesota was shut out 11 times this season and managed only 24 shots in the loss.

OILERS 3, FLAMES 1

Leon Draisaitl's 50th goal of the season was overshadowed by Connor McDavid sustaining an injury early in the second period as visiting Edmonton beat Calgary. McDavid was driving to the net when he was tripped up by Flames captain Mark Giordano and went crashing into the post, his left shin taking the brunt of the force. He remained on the ice for several minutes and didn't put any weight on his leg as he was helped to the dressing room. Giordano was assessed a tripping penalty on the play. Edmonton took advantage of the ensuing power play with Alex Chiasson netting his 22nd goal of the season. Flames goalie Mike Smith couldn't contain Oscar Klefbom's point shot, and Chiasson pounced on the loose puck for the eventual game-winning goal.

SHARKS 5, AVALANCHE 2

Even before the opening faceoff of its road loss to San Jose, Colorado knew its fate as hopes of claiming the first of two Western Conference wild-card playoff berths were dashed when Dallas defeated Minnesota earlier in the evening. That means Colorado (38-30-14, 90 points) will play Calgary, who finished second in the President's Trophy race behind Tampa Bay. The Sharks (46-27-9, 101 points), who finished second in the Pacific Division, will face Vegas in the first round of the playoffs. Evander Kane and Gustav Nyquist each had a goal and an assist for the Sharks, who won for just the third time in their last 12 games (3-8-1). Brent Burns, Kevin Labanc and Micheal Haley also scored. Tomas Hertl notched two assists and Martin Jones made 28 saves. — Reuters



Kuwait gears up for Red Bull Back 2 Back

KUWAIT: Red Bull Back 2 Back, an e-football tournament on PS4, is coming to Kuwait! 192 gaming enthusiasts can create a 2-player team and compete in 3 offline qualifiers leading to the national final, ultimately crowning 1 team with the national championship thrown.

In a unique championship, the 2v2 format changes the whole game dynamics as well as supports the players to play with their favorite teammates using strategy, communication & skills. Teams are now focused on how well they can coordinate with their teammate to score two consecutive goals.

192 participants can battle it out in the offline qualifiers from April 25 to 27 and only the top eight teams can head to the on-ground National Final, to be held at 360 Mall on May 2. The series is an e-football interactive competition, based on the global gaming console Playstation 4. The sportive angle is that teams need to score 2 consecutive goals to win.

Qatar hosted the first ever Red Bull Back 2 Back in 2018 making it possible for all e-football gaming enthusiasts to put their skills to the test.

Red Bull Back 2 Back in Kuwait is held in partnership with The Hub, X-cite by Alghanim Electronics, Gamma Game, Qualitynet, PS4, 360 Mall and Acqua Eva. Media partner, Kuwait Times will cover this popular event.

Good skills and constant training are half the battle. If you want to keep the pace up with your teammates or competitors make sure you have a can of Red Bull at your side to take your game to a higher level.

To find out more about Red Bull Back 2 Back and to sign up follow @RedBullKuwait on Instagram & Twitter, and @RedBull on Facebook.

Fiji win fifth consecutive Hong Kong Sevens

HONG KONG: Fiji are within striking distance of the Rugby Sevens series championship after their fifth consecutive victory in Hong Kong yesterday, storming a determined but outmuscled France 21-7.

The defending tournament champions opened the scoring in the fifth minute when a quick pass behind from Aminasi Tuiamba 20 metres from the try line set up an opportunity for Vilimoni Botitu to weave around Remi Siega.

Tuiamba followed with a try of his own for Fiji to lead 14-0 at the break before a yellow card for Josua Vakurunabili saw them concede a penalty.

But the 10th-ranked French could not press the advantage and found themselves back on the defensive even before a high tackle send-off for Tavite Veredamu levelled the playing field.

Tuiamba was sent off with 90 seconds to spare, two minutes after his second try, in a match where the Fijians made full use of their strength advantage.

Fiji's reliable band of supporters, celebrating the country's 19th overall win in Hong Kong, cheered and sang in the north stand long after their team had left the championship podium.

The side came into the final after spoiling the United States' hopes of a maiden Hong Kong Sevens championship with a 28-19 semis win over the series leaders, recovering their custom-

ary precision after a scrappy quarter-finals win over Argentina.

The US beat Samoa to third place without injured captain Madison Hughes. They will stay number one on the standings following their Vegas win and four other finals appearances, with Fiji to leapfrog New Zealand into second.

France, continuing the form that saw them runners-up in Vancouver last month, knocked out Samoa to book their first ever finals appearance in Hong Kong after earlier dashing the All Blacks' chances in a shock 14-12 quarter-final win. New Zealand lost to Argentina 21-14 in the fifth-place plate final when Kurt Baker was sent off in the 13th minute, giving Matias Osadczuk a crucial opening after the final horn.

Japan meanwhile earned a temporary reprieve from their relegation threat with a 10th place finish, losing 26-24 to Scotland in the bowl final.

IRELAND QUALIFIES

Ireland will join the world tour next year after a 28-7 win over Hong Kong-a second disappointment for the hometown side after their 2016 qualifying finals loss.

Fans cheered and waved the city's red and white baunhia flag from all corners of the stadium but the much-improved squad's golden run through the tournament ended when Jordan Conroy bagged the winners' third try in the first minute after the break.

Tom McQueen made the home team's solitary try soon after Gregory O'Shea was sin-binned for rough conduct in the second half.

"It's been a long and hard road. I think that we all just stood on the pitch there and couldn't move," said Ireland captain Billy Dardis after the win. "We're just speechless... It won't sink in for a couple of weeks." — AFP

Sports

Cubs break out to end six-game skid to beat Milwaukee Brewers

Kelly gets game-winner as Diamondbacks edge Red Sox

MILWAUKEE: Jason Heyward went 3-for-3 with two homers and three RBIs, and the Chicago Cubs pulled away for a 14-8 win over the host Milwaukee Brewers on Saturday night. Victor Caratini and Javier Baez also homered for the Cubs, who set a season high for runs. Chicago snapped a six-game losing streak and recorded its first win since the season opener on March 28. Cole Hamels (1-0) limited the Brewers to two runs on six hits in six innings. He walked none and struck out five. Lorenzo Cain, Ryan Braun and Eric Thames homered to lead the Brewers. Milwaukee had won its previous six in a row.

DIAMONDBACKS 5, RED SOX 4

Carson Kelly drove in three runs and delivered a two-out, walk-off single as Arizona beat Boston in Phoenix. Kelly lined a 1-1 pitch from Colten Brewer (0-1) to left field as Nick Ahmed had no trouble scoring from second. Kelly also had a two-run double in the Diamondbacks' four-run second inning. Andrew Benintendi had two of the six hits for Boston, which lost its third in a row. The Red Sox are 2-8, tied for the worst 10-game start in franchise history, according to ESPN.

TIGERS 7, ROYALS 4

Rookie Christin Stewart blasted a grand slam with two outs in the seventh to help catapult host Detroit past Kansas City. With the Tigers trailing 4-3, Stewart hit a 2-2 changeup over Royals reliever Wily Peralta that glanced off of the foul pole in right field and gave the Tigers a 7-4 lead. Tigers closer Shane Greene earned his sixth save as Detroit won its fourth consecutive game. The Royals have dropped five straight since starting the year 2-0.

METS 6, NATIONALS 5

Keon Broxton's two-out RBI single capped a three-run eighth inning for New York, which came back to edge visiting Washington. The Mets squandered leads of 1-0 and 3-1 and fell behind 5-3 in the top of the eighth, when Anthony Rendon hit a leadoff homer and Wilmer Difo hit a two-run, two-out shot, both off Jeury Familia. But the Mets wasted no time coming back in the bottom of the inning, when Pete Alonso and Robinson Cano opened the inning with home runs, the fourth and fifth of the day for New York, tying a single-game high at Citi Field. J.D. Davis hit solo homers in the fourth and sixth, and Michael Conforto had a solo homer in the sixth.

PIRATES 6, REDS 5 (10 INNINGS)

Kevin Newman's RBI double in the bottom of the 10th inning lifted Pittsburgh over visiting Cincinnati. Pinch hitter Francisco Cervelli hit a one-out single off Raisel Iglesias (0-2) and raced home on Newman's hit. Josh Bell was 3-for-5 with a solo homer, two doubles and two RBIs, and Starling Marte hit a two-run double for Pittsburgh, which has won the first three contests

of the four-game series. Kyle Farmer hit a two-run homer, Joey Votto smacked a tying homer, Curt Casali had an RBI double and Yasiel Puig added an RBI single for the Reds.

INDIANS 7, BLUE JAYS 2

Carlos Carrasco struck out 12 batters in five innings, and Jake Bauers had a two-run single as host Cleveland posted a victory over Toronto. Jose Ramirez had two hits and scored twice, and Carlos Santana ripped an RBI single to extend his hitting streak to seven games for the Indians, who have won the first three contests of the four-game series. The seven runs were a season high for Cleveland. Freddy Galvis homered for the second time in as many contests, and Randal Grichuk added an RBI double in the fifth inning for the Blue Jays, who have lost six of their past seven games.

DODGERS 7, ROCKIES 2

Justin Turner had three hits and scored two runs, A.J. Pollock had two RBIs, Alex Verdugo homered and added an RBI triple, and Los Angeles defeated Colorado in Denver. Dodgers starter Walker Buehler (1-0) allowed three hits, two walks and one run in five innings. He struck out four. Kenley Jansen threw 1 1/3 scoreless innings to earn his fourth save of the season for the Dodgers, who have won seven straight over the Rockies. Colorado's David Dahl had a solo homer and an RBI single among his three hits.

TWINS 6, PHILLIES 2

Eddie Rosario hit a three-run homer, and Michael Pineda picked up his first victory in 21 months as Minnesota won at Philadelphia. Pineda, making his second start since undergoing Tommy John surgery in July 2017, allowed two runs on four hits over five innings in picking up his first victory since June 30, 2017, when he was a member of the New York Yankees. He walked one and struck out five. Max Kepler had two hits, including a home run, and Willians Astudillo also homered for the Twins. Rhys Hoskins homered and Bryce Harper had two hits for Philadelphia, which had its streak of six straight games of scoring five or more runs snapped.

MARINERS 9, WHITE SOX 2

Tim Beckham went 4-for-5 with a homer, a double and three RBIs, and Jay Bruce hit two solo homers as Seattle won at Chicago. Mariners starter Mike Leake (2-0) pitched 6 1/3 solid innings. Leake allowed two runs—solo homers by Jose Abreu and Tim Anderson—on nine hits. He didn't walk a batter and struck out six. Seattle relievers Brandon Brennan, Roenis Elias and Connor Sadzeck combined for 2 2/3 scoreless innings. White Sox starter Lucas Giolito (1-1) lasted just 4 1/3 innings, allowing five runs on six hits. He walked four and struck out four.

PADRES 6, CARDINALS 4

Austin Hedges and Manny Machado each followed



MILWAUKEE: Victor Caratini #7 of the Chicago Cubs tags out Hernan Perez #14 of the Milwaukee Brewers at home plate in the second inning at Miller Park in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. — AFP

YANKEES 6, ORIOLES 4

Clint Frazier hit a three-run, eighth-inning homer that gave New York a victory at Baltimore. Aaron Judge added two homers and three RBIs for the Yankees. New York has won the first two games of the series, banging out seven homers. Adam Ottavino (1-0) got the win in relief, and Aroldis Chapman closed it for his second save. Trey Mancini had two hits, including a homer, for the Orioles.

ASTROS 6, ATHLETICS 0

George Springer, Michael Brantley and Robinson Chirinos clubbed home runs in support of Wade Miley as host Houston beat Oakland. Miley (1-1) worked 5 2/3 scoreless innings. He surrendered four hits and two walks with four strikeouts. Stephen Piscotty had two of the Athletics' six hits. Oakland starter Aaron Brooks (1-1) yielded five runs on nine hits in five innings.

MARLINS 4, BRAVES 2

Jorge Alfaro hit two home runs, the second a two-run shot in the ninth inning that allowed visiting Miami to beat Atlanta. Alfaro hit a solo shot in the fifth inning against Atlanta starter Kyle Wright and connected for his third of the season with one out in the ninth against A.J. Minter (0-1). The Marlins broke their four-game losing streak and snapped Atlanta's four-game winning streak. Miami also ended Atlanta's home-field winning streak at nine games and snapped the Braves' nine-game head-to-head winning streak against the Marlins. — Reuters

GIANTS 6, RAYS 4

Brandon Belt hit a home run during a four-run fifth inning as San Francisco rallied past visiting Tampa Bay. Steven Duggar added a two-run double in the fifth for the Giants, and he and Belt had three RBIs apiece. The victory ended San Francisco's three-game losing streak. Ji-Man Choi drove in two runs for the Rays, who lost for just the second time in the past eight games.

ANGELS 5, RANGERS 1

Mike Trout hit a fourth-inning grand slam to power Los Angeles past Texas in Anaheim, Calif. It was Trout's fifth career grand slam, his first since Sept. 17, 2015. Tyler Skaggs (1-1) put together a solid start for the Angels, giving up one run on five hits and one walk in 6 1/3 innings. He struck out five. Rangers starter Drew Smyly (0-1) gave up four runs on six hits and three walks in 3 1/3 innings. He fanned four.

Ko takes one-stroke lead at ANA Inspiration

LOS ANGELES: Ko Jin-young birdied five holes on the front nine to seize slim lead over two other South Koreans heading into the final round of the ANA Inspiration, the first major of the LPGA season.

The 23-year-old from Seoul fired a four-under 68 to lead second round leader Kim In-kyung as the Korean juggernaut steamrolled its way to the top of the leaderboard at the Mission Hills Country Club course near Palm Springs, California. Four of the top seven players are Korean-born.

Ko said she is going to stick to her game plan going into today's fourth round. "I just have to play golf, 18 holes," she said. "I am not nervous, and I am not afraid." Ko's round was far from perfect as she stumbled down the stretch with a double bogey and bogey on Nos. 14 and 15 respectively to reach a eight-under 208 total.

The reigning LPGA rookie-of-the-year led by five strokes at one stage after sinking a long putt on the par-four 10th. But her tee shot on 14 landed in the water and she dropped further with a bogey on the next hole which saw her lead cut to just one stroke.

"I'm not a robot, I'm human," Ko said about the pitching wedge wobble on 14. "Everyone can do a miss shot. Doesn't matter. It happens sometimes." Kim is in sole possession of second place and just one stroke back after shooting a one-over 73.

She struggled on the front nine but bounced back on the back and closed with a birdie on the last hole. Lee Mi-hyang and Korean-American Danielle Kang are tied for third at five under 211, three shots back of Ko. Lee blasted a superb hole-in-one on the 181 yard 17th hole to put herself into contention.

Kim was trying to look at the big picture after a frustrating round in which she surrendered a three-shot lead to start the day. "I quite lost it," she said. "I don't know what it is, expectations I could (not) live up to."

"I was tough on myself but I learned a lot and tomorrow is another day. I hit many good shots. So far, it is already my best year." The 30-year-old Kim is hoping to redeem herself after missing a 35 centimetre (14 inch) putt on the 18th hole of the 2012 tournament that would have delivered her the championship.

Instead she went into a playoff with compatriot Yoo Sun-young where she lost on the first extra hole. Despite her final hole stumble in 2012, Kim is not without a major victory. In 2017, she captured the Women's British Open, in a season that saw her win three times on the Tour. — AFP



LONDON: British rower James Cracknell (C) smiles as he poses with his medal after Cambridge win the 165th annual men's boat race between Oxford University and Cambridge University on the River Thames in London yesterday. Forty six year old, James Cracknell becomes the oldest oarsman to compete in the Boat Race. — AFP

Cracknell stars for Cambridge to become oldest Boat Race winner

LONDON: Former Olympic champion James Cracknell became the oldest Boat Race winner as Cambridge defeated Oxford by one length yesterday. Cracknell is a double-Olympic gold medalist and six-time world champion, but this was the 46-year-old's first taste of glory in the annual race between the two English university crews on the River Thames in London.

Inspired by Cracknell, Cambridge battled to victory in a feat dubbed "off the scale" by his former Great Britain rowing colleague Matthew Pinsent. Eight years older than the previous record holder, Cambridge's 1992 cox Andy Probert, Cracknell suffered a traumatic brain injury in 2010 when fracturing his skull in a bike accident in Arizona.

Cracknell refused to bow to that setback, battling back to top form and fitness. And after last week con-

firming the end of his marriage to Beverley Turner, the Peterhouse College masters student pulled off an extraordinary personal achievement.

"On the start I thought 'I've missed this'," Cracknell told the BBC. "The first few minutes were great, but they just didn't drop. To be honest the endurance wasn't a problem. 'If I had any doubt it would have been my sprinting. I just made sure I stuck it in and hopefully we had enough in the bank.'"

Cracknell conceded more than 25 years on some of his team-mates, but belied his age to leave friends and former colleagues in awe. Cracknell's fellow former Olympian Pinsent said: "It's extraordinary that he's got himself into the shape, at 46, of a 24-year-old."

"I only know one person who could do that, and it's James. It's just off the scale." It was day of double celebration for Cambridge, who won the Women's Boat Race for the third year in succession, beating Oxford by five lengths.

Cambridge appeared close to a record time at the halfway stage, but eventually clocked 18 minutes and 47 seconds, some 14 seconds behind their winning time in 2017. Cambridge stroke Lily Lindsay has rowed internationally for the USA, but insisted nothing compared to a Boat Race victory.

"There's nothing like this," Lindsay told the BBC. "Training alongside my team-mates has been unbelievable. It's been a pleasure." — AFP

Windies Joseph claims IPL best of 6-12 on debut

HYDERABAD: West Indies fast bowler Alzarri Joseph enjoyed a dream Indian Premier League debut for Mumbai Indians on Saturday after returning best ever figures of 6-12 in the Twenty20 tournament.

The 22-year-old, who joined the Mumbai squad in place of the injured Adam Milne of New Zealand, bowled a maiden in 3.4 overs to help his team thrash hosts Sunrisers Hyderabad by 40 runs.

Joseph went past the previous best bowling effort of Pakistan's Sohail Tanvir for Rajasthan Royals in the IPL's inaugural edition in 2008.

Joseph, a lanky pacesman who made his Test debut in 2016 and took 10 wickets in the West Indies' recent home 2-1 series triumph against England, was named man of the match.

"It's a dream start, can't get better than this. I just wanted to bowl to the plans. When they said I was playing, I decided to keep it simple and back myself," Joseph said.

"When I got my first wicket, I had a muted celebration since I was focused on the game that we had to win. The boys are really playing well, lot of hard work, so all we need to do is go to the park and show them what we can do."

Chasing 137 for victory, Hyderabad were dismissed for just 96 in 17.4 overs with Deepak Hooda top-scoring with 20. Joseph got the in-form David Warner of Australia for 15 on his very first ball. It was a fuller length delivery from Joseph that the left-handed Warner dragged on to his stumps.

Warner's opening partner Jonny Bairstow of England also had an ordinary day with the bat, scoring 16, after falling to leg-spinner Rahul Chahar, who took two wickets.

Earlier, West Indies batsman Kieron Pollard smashed an unbeaten 46 off 26 deliveries to give three-time champions Mumbai a fighting 136-7 after they were reeling at 97-7. The burly Pollard hit two fours and four sixes, smashing the ball to all parts of the ground as Mumbai managed 39 runs off the last two overs. — AFP

Sports

Barca 'closer' to La Liga title after beating 10-man Atletico

Suarez and Messi strike late to seal a pivotal 2-0 win

BARCELONA: Luis Suarez and Lionel Messi scored twice in two minutes as Barcelona broke the resistance of 10-man Atletico Madrid on Saturday to go 11 points clear of their La Liga title rivals.

Diego Costa was sent off in the 28th minute at Camp Nou after insulting referee Gil Manzano but while Atletico held on for almost another hour, Suarez and Messi struck late to seal a pivotal 2-0 win. The victory leaves Barca almost out of sight with seven games left to play and maintains momentum ahead of Wednesday's trip to Manchester United in the first leg of the Champions League quarter-finals.

"It is three crucial points," coach Ernesto Valverde said. "We are a little closer." "It gives us a big margin," said Suarez. "We've taken not just one, but two steps forward." United coach Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was in the crowd along with his assistant Mike Phelan but this was a familiar story of Barcelona's deadly duo delivering when it mattered most.

Costa's early and needless dismissal left Atletico needing snookers just to avoid defeat, let alone pull off the win that their coach Diego Simeone had said last week was the only result to keep their challenge alive.

"I asked the referee and he told me Costa said something to him," Simeone said. "Other players have said things and not been sent off but that does not justify what Costa did." Suarez intervened with a superb long-range strike in the 85th minute, before Messi added a second in the 86th. The pair have now scored 53 league goals between them this season while for Messi, this was a record 335th La Liga victory.

Only a monumental collapse could now bring Atletico back into contention and more likely is Barca have earned themselves the luxury of resting players, around an even greater focus on success in Europe.

Antoine Griezmann, who decided against joining Barcelona last summer, was whistled as his name was read out before kick-off and he struggled for chances in what quickly became, after Costa departed, a contest of attack against defence.

Atletico seemed to be finding their way into the game when Manzano showed a red card to the Spaniard, who had pursued the referee and seemingly insulted him after a tangle with Philippe Coutinho.

A fuming Costa was escorted away by Gerard Pique and Barca took control. Jordi Alba had already hit the post after defence-splitting pass by Messi and Coutinho should have scored after a brilliant backheel by Suarez.

Messi came alive at the start of the second half as one shot was saved by the excellent Jan Oblak and another mesmeric run ended with a feathered pass to Suarez but again Oblak saved, this time with his foot.

Finally, the resistance of Atletico and their goalkeeper was broken as Barca scored twice in two minutes. The first was a peach as Suarez lined up a shot from 25 yards and whipped it past the left hand of Oblak into the bottom corner. The second was a display of Messi magic, his weaving run from the right leaving both Jose Gimenez and Diego Godin on their backs. A tucked finish found its way in to finish off the game and, probably, Atletico too. — AFP



BARCELONA: Atletico Madrid's French forward Antoine Griezmann (C) vies with Barcelona's French defender Clement Lenglet (L) during the Spanish league football match between FC Barcelona and Club Atletico de Madrid at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona. — AFP

Five-goal Bayern thrash Dortmund to reclaim top spot

BERLIN: Robert Lewandowski humiliated his old club on Saturday as Bayern Munich obliterated Borussia Dortmund with a scintillating 5-0 win to reclaim their spot at the top of the Bundesliga.

"We are so happy, everything went according to plan today," Lewandowski told Sky. Bayern began the day under immense pressure, having slipped two points behind Dortmund in the title race a week earlier. They ended it on cloud nine, after a masterful first-half performance left Dortmund in the dust and put Bayern on course for a seventh successive league title. The champions may be just a single point ahead of Dortmund in the title race, but the two teams were separated by a gargantuan gulf in quality at the Allianz Arena. "Bayern taught us a lesson today," Dortmund coach Lucien Favre told Sky. "If we keep playing like that, then we will find it difficult to stay in the race." Mahmoud Dahoud struck the post early on for the visitors, but two quick goals from former

Dortmund players put a dominant Bayern firmly in the driving seat. Hummels landed the first blow on ten minutes, rising high at a corner to head in the opener for Bayern. Lewandowski then pounced on a mistake by Dortmund centre-back Dan-Axel Zagadou to double the lead.

Having robbed Zagadou of possession, Lewandowski then looped the ball over goalkeeper Roman Buerki and scissor-kicked it into the open net. Buerki kept a furious Bayern at bay for a short while, denying Lewandowski, Hummels and Thomas Mueller with a series of saves.

But the Dortmund keeper could do nothing to stop the Bavarians' third, a blistering strike from the edge of the area from Javi Martinez. With their defence in disarray, Dortmund could only watch on as Serge Gnabry headed in Bayern's fourth just before half-time. Lewandowski rubbed salt in the wound by netting his second goal just before full-time. "It's not over yet, there are still six games to go and it is a difficult path ahead of us," Lewandowski told television after the game.

The win leaves the title race finely poised on paper, but with Dortmund in the doldrums and Bayern bouncing, Niko Kovac's side are now firm favourites to finish first. RB Leipzig and Eintracht Frankfurt remain on course to take the remaining two Champions League spots after both won earlier on Saturday. Leipzig twice came from behind to claim a

fourth consecutive victory in all competitions. Kai Havertz gave Leverkusen the lead with an early penalty, but Leipzig replied almost immediately when Marcel Sabitzer curled in a free-kick from the edge of the box. Havertz restored the lead with a superb half-volley. Yet an Emil Forsberg penalty and excellent finishes from Cunha and Timo Werner saw Leipzig come back to win the game.

Fourth-placed Frankfurt, meanwhile, snatched a late 2-1 win at Schalke. Schalke's Suat Serdar cancelled out Ante Rebic's opener, but Frankfurt were awarded an injury-time penalty by VAR and Luka Jovic fired in the winner.

Schalke remain five points clear of the bottom three after Nuremberg and Stuttgart shared the points in a relegation showdown. Matheus Pereira gave Nuremberg the lead, but Stuttgart's Ozcan Kabak's controversial equaliser was allowed by VAR despite an apparent offside in the build-up.

The draw keeps Stuttgart four points ahead of Nuremberg in the relegation play-off place. Relegation seems all but certain for Hanover after a 3-1 defeat to local rivals Wolfsburg.

Hanover took the lead through Henrik Weydandt, but Wolfsburg came from behind with goals from Renato Steffen and Jerome Roussillon. Elsewhere, a Marko Grujic goal was not enough for Hertha Berlin, as they lost 2-1 at home to Fortuna Duesseldorf thanks to a Benito Raman brace. — AFP

Kean winner puts Juventus on brink of Serie A title

MILAN: Teenage sensation Moise Kean scored the winner to put Juventus one step away from an eighth consecutive Serie A title on Saturday as a 2-1 comeback win over AC Milan pushed the champions 21 points clear at the top.

Kean—the victim of racist abuse earlier this week in Cagliari—came on as a substitute and fired in the winner on 84 minutes for his fifth goal in as many league games.

The Turin giants will seal a 35th Scudetto with seven matches to spare—the earliest any team has won Serie A if second-placed Napoli lose at home against Genoa. Juventus were playing without injured striker Cristiano Ronaldo, recovering from a thigh injury, as they prepare for their Champions League quarter-final, first leg against Ajax. But 19-year-old Kean has stepped up in the absence of the Portuguese superstar who is battling to be fit for Wednesday's game in Amsterdam. "Even today Kean came on and scored, he is very good at that," said Allegri of the youngster who also scored twice in two Euro 2020 qualifiers for Italy. "He's a young man who is doing very well, but let's leave him to be calm. "Will he play on Wednesday (against Ajax)? We'll see, the substitutes are important as we saw today." Krzysztof Piatek had put visiting AC Milan ahead five minutes before the break with his 21st goal of the season. Paulo Dybala pulled the hosts level from the spot on the hour mark.

For Milan, the defeat further damages their Champions League ambitions with just one point from their last four Serie A games. Gennaro Gattuso's side are fourth but can be overtaken by Atalanta, who are one point behind and travel to third-placed Inter Milan. Roma, also targeting a Champions League berth, got back winning with captain Daniele De Rossi scoring the only goal against Sampdoria, to sit sixth, equal on points with Atalanta.

"We still have a chance to qualify for the Champions League if we beat Lazio next Saturday," said Gattuso, as they target a first Champions League campaign since 2013-14. The visitors had come out firing.

Piatek missed a chance after two minutes, heading wide from Suso's cross. Franck Kessie was also off target early. Sami Khedira came on for the first time since heart surgery a month ago, replacing fellow German Emre Can who went off early with an ankle sprain.

Milan were denied a penalty when Alex Sandro handled Hakan Calhanoglu's cross. The referee decided it was unintentional after a VAR review. Minutes later, Piatek broke through to beat fellow Pole Wojciech Szczesny following a blunder from former Milan defender Leonardo Bonucci,



TURIN: Juventus' Italian forward Moise Kean (R) shoots to score despite AC Milan's Swiss defender Ricardo Rodriguez during the Italian Serie A football match Juventus vs AC Milan at the Juventus stadium in Turin—AFP

who had been widely criticised for comments he made over the racist abuse Kean suffered in Cagliari.

Tiemoue Bakayoko pounced on his sloppy pass to

burst through for Piatek to score. Mario Mandzukic almost grabbed the equaliser before the break but Pepe Reina, at full stretch, tipped clear the Croat's acrobatic effort. — AFP

Pele recovering

PARIS: Brazilian football legend Pele, who has been in hospital in Paris, will discover if he will be allowed to return to Brazil today, his advisor told AFP. "We will know. It is the doctors who will decide," said the advisor having earlier Saturday announced that Pele would definitely return today to Sao Paulo. A date for the 78-year-old's discharge has not been officially announced by hospital which is based in the Paris suburbs. The three-time World Cup winner was admitted to a hospital with a urinary tract infection on Wednesday, the day after appearing at a promotional event with France striker Kylian Mbappe.

Brazilian news website G1 reported that Pele had intended to come out of hospital on Saturday to return to

Brazil but had been delayed by further tests and would stay under observation until he was 100 percent.

The infection was not serious and was under control, according to members of Pele's entourage. "Thank you so much for all the love! The antibiotics are working," Pele tweeted on Friday. "I'm feeling much better and I think I'm ready to play again!"

The event in Paris was originally scheduled for November but the Brazilian "was not in a position to travel". Pele has had several health issues in recent years. A similar infection put him in intensive care in November 2014. In 2016, Pele, who played 1,363 professional matches, scoring 1,281 goals, was unable to light the flame at the Rio Olympics because of severe pain in the hip. "I was not physically fit to participate in the opening of the Games," he said at the time. In January 2018, he cancelled a trip to London fearing a "stressful" and "tiring" journey. — AFP



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE
Chelsea FC v West Ham United 22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE
Bologna FC v AC Chievo Verona 21:30
beIN SPORTS

Qatar wary over 48-team World Cup

KUALA LUMPUR: Qatar stressed that the 2022 World Cup remains at 32 teams as FIFA chief Gianni Infantino piled on pressure to expand the tournament to 48 and share it with other Gulf countries.

Speaking to AFP at the Asian Football Confederation Congress, head organiser Nasser Al-Khater said Qatar was still planning for 32 and that studies about adding another 16 teams were just an "assessment".

"There's a feasibility study on the countries that could possibly host. So together with FIFA we're looking into those possibilities," Khater said in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday. "So that's where we are now. It's still open as an idea but it's not a done deal for it to be a 48-team World Cup."

Although Qatar has said it is open to expanding, Khater was at pains to underline that "the status quo is that it's still a 32-team World Cup, everything after that is an assessment". After winning the right to host a 32-team World Cup in 2010, in a bidding process mired in bribery allegations, the Qataris are coming under sustained pressure to switch to 48.

Oman and Kuwait are being studied as possible co-hosts as Qatar remains under a diplomatic and transport blockade from other Gulf neighbours, who accuse it of supporting terrorism—a charge Doha denies.

Khater said there was no chance of UAE—who have signalled they would like to hold games—or fellow blockaders Saudi Arabia co-hosting the World Cup, given the current impasse. "Under the current environment I don't think it's a possibility," he said, adding that studies were underway about the feasibility of Oman and Kuwait hosting games.

"We've got to take into consideration the capabilities as they stand today but also what could be done over the next three years," he said. Despite the tight timeline, Infantino has made clear he wants 48 teams in 2022 and he subtly hammered home the message in his address to the Asian congress.

The Swiss-Italian FIFA president, who may put the matter to the world body's congress in June, said 90 percent of football associations support the move. "Sharing the games with a few of the neighbouring countries is of course an option as well to make it a true World Cup for the world and for the whole Gulf region," he said.

"Something to discuss, something to think about, something that we are working on together with Qatar and together with all of you. "And of course it's going to be a nice achievement if the first World Cup of 48 teams would be played in Asia." — AFP

25 Predators beat Blackhawks 5-2 to win Central Division crown



26 Cracknell stars for Cambridge to become oldest Boat Race winner



27 Barca 'closer' to La Liga title after beating 10-man Atletico



Everton dent Arsenal's hopes

Jagielka scored for Everton after 10 minutes



LIVERPOOL: Arsenal's Spanish defender Nacho Monreal (3L) vies with Everton's Brazilian striker Richardison (C) during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Arsenal at Goodison Park in Liverpool, north west England yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Arsenal's hopes of a top-four finish in the Premier League were dented yesterday as Everton captain Phil Jagielka took advantage of an unexpected late recall to score the winner in a dominant 1-0 victory at Goodison Park.

The veteran defender, who was brought into the team for a rare appearance after Michael Keane had to withdraw in the warm-up through illness, scored after 10 minutes to earn his side a well-deserved third straight league win.

It marked a significant setback for disappointing Arsenal, who remain fourth in the table but missed an opportunity to leap ahead of their third-placed north London rivals Tottenham Hotspur. Unai Emery's side stay on 63 points, one behind Spurs, level with fifth-

placed Chelsea and two clear of Manchester United in an increasingly tight battle for the Champions League berths. The experienced Jagielka proved Everton's unlikely hero after his late call-up, becoming the oldest goalscorer in the league this season at 36 years 233 days when he poked home his finish after Arsenal failed to clear Lucas Digne's long throw.

The ball had fallen kindly after Dominic Calvert-Lewin got the final touch on to him in the aerial battle, allowing Jagielka to score his first league goal in two years and become Everton's second-oldest marksman in the Premier League era.

"I'm not normally a match-winner, full stop," laughed the former England defender on Sky Sports. "They're the best goals, the little tap-ins from two or three

yards." His goal signalled a hungry and aggressive display from Everton who, while moving up to ninth on 46 points, could have won far more convincingly if Gylfi Sigurdsson and Richardison had converted any of the side's 23 attempts on goal. "We got one goal but could have scored a few more," added Jagielka. He earned special praise from delighted Everton manager Marco Silva, who told the BBC: "He was to start on the bench, but showed how he is a good professional and prepares himself for what the coach and team needs. He is always ready to help the team."

Arsenal, who have conceded at least one goal in every league away match this season, came closest with one curling second-half effort from Henrikh Mkhitaryan but were outplayed and outfought by Silva's team.

They had only two attempts on target in the whole match and, with Mesut Ozil failing to offer much inspiration as captain for the day, endured one of their more frustrating lacklustre away days.

Arsenal's frustration became obvious when the two managers were involved in a brief confrontation in the second half. "The football is emotional. He wants the best for his team, I want the best for mine. At the end we spoke together and everything is normal," said Silva. Arsenal boss Emery felt his team would have to rebound swiftly as they prepared to face Napoli in a Europa League quarter-final first leg on Thursday. "It was not a good result today but we are still fourth," said the Spaniard. "We lost and we need to get up quickly and find the next step." — Reuters

Kipserem sets new course record to win Rotterdam marathon

ROTTERDAM: Kenya's Marius Kipserem set a new course record to win the Rotterdam Marathon yesterday in two hours, four minutes and 11 seconds, his second success in four years.

The previous course record had stood for 10 years after Kenyan Duncan Kibet ran 2:04:27 to win in 2009. Yet that time always looked under threat as the frontrunners set a quick pace of 1:02:16 at the halfway mark.

A Kenyan quartet of Kipserem, who also won in 2016, Emanuel Saina, Vincent Rono and Josphat Boit broke away after about 30km but Rono and Boit fell away as Kipserem and Saina battled it out. Saina faded near the end to allow Turkey's Kaan Ozbilen to pip him to second place.

In Sydney, Australia's dual 100-metre hurdles world champion Sally Pearson yesterday pulled out of her first competitive event in more than a year, saying her body was "overheating", in a blow to her comeback plans.

The 32-year-old, who won the world title in 2011 and 2017, hadn't competed over the hurdles since an Achilles problem sidelined her 14 months ago.

She won her first race since then at the Australian championships in 12.99 seconds, but looked drained afterwards on a hot Sydney day and pulled out of the final.

"After the race I felt like I was overheating, my legs felt like lead and I just needed to get out of there," she told

reporters after getting the all-clear from medical staff.

"I'm disappointed, really disappointed," she added. "But I'm actually going to listen to my body this year and when it's down and I can't move... you've got to listen to it and move on to the next race, get some training in."

It is a big blow for the 2012 Olympic champion as she targets more glory at the Doha world championships in September.

Injuries have been a constant for Pearson, who suffered a broken wrist from a race fall which derailed her 2015 world titles campaign.

A hamstring problem hit her 2016 Rio Olympics hopes and she was forced to pull out of the Commonwealth Games on home soil last year due to the Achilles issue.

While it was tough going for Australia's best-known athlete, the national championships, which wrap up Sunday, has unearthed several new potential stars, notably 16-year-old Sasha Zhoya.

He burst onto the scene by winning the under-20 pole vault with a height of 5.56 metres, just shy of the world championship qualifying standard. No 16-year-old has ever jumped higher.

The Perth-born Zhoya, who could opt to represent France courtesy of his French mother, also defied a headwind to clock 13.05 seconds and win the under-18 110m hurdles-another under-16 world best.

That came a day after he clinched gold in the under-20 200m, finishing in 21.18, narrowly outside the Australian record. Eddie Nketia, 17, is another top prospect, stunning a more experienced field to win the men's 100m in 10.22 seconds. Coached by his father and New Zealand 100m record holder Gus Nketia, he is another subject to a tug-of-war for his services. Nketia is eligible for either Australia or his family's homeland.

Among other athletes, Matt Denny won the men's discus



ROTTERDAM: Winner Marius Kipserem from Kenya celebrates as he crosses the finish line of the 39th Rotterdam Marathon in Rotterdam, yesterday. — AFP

with a throw of 65.28m, inside world championship qualifying distance, while high jumper Joel Badan also leapt a world qualifying height of 2.30m.

Both Kelsey Barber and Kathryn Mitchell threw world championships qualifying distances of 65.53m and 62.78m respectively in the women's javelin. — Agencies

Getafe earn vital victory over Bilbao

GETAFE: Getafe edged closer to qualifying for the Champions League for the first time by beating Athletic Bilbao 1-0 at home yesterday, seizing an advantage in the battle to finish fourth in La Liga. Angel Rodriguez struck the only goal in a tight game of few chances for either side, controlling the ball after an aerial battle and confidently tucking it into the net from inside the area in the 78th minute.

Athletic had moved to within four points of fourth spot with a dramatic 3-2 win over Levante in mid-week but they barely created any clear chances in a highly physical encounter, only managing one shot on target.

Getafe's Spain striker Jaime Mata missed two clear chances to score either side of Rodriguez's strike but the one goal was enough for the home side to take all three points and their players embraced each other at the final whistle.

The victory took fourth-placed Getafe on to 50 points after 31 games, while Valencia are fifth on 46 after their surprise 2-0 defeat at Rayo Vallecano on Saturday. Sevilla are sixth on 46 but have the chance to close the gap with Getafe to one point when they visit Real Valladolid, while Athletic are eighth on 43. — Reuters