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India on high alert ahead of poll as blast heightens fears

India bans Modi film until after mega-election



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah returned to Kuwait yesterday after a private visit to Salzburg, Austria. His Highness the Amir was received at the airport by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and other senior State officials. —KUNA

NEW DELHI: India went on high security alert yesterday ahead of the start of its marathon election, after a campaign dominated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership that has focused on keeping the country safe from attack. A bomb blast Tuesday blamed on Maoist rebels killed five people, including a lawmaker campaigning for Modi, heightened fears of election bloodshed.

Some 80,000 troops, police and paramilitaries will be deployed in troubled Chhattisgarh state—where the attack was carried out—when voting starts Thursday, state police chief D M Awasthi said. Maoist rebels are behind many of the long-simmering insurgencies in at least nine Indian states. But the Election Commission, which organizes the world's biggest democratic election with 900 million eligible voters choosing 543 MPs, insisted the attack would not change its schedule. Seats in 20 states will be decided on the first of seven days of voting spread over six weeks.

Modi's right wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is seeking a second term, defending a landslide win over the opposition Congress party in 2014. The result is predicted to be close however. Chhattisgarh is among sensitive states where polling is staggered over several weeks so security and administrative staff can be moved around. The killing of a local leader of a Hindu nationalist group in

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GUWAHATI: Indian election officials carry Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) and other election material, followed by paramilitary personnel, along the bank of the Brahmaputra river in the northeastern state of Assam yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

Ministry to cut unpaid lines

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Communications urged all landline subscribers to pay their phone bills and warned that automated service cutting would start this month for those who fail to pay overdue bills. The Ministry said in a statement that it would follow the same standard procedures by sending a first warning message next Sunday, a second one on April 21 and finally cut the service on April 28 for those who do not comply. It added that the maximum limit after which the service would be cut is KD 50 for house landlines and KD 100 for commercial ones. The ministry announced that subscribers could pay their bills online at www.moc.kw and the e-government gate at www.e.gov.kw and that they could also inquire about their bills by calling 123. —KUNA

Iran tied to Al-Qaeda: US

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo yesterday accused Iran of ties to Al-Qaeda and declined to say whether the Trump administration had legal authority to invade the country. Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Pompeo hedged on whether the authorization of force by the US Congress days after the September 11, 2001 attacks would allow the United States to strike Iran. "I would prefer just to leave that to lawyers," Pompeo told Senator Rand Paul, a Republican who is critical of US foreign interventions. "The factual question with respect to Iran's connections to Al-Qaeda is very real. They have hosted Al-Qaeda, they have permitted Al-Qaeda to transit their country," he said. "There is no doubt there is a connection between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Al-Qaeda. Period, full stop," he said. —AFP

Driver's licenses seized

KUWAIT: Well-informed security sources said that thousands of driver's licenses have been recently withdrawn from expatriates who had changed their profession or managed to get them through illegal means. The sources added that more licenses will be withdrawn for the same reasons and that an investigation showed that some Ministry of Interior's employees who are involved in the corrupt practices will be referred to Public Prosecution. — By A Saleh

Khashoggi children deny report

RIYADH: The children of murdered Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi denied yesterday discussing any sort of settlement over his killing by Saudi agents after a report of compensation awards. "Currently the trial is taking place and no settlement has been discussed or is being discussed," said the statement, published on Twitter by Khashoggi's elder son Salah. The Washington Post, where Khashoggi was a columnist, reported last week his children were given million-dollar houses and monthly five-figure payments as compensation. — AFP



A handout photo provided by the European Southern Observatory yesterday shows the first photograph of a black hole and its fiery halo. — AFP

'Seeing the unseeable': Black hole revealed

WASHINGTON: Using a global network of telescopes to see "the unseeable," an international scientific team yesterday announced a milestone in astrophysics — the first-ever photo of a black hole — in an achievement that validated a pillar of science put forward by Albert

Einstein more than a century ago.

Black holes are monstrous celestial entities exerting gravitational fields so vicious that no matter or light can escape. The somewhat fuzzy photo of the black hole at the center of Messier 87, or M87, a massive galaxy residing in the center of the relatively nearby Virgo galaxy cluster, shows a glowing ring of red, yellow and white surrounding a dark center. The research was conducted by the Event Horizon Telescope (EHT)

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AYN ZARAH, Libya: A Libyan fighter loyal to the Government of National Accord (GNA) fires an assault rifle during clashes with forces loyal to strongman Khalifa Haftar south of Tripoli's suburb yesterday. — AFP

Thousands flee Tripoli homes as battle rages

TRIPOLI: Eastern forces and troops loyal to the Tripoli government battled on the outskirts of Libya's capital yesterday as thousands of residents fled from the fighting. The Libyan National Army

(LNA) forces of eastern commander Khalifa Haftar held positions in the suburbs about 11 km south of the centre. Steel containers and pickups with mounted machine-guns blocked their way into the city.

Residents reported LNA planes buzzing Tripoli as anti-aircraft guns fired at them. On the ground, Haftar's forces were fighting Prime Minister Fayeze Al-Serraj's soldiers at the former international airport, witnesses said.

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MP: Labor law needs balance

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Head of the National Assembly Priorities Committee MP Ahmad Al-Fadhil said yesterday that the amendments in the labor law in the private sector which calls to raise annual leave to 35 days has some problems and is not likely to be debated in the coming Assembly session next week. Fadhil said that the proposed amendments, which were passed by the Assembly last month in the first reading, needs to create a balance between giving more benefits to Kuwaitis employed in the private sector and not adding new burdens on Kuwaiti businessmen.

He said that there is a problem in the retroactive effect attached to the amendment, adding that "we want to expand benefits for Kuwaiti employees by increasing the leave to 35 days but we do not want to add any burden on Kuwaiti businessmen". The government had voted in favor of the first reading of the law but later retracted and rejected the amendment saying that raising the annual leave from 30 days to 35 days adds a lot of burden on Kuwaiti businesses.

The amendments were proposed in a bid to make working in the private sector more attractive to Kuwaiti citizens, the overwhelming majority of whom prefers government jobs which provide much easier conditions and higher pay and benefits. The problem also is that only under 100,000 Kuwaitis are employed in the private sector against over 1.5 million expatriates

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Netanyahu wins re-election

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu secured a clear path to re-election yesterday, with religious-rightist parties set to hand him a parliamentary majority despite a close contest against his main centrist challenger, a vote tally showed. With more than 97 percent of votes counted, Netanyahu's conservative Likud party looked likely to muster enough support to control 65 of the Knesset's 120 seats and be named to head the

next coalition government.

It would be his record fifth term as premier. President Reuven Rivlin said on Twitter he would begin meeting next week with political parties that won parliamentary seats to hear who they support for prime minister. At the sessions, which Rivlin said would be broadcast live "to ensure transparency", he will then pick a party leader to try to form a coalition, giving

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TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks before supporters at his Likud Party headquarters in the Israeli coastal city of Tel Aviv yesterday. — AFP

Audiences of Crown Prince



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



HH the Deputy Amir receives Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



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

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday

received at Bayan Palace the acting Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Naser Sabah Al-

Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness also received Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-

Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and

Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Khaled Al-Saleh. — KUNA

Kuwaiti MP: IPU dealt with many issues of concern

DOHA: Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Parliamentary caucus MP Rakan Al-Nisf said yesterday that the 140th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) conference discussed several topics and issues of concern to various peoples and countries of the world. In a press statement on the sidelines of the conference, which concluded in the capital Doha yesterday, Al-Nisf said that discussing various issues in the General Assembly and the main committees and sub-committees as well as the adoption of decisions is in the interest of all parliaments. He praised Qatar's hosting of the 140th session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the organization efforts, saying it is a historic precedent for an Arab country to host the IPU conference. He congratulated MP Omar Al-Tabtabae on the occasion of his nomi-



MP Rakan Al-Nisf

nation by the Arab Group for membership of the forum of young parliamentarians in the Union for the second time. — KUNA

Kuwait's parliamentary positions in line with foreign policy: Amb



DOHA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Qatar Hafeeth Al-Ajmi with Kuwaiti Parliament Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. — KUNA

DOHA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Qatar Hafeeth Al-Ajmi said that Kuwaiti parliamentary positions in international forums are consistent with Kuwait foreign policy under the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Al-Ajmi made his remarks to KUNA yesterday at the conclusion of the 140th IPU conference, adding that the active participation of Kuwaiti Parliament Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem shed light on the importance of the world parliaments in

addressing all the issues and crises faced by humanity.

He pointed out Al-Ghanem's speech, which condemned all forms of terrorism in the world, "Zionist entity's" practices against the Palestinian people, and rejected the recent unilateral American declaration to recognize Israel's sovereignty over the occupied Golan.

He stressed on the importance of the results of the committees' meetings at the conference, in which the members of the

Parliamentary Division participated and presented working papers explaining the views of the National Assembly on the issues discussed—notably education, human rights, promotion of international peace and security and women empowerment. He also referred to the results of the meetings held by the National Assembly delegation with Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad, who discussed the historic brotherly relations between the two countries, and the latest developments in the region. — KUNA

Kuwait exerted great effort to achieve development goals

BEIRUT: Assistant Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development in Kuwait Bader Al-Rifai yesterday stressed Kuwait's keenness to implement the goals of sustainable development 2030 goals and made intensive efforts to do so.

Al-Rifai, who heads Kuwait's delegation to the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, said in a speech during the forum that Kuwait formed the Higher National Committee to follow up the implementation of sustainable development goals, which includes a selection of representatives from various stakeholders in government, the private sector and civil society and has issues numerous recommendations in this regard. The National Observatory for Sustainable Development and Future Prospecting has been established to ensure that sustainable development objectives are aligned with strategic plans and development plans, he added.

Kuwait's International Women's Award, under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, is a high-level international award aimed at building an interactive competitive platform that highlights excellence in the public, private and civil society

sectors, he said, adding that such is part of Kuwait's efforts to implement the fifth goal of sustainable development on the empowerment of women.

"Kuwait has also launched the Sustainable Development Award under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who is keen to implement the 2030 agenda and fulfill international commitments," Al-Rifai said. "The government's work program for the 15th legislative term is closely related to the translation of many sustainable development goals, taking into account the different national realities, the level of development and respect for national policies and priorities," he noted.

"Kuwait is one of the first countries to commit to the implementation of the 17th sustainable development goals when His Highness the Amir signed with the world leaders in September 2015 to be committed to achieving these goals," Al-Rifai told KUNA. He said that Kuwait was a pioneer when its development plans included development pillars that confirm the progress towards achieving the goals of sustainable development by its universal adoption and commitment to implement them. — KUNA

Kuwait stresses need for full, unimpeded access to refugees

NEW YORK: Kuwait has stressed the importance of full and unimpeded access to refugees in need of humanitarian assistance and basic services, including health care, education and psychosocial support, as well as allowing the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations to carry out their work. This came in Kuwait's speech delivered by its Ambassador to the United Nations, Mansour Al-Otaibi, at a Security Council session on refugees.

Al-Otaibi called on the international community to continue its support for the efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, stressing the role of institutions, civil society and non-governmental organizations working tirelessly to provide a decent life for all those in need in all areas of conflict to be followed by rehabilitation.

"Our meeting today comes at a time when the number of people forcibly displaced worldwide has reached its highest level since

World War II, with 40 million internally displaced persons, 25.4 million refugees and 3.1 million asylum seekers worldwide, according to UNHCR statistics," he said. "As members of the Security Council, and besides being responsible of maintaining international peace and security, we are also responsible to hold accountable those who do not respect international law and those who fuel conflicts that cause most of the displacement in our world today," he said.

"If the number of conflicts and the number of people in need around the world are a measure of our performance, it will be clear that the Security Council has not been able to deal with, prevent or contain many conflicts, which would increase the burden on the UNHCR and other actors in the field of Humanitarian aid", he noted.

He stressed the importance of preventing conflicts in their initial stages and address-



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Ambassador to the United Nations, Mansour Al-Otaibi, delivers his speech at the Security Council session on refugees. — KUNA

ing the root causes of them, the need for international and regional cooperation and the strengthening of humanitarian efforts. The inability to prevent the outbreak of these conflicts in their initial stages and to address their roots automatically leads to the influx of large numbers of refugees, which entail considerable material and political costs, he added. — KUNA

FAO to join Kuwait's Al-Sumait Prize's Board of Trustees

ROME: Charge d'Affaires of the Kuwait Embassy in Rome Advisor Salem Al-Zamanan has handed over an official invitation from Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah to Deputy Director-General of FAO to join the Board of Trustees of Al-Sumait Prize for African Development. Deputy Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Daniel Gustavson welcomed the Kuwaiti initiative as being a pioneer country in the field of humanitarian work.

Gustavson praised the initiative as an international value that stimulates scientific research to serve the goals of sustainable development to help poor African communities and enable them to improve their living conditions. He said that being a board member will help to expand the development partnership with Kuwait, especially the food security, which is the main task of FAO and one of the priorities of the World Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030.

For his part, Al-Zamanan praised the FAO's unique expertise and major role regarding agricultural development and food security sectors, stressing that being a member of Al-Sumait Prize's Board of Trustees will enhance its international objectives and status. "It is a world-class scientific forum that includes experts, scientists and specialists in various fields with a huge research and scientific archives due to cooperation with distinguished universities and scientific institutions", Al-Zamanan described the UN organization.

Al-Zamanan expressed his pride in welcoming FAO to participate in this initiative since its launch during the third Arab-African summit, hosted by Kuwait in 2013 by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He referred to the "great symbolic value" of the late Kuwaiti philanthropist Dr Abdulrahman Al-Sumait's Prize for his life was dedicated to helping the poor of Africa, "confirming the profound human traits of Kuwait's people." — KUNA



ROME: Charge d'Affaires of the Kuwait Embassy in Rome Advisor Salem Al-Zamanan meets with Deputy Director-General of (FAO) Daniel Gustavson. — KUNA



BEIRUT: Assistant Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development in Kuwait Bader Al-Rifai with the Council's delegation to the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait acting premier hosts investment authority chief



KUWAIT: Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, yesterday received the Director of Kuwait's Investment Authority Farouq Bastaki at Bayan Palace. During the meeting, the



KUWAIT: Sheikh Nasser receives Kuwait's Investment Authority Director Farouq Bastaki.

two sides discussed a host of issues. Sheikh Nasser also received Justice Husam Bahbahani, head of the investiga-

tion committee charged with examining the ministry's final account and contracts related to armament. — KUNA

Education among the most important pillars of 'Kuwait Vision 2035'



KUWAIT: The participants in the National Workshop on the Foundations and Approaches to Integrate Pre-School Education into the Official System of Education. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti National Committee for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) stressed the importance of building and supporting national capacities in the field of education, which is one of the priorities of Kuwait's 2035 vision.

This came in a speech by the Secretary-General of the Organization Nadia Al-Wazzan during the opening of the National Workshop on the Foundations and Approaches to Integrate Pre-School Education into the Official System of Education in cooperation with the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

(ISESCO) and the Arab Center for Educational Research of GCC states. The workshop aims to discuss the reality of pre-school education and the extent of its system's relation to the formal educational system, she added.

She pointed out that it also aims to identify the foundations and approaches to the integration of pre-school education in the formal educational system and to clarify ways to develop the content, objectives and methods of teaching educational materials in pre-school education to facilitate its integration into the formal educational system. On his part, representative of the Director



Nadia Al-Wazzan



Abdulaziz Al-Duaij

General of the Arab Center for Educational Research for the GCC states Abdulaziz Al-Duaij hailed the fruitful cooperation

between the center and other educational and cultural organizations which eventually serves Kuwait's interests. — KUNA

Kuwaiti Health Min praises quality of health services

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Health Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah said yesterday that the Federation of Private Hospitals in Kuwait and the joint effort between the public and private sectors to achieve healthy development in the country are achieving positive results on the quality of health services. This came in a speech on the occasion of sponsoring the 21st annual forum for the development of Arab health care for the Federation of Arab Hospitals, hosted by the country for two days.

He pointed out that the forum will discuss the productive issues in the health sector, good governance, enhancing accountability and productivity of the administration and other important topics, pointing to the awareness of hospitals in the private sector in Kuwait with the support of the Ministry of Health to



Health Minister Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah

achieve health renaissance and internal coordination between them to activate their role in implementing the ambitious vision of the state for the health sector. He pointed out that the Federation of Private Hospitals Companies in Kuwait has been announced as a positive step towards coordination and seeking to organize joint efforts among private hospitals in a way that enhances the quality of health services provided to the public. — KUNA

Finance Min participates in annual WB, IMF meeting

WASHINGTON: Kuwaiti Minister of Finance Dr Nayef Falah Al-Hajraf will attend the annual Spring Meetings of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, DC, to discuss issues of global concern, including global economic prospects, poverty eradication and economic development. The Ministry of Finance said in a press statement Tuesday evening that the minister is scheduled to hold on the sidelines of the gatherings a



Dr Nayef Falah Al-Hajraf

number of meetings with a group of international financial institutions to become acquainted with the latest economic developments in the world. It added that the minister will also meet with officials tasked with reviewing Kuwait Program at the World Bank to get to know about the latest developments of studies the bank is conducting on Kuwait. — KUNA



PARIS: Kuwaiti National Assembly's foreign affairs committee members meet with the Head of the French Senate friendship group Jean-Marie Bockel. — KUNA



PARIS: Kuwaiti National Assembly's foreign affairs committee members meet with the lawmakers of France's Senate.

Kuwait, France eyeing closer parliamentary ties

PARIS: The Kuwaiti National Assembly's foreign affairs committee members discussed on Tuesday bilateral ties and means of promoting them with some lawmakers of France's Senate. In a statement to KUNA, Abdulkarim Al-Kandari, the committee's head, said the Kuwaiti parliamentary visit to France comes in response to an invitation by the French Senate and parliament to deepen relations between the two countries. The delegation discussed files with

the French officials that included Kuwaitis' affairs living in France and facilitations provided to them, he said.

Some other topics pertaining to the region were covered between the two sides, he noted, stressing that the Kuwaiti parliament supports firmly His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's policy aiming to "heal the Gulf rift." The Kuwaiti parliament has a pivotal role in unifying efforts on GCC parliaments levels, as this needs support of some international parliaments like the French legislature, he pointed out.

During the three-day visit, the delegation will hold meetings with Senate's foreign affairs and some French MPs in the European Parliament, Al-Kandari said. Some topics of common concern were discussed by the Kuwaiti delegation, and head of the

French Senate friendship group Jean-Marie Bockel, director of international relations and protocols of the Senate Philippe Adnot and Foreign Relations and head of defense and armed forces committee of the Senate Christian Cambon.

During the meetings, Kuwaiti MPs stressed the depth of relations between the two countries, mainly the parliament. The Kuwaiti lawmakers have several international dossiers, which concern French like issues of refugees, climate and environment as well as humanitarian. The delegation includes Al-Kandari, Abdulwahab Al-Babtain and Abdullah Al-Enezi. They look forward that the upcoming visit of Senate's chairman to Kuwait would help promote cooperation with the two sides. They said the trade exchange between Kuwait and France hit USD 700 million, hoping for increasing this number. — KUNA

Kuwaiti and British officials discuss enhancing cooperation

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lieutenant General Essam Al-Naham on Tuesday discussed with UK's Defense Advisor for the Middle East, Sir John Lorimer, methods of enhancing cooperation between the two countries. In a statement, the ministry said Al-Naham stressed during the meeting the depth of the historical relations between Kuwait and the UK,

where a number of topics were discussed. The statement noted that new mechanisms have been discussed to consolidate cooperation in the fields of exchanging visits, information and experiences. For his part, Sir Lorimer lauded the importance of the issues discussed, which would lead to more cooperation and coordination between the two countries. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lieutenant General Essam Al-Naham meets with UK's Defense Advisor for the Middle East, Sir John Lorimer. — KUNA

KEA, KPI ink memo to preserve environment

KUWAIT: The Environment Public Authority (EPA) yesterday inked a memorandum of understanding with Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) to achieve the mutual goal: safeguarding the Kuwaiti environment and biodiversity. EPA Director General and Chairman Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said in a

statement that such cooperation "emanates from our sense of challenges facing nature." He called for cooperation among all state sectors to protect the environment and achieve sustainable development, endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, envisaging 17 objectives, partly related to tackling environmental deterioration and

climatic change. On fish deaths and the red tide recurrence, he said that the relevant national panel met on Tuesday and worked out plans to tackle these problems. Sheikh Abdullah has called for the speedy collection of the dead fish still in the waters and tackle the dirty water problem in sewers reaching the sea. — KUNA

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A birds-eye view of Souq Sharq's bridge. — KUNA/Hassan Bushlhr

Burgan Bank hosts 2nd 'Job Shadow' program in collaboration with INJAZ

KUWAIT: As a sought-after career destination that seeks to develop the skills and expertise of future leaders in the market, Burgan Bank recently hosted the 2nd "Job Shadow" program in collaboration with INJAZ-Kuwait. Through the latest skills-building program, Burgan Bank aims to create a highly educated generation of ambitious and driven professionals. The "Job Shadow" Program offers school students the opportunity to explore different business sectors through a series of workshops and field visits that are presented by the respective heads, professionals, and business owners.

INJAZ-Kuwait is a private sector driven, non-profit organization that works on developing and building business and entrepreneurial skills of private middle school, high school and university students, with the help of qualified and dedicated volunteers from the private sector. This initiative falls under the KIPCO Group's commitment to train 1,000 students over the next two years, until June 2020. KIPCO first partnered with INJAZ-Kuwait in 2016 with volunteers hailing from within the company and its subsidiaries, including Burgan Bank.

Through the aid of the bank's Human Resources & Development Department and their coordination with other internal departments, 15 students, all majoring in Economics Major from the Australian College of Kuwait explored individual sectors, departments and the overall banking realm. Attended by the representatives of the Learning and Development Center, International



Operations Office, Corporate Banking, Economist-Economy Research Unit, and investor Relations, the students were further inducted on the banks corporate culture, organizational objectives, and goals through an interactive session of Q&As to benefit each academically.

Burgan Bank has a long-standing commitment to enhance the potential of the Kuwaiti youth through innovative educational and skills-building platforms, enabling human development and career progression for the benefit of the present and future generations.

NBK continues to support Elderly Care Department

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues its support to the Elderly Care Department at the Ministry of Social Affairs to support home mobility for elderly for more than 10 years. NBK's support included maintenance of the mobility service that the bank provided, as part of its commitment towards aiding the elderly and continuance of maintaining the donation to help in overcoming all obstacles. NBK Public Relations Team Leader, Talal Al Turki and Asmaa Bin Hussain, NBK Public Relations Officer, visited Dr Amani Al Tabtabaei, the Elderly Care Department Director, to reassure NBK's continuous support to the department.

Al Turki praised the department's efforts to support elderly in need and stressed that NBK believes that the private sector should play a major role in supporting the government's policy towards social aid, in order to maintain the country's approach towards a sustainable future and guarantee better methods to adopt advanced systems and ways to care for those in need. NBK's sponsorship and support comes in line with the bank's customary and ongoing spirit of corporate citizenship as well as the vital role it plays in supporting all social causes.

During the past years, NBK has promoted a range of philanthropic missions and social welfare programs as part of the humanitarian dimension of its corporate social responsibility (CSR). NBK continues to be a leader in CSR, standing as a model in serving all aspects of Kuwait's community. In addition to health, NBK's corporate social responsibility programs cover a range of education, environment, philanthropic, social and sports-related initiatives.



KIB concludes sponsorship of Ideal Mother Award

KUWAIT: For the fifth consecutive year, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) sponsored the 7th Ideal Mother Award honoring mothers of disabled children. The award is organized annually by Al-Kharafi Activity Kids Center, under the patronage of the President of the Kuwait Foundation for Disabled Children, Sabeeka Al-Jasser, to honor the hard work and dedication of mothers of children with mental disabilities across the region.

A press conference was recently held on the occasion of Mother's Day to announce the winners of this year's award, with winners from Kuwait, the GCC and the Arab region. The press conference was attended by the Secretary General and the President of the organizing committee for the Ideal Mother Award.

On his part, Nawaf Najia, Senior Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, commended all mothers and congratulated the winners of the 7th Ideal Mother Award, saying: "We are proud to take part in this event for a fifth consecutive year. Our commitment reflects our

social mission to support events and activities that have a positive impact on the local community. At KIB, we believe in the importance of cultivating a culture of acceptance and support for people with disabilities. For this reason, we continue to support this award, as it recognizes the efforts of parents of children with disabilities, particularly mothers who sacrifice a lot as well as provide limitless love and care."

Najia added that KIB's leading social responsibility program features a wide range of initiatives that serve people with disabilities. Additionally, the Bank provides easily accessible banking services, and accordingly redesigned six of its branches in order to accommodate the needs of customers with special needs, including those who are visually impaired and deaf.

At the end of his statement, Najia lauded the efforts of all organizers of this humanitarian award, wishing all parties involved success in their ongoing efforts. He also noted that KIB will continue to be a supporter of their various impactful activities and initiatives. It is worth noting that KIB believes that the health of the community depends heavily on children of today and their mothers - which are extremely valuable national assets. Accordingly, the Bank is dedicated to participating in events involving people with disabilities to help them overcome obstacles and assist in effective participation and inclusion, thereby benefiting the entire nation.

GBK empowering youth to own their economic success

KUWAIT: Title sponsors of INJAZ Kuwait's 2019 edition of 'Company Program Competition', Gulf Bank is sponsoring the award for 'Best Company'. Held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the two-day event is set to take place at Salva Sabah Al-Ahmad Hall, Marina Hotel from April 12th to 13th, 2019, and will see Gulf Bank's Tareq Al Saleh, Assistant General Manager, Consumer Investments join the competition's judging panel.

Over the course of the two days, the competition will see 250 students compete, where they will be assessed by their donor and financial reports, presentations, panel interviews and booths. The winning students will then be invited to attend the Regional INJAZ company competition the following academic year. Gulf Bank will also be hosting competing students for a workshop session under the theme of public speaking, to help prep participants for the presentation phase of the competition. Sponsorship of the competition falls under the bank's corporate social responsibility, through which the bank supports and empowers the development of Kuwait's youth and their entrepreneurial spirit.

Speaking of the competition, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communications, Gulf Bank, said: "Gulf Bank is proud to support the next generation of Kuwait's entrepreneurs. As a long-time partner and supporter of INJAZ, the bank is committed to Kuwait's youth and their development, through training, mentorship and opportunities. We look forward to this year's edition of the Company Program Competition and wish all those who are participating the best of luck."

INJAZ Kuwait, part of the global network of Junior Achievement worldwide, is a non-profit (NPO), non-governmental organization (NGO) driven by Kuwait's private sector. Through strategic partnerships with Kuwait's business and education sectors, and with the help of qualified and dedicated volunteers, INJAZ delivers both Arabic and English language educational programs on entrepreneurial and leadership skills to build successful careers. The Bank continues to sponsor INJAZ Kuwait as part of its commitment to encourage and develop professional business skills amongst youth. INJAZ Kuwait is a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of young business talent.



Ahmad Al-Amir

Local

KRCS distributes aid to affected people in Iran's Golestan province



GOLESTAN: Kuwait Red Crescent Society distributes aid to flood-stricken victims in the Iranian province of Golestan. — KUNA photos

TEHRAN: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) yesterday distributed aid to flood-stricken victims in some of the affected areas in the Iranian province of Golestan. "The humanitarian message we are carrying today reaches the province of Golestan," KRCS' deputy President Anwar Al-Hasawi, told Kuwait News

Agency (KUNA) yesterday. Al-Hasawi added that the Kuwaiti team would complete delivery of aid supplies to other affected areas in the coming days. He praised efforts of the Iranian Red Crescent Society to help those affected by floods, stressing that cooperation between the Kuwaiti and Iranian Red Crescent

Societies will continue. On his part, deputy Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy of the State of Kuwait in Tehran Falah Al-Hajraf told KUNA that the humanitarian initiative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Humanitarian Leader to provide humanitarian aid to all affected people is

reflected on the ground in the first flood-stricken Iranian province of Golestan. He praised the role of the Kuwaiti Red Crescent team in the distribution of food aid and relief supplies, stressing that the assistance of the Iranian Red Crescent during these circumstances is a humanitarian duty. — KUNA



Municipality campaigns in Hawally make strides

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Municipality for Public Relations announced the achievements of Hawally governorate municipality during the month March with field campaigns resulting in the removal of 82 encroachments on state property. Head of the emergency team Ahmad Ramadhan said three shift inspectors issued 53 warnings for the use of state property in addition to the removal of 82 encroachments. He said that 14 complaints were dealt and 140 violating ads were removed adding that legal action was taken against them.

Un-invited house guest

Interior Ministry of Relations and Security Information said that the Ishbeliya police station received a call about an unidentified individual storming



a house, stealing the car keys and creating a general disturbance before escaping in the stolen car. Police found the vehicle in the same area, so forensics men lifted finger prints from both inside the house and car. They are working on the case.

Honoring ceremony

An honoring ceremony was held for retired Lt General Khalid Yousuf Al-Tarkeet and retired Lt General Khalid Al-Zaid at Crown Plaza under the patronage of the Kuwait Fire Service Directorate Director General Lt General Khalid Rakan Al-Mikrad.

Specialized officers

The interior ministry recently urged its various sectors to notify Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences with their needs regarding specialized officers pending the opening for a new batch of citizens with 2019-2020 university degrees in needed majors. Meanwhile, informed sources said that the total 160 expats were laid off by MoI in 2019-2020 and that most of them had been notified of the termination of their contract last January.

Price manipulation

Kuwait Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies (KUCCS) recently brought up the issue of item price manipulation on its website to a legal advisor. Informed sources added that union chairman, Khaled Al-Otaibi had noticed unjustified price increases of some items resulting from manipulated data at the pricing department adding that the decision was cancelled and an investigation was conducted to determine the culprits.

and PAAET. The meeting was dedicated to discussing categorizing various professions and linking them to certain qualifications and specialties. The meeting also discussed a study on tests and a special training for private sector laborers.

Online lecture

Sabah Hospital's internal diseases department recently organized a lecture using an online video-conference with Professor Alaa Shararah, the head of the digestive system department at the American University. Speaking on the occasion, head of the department, Dr Ghassan Beidi said that the lecture was the first of its kind at Al-Sabah hospital and that it facilitates direct contact with international doctors to benefit from their knowledge.

Pregnant woman beaten by husband, locked in hotel room

KUWAIT: Policemen freed a pregnant woman from a hotel room after her husband locked her inside after forcibly taking her from an Eqaila complex. He had beaten her till she was bleeding and threatened to kill her. The woman, a Kuwaiti, was in an Eqaila mall when she was assaulted by her husband and dragged outside. She screamed for help but no one interfered. He then took her to a hotel in Salmiya where he viciously beat her. The victim called the police from a phone in the room and they helped free her and took her to a nearby hospital. The husband is being sought for questioning.

Child injured by cupboard

A Kuwaiti child had a cupboard fall on her at home and was rushed to Jahra hospital and is due for surgery. The father had brought the girl in a critical condition, and told doctors a cupboard had fallen on her. Police later lodged a complaint of negligence with a minor against the father.

Cheating leads to beating

A Kuwaiti was shocked when she found her husband cheating on her with her best friend at home. She left work early and when she arrived home, she found her husband in bed with her best friend. She became furious and started to exchange blows with the friend who eventually fled from the house. The husband, unable to control his wife, started to beat her and left the house. The wife then went to

police station and lodged a complaint. Investigations are underway.

Suspicious behavior

Police responded to claims by a Sri Lankan saying he found his wife was staying with a stranger in a Hawally flat. Both were arrested after a warrant was obtained. The Sri Lankan had doubts about his wife's behavior and kept a close eye on her. He began following her outside and after a while he saw her enter a flat unknown to him. He then asked the haris (custodian) of the building whose flat it was and he told him that another Sri Lankan man lives there alone. The husband called the police and has lodged a complaint against the two alleged lovers.

Cable thief

A thief stole a 120 meters long cable from a construction site pertaining to the National Guard. The company's lawyer complained to an Ahmadi police station about the theft, which occurred in the site located east of Sabah Al-Ahmad city. Detectives are working on the case.

Suicide by hanging

The body of an Indian who committed suicide was identified by the coroner. Police received a call about a suicide that took place behind a gas station south of the country, so police responded and found the man had hung himself. The public prosecution was informed and the body was recovered by the coroner.

Car blaze kills

A Saudi national burned to death when his car caught fire on Salmiyah road. A shepherd called the police and told them a car collided with the farm he guards - so police, firefighters and paramedics responded and found out the car was totally burnt with the driver trapped inside. Forensics was called in, and they sent the body to the coroner who identified the victim. — Al-Rai

Optional retirement law opens for 6,000 Kuwaitis

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Social security deputy director, Khaled Al-Fadhalah said that the optional retirement law opened for over 6,000 Kuwaitis to retire regardless of the standard age limit of 55 for men and 49 for women. Al-Fadhalah added that social security managed to maintain the minimum pension wage at KD 1,150 and said that the total number of retirees getting those pensions was 145,000 including disabled citizens.


630 expats in MOE

There are a total of 630 expats in leading positions in the Ministry of Education; that is 0.05 percent of the total number of Kuwaitis in the same or similar positions, said informed sources noting that those expats are only placed in positions that rarely employ Kuwaitis. The sources elaborated that Ahmadi educa-

Manpower authority holds meeting with several departments

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The manpower authority recently held a meeting for its joint work team comprising of members from the labor market quality standards department, Kuwait University, ministry of higher education, CSC



عمليات الخفجي المشتركة

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الشركة الكويتية لتفط الخفجي
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The sale of Tender Documents will be effective from **April 08, 2019 until 12:00 Noon, May 2, 2019.**

Attending the Pre-Tender Meeting and Site Visit are Mandatory

A Pre-Tender meeting will be held for interested The bidders at Sheraton Bahrain Hotel, 6 Palace Avenue, 185 Manama, Bahrain, **at 09:00 AM local time on May 2, 2019.** A Site Survey shall be on **Wednesday, May 8, 2019** at KJO, AlKhafji, Saudi Arabia.

The bidder shall note that he shall be required to provide an irrevocable bank guarantee from a bank in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, in the sum of **United States Dollars One Million (US\$1,000,000.00/-) only**, to warrant the bid proposal. Such bank guarantee shall be on behalf of the bidder himself and valid for (120) days from the closing date of the tender, any bid proposal received without the said bank guarantee will be rejected.

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International

THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2019



Large parts of Venezuela hit by massive blackout

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N Korea convenes top-level meeting over 'tense situation'



SANAA: A general view shows the debris following a reported air strike on a plastic factory in Sana'a's Jeraf district.—AFP

Coalition airstrikes hit Yemeni capital

Violence flares; airstrikes target Houthi drone-manufacturing plant

SANAA: The Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen carried out air strikes against two Houthi targets in the capital Sanaa yesterday, its spokesman said. The coalition said the strikes targeted a Houthi drone-manufacturing plant and a warehouse containing launch pads. Residents said a house was also hit, but no casualties were reported. Houthi-run Masirah TV said a fire broke out in a plastics factory as a result of air strikes yesterday.

Saudi Arabia leads a Western-backed alliance of Yemeni and Arab forces that has been fighting the Iran-aligned Houthi move-

ment in neighboring Yemen since March 2015, after Houthi forces drove Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi into exile. They are fighting to restore Hadi's internationally recognized government.

The Houthis, who say their revolution is against corruption, control Sanaa and most population centers. The strikes hit the al-Jeraf neighborhood in north Sanaa. The roof was blasted off a large industrial building and machinery was damaged, Reuters footage showed. Bystanders pointed to powder they say would have been turned into plastic in the factory.

Yemen's war has killed tens of thousands of people - some of them by coalition air strikes - and driven 10 million to the brink of famine. The country is also suffering its third major outbreak of cholera since the conflict began.

A peace process that began with a December agreement has stalled as the United Nations tries to get the parties to pull troops out of Hodeidah, Yemen's main port, and complete a prisoner exchange. These confidence-building measures could pave the way for further talks. Although a ceasefire agreed in December for

Hodeidah largely holds, violence continues elsewhere and has escalated in recent weeks. A blast hit Sanaa near two schools on Sunday, the United Nations and Houthi-run media has said.

"It was almost lunchtime and students were in class. The blast shattered the windows and unleashed a burst of shrapnel and broken glass into the classrooms," said Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF's Middle East head. Funerals for 12 of the killed pupils, all girls, were held yesterday, their coffins carried by a crowd through the streets of Sanaa. It is unclear what caused the blast

and UN Yemen aid coordinator Lise Grande called for efforts to pinpoint the circumstances "that led to this tragedy".

As well as deaths from conflict, Yemen's war has pushed more than 2 million people from their homes - exacerbating disease, poverty and hunger. Aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said a flare up in fighting in the Abs region in recent days has forced 18,000 from their homes, adding to the tens of thousands already displaced in that area. "MSF calls on all warring parties to ensure the protection of civilians," it said in a statement. — Reuters

Hunting for freebies with India's election flying squad

COIMBATORE: It's a game of cat and mouse for Naresh and his "flying squad", stopping cars, trucks and scooters to hunt for goodies being handed to voters in India's mammoth election starting this week. The illegal doling out of everything from alcohol to kitchen appliances has long been a feature of the vast undertaking that is Indian elections. But it's getting worse. Naresh (not his real name) is part of one of 60 "mobile flying squads" in just one district in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, where political parties are notoriously generous at election time.

"We never really know how our day will end," Naresh, a khaki-uniformed policeman, said as AFP accompanied him and his team of officials around the prosperous industrial town of Coimbatore in their two SUVs. "There are days when we get nothing. But on others, a timely tip-off by rivals or by plain perseverance and luck, we may find cash, a stash of alcohol or other freebies," he added. Over several hours, and in constant touch with a command centre, they stop dozens of vehicles and comb through the interiors, even under moped seats, but in vain this time.

The day before another squad impounded a vehicle packed with sarees. Others in the past have seized booze, watches, juicers, mixers, or just hard cash. And while Tamil Nadu is a hotspot for such practices, it's a nationwide phenomenon in the country of 1.3 billion people voting between April 11 and May 19.

In late March authorities said that they had already seized 1.5 billion rupees, 4.4 million liters of liquor and even precious metals and illegal drugs. From the moment the election was announced in mid-March, special laws took effect banning Indians from carrying large amounts of money, gold or silver without



COIMBATORE, India: An Indian election commission 'flying squad' member displays a complaint and tracking application on a smartphone in the south Indian city of Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu state.—AFP

proper supporting documentation. Officials such as police and railway staff are also granted temporary powers during the campaign to seize items they believe are being used to sway voters.

Big spenders

The phenomenon may not be new but many observers say that it has only become more acute in recent years, giving a huge advantage to richer candidates who can always spend more to get elected. A report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), a New Delhi-based non-government entity pushing for electoral transparency, says that 32 percent of candidates in the first phase of voting on Thursday are multi-millionaires.

"Our statistics prove that the candidates with criminal backgrounds and money have a much better chance of winning," Anil Verma, head of ADR's National Election Watch unit, told AFP. "The unlimited flow of money and its use to induce voters is increasing and we can see it with the nationwide cash seizures by authorities," he added. Kumar, a Coimbatore resident who uses only one name, told AFP that

he always rejected any inducements offered by local candidates.

"The parties give us 500 rupees (\$6 US) each asking us to vote for their party. I tell them that I don't need money to vote and that I'd vote for whoever I want to vote," he told AFP. But he's likely just one side of the coin. Another ADR survey found 41 percent of those polled felt that the distribution of freebies was an important part of the election process—even though almost 73 percent know it is illegal. "Many politicians say that voters themselves demand freebies and they feel even more pressured if any rival offers them," said Verma.

"It is a temptation many can't resist. One can still understand the economically weak doing it but in some Indian states including Tamil Nadu, even the middle classes often take the money and the freebies," he added. Meanwhile, others say that while they might take what is offered, they won't necessarily fulfill their side of the bargain. "Why refuse when they offer us money? We can still go and vote for the candidate we like," said Senthil Kumar, a Coimbatore cab driver. "I even tell my family to take the money but vote for whoever they want."—AFP

Global executions at lowest level in a decade: Amnesty

LONDON: Executions fell worldwide by nearly a third last year to their lowest levels in at least a decade, but several countries recorded a rise, Amnesty International said yesterday. Use of the death penalty dropped in Iran by an eye-popping 50 percent, following a change to its anti-narcotics laws—Iraq, Pakistan and Somalia, the rights group found in its annual review.

But it rose in Belarus, Japan, Singapore, South Sudan and the United States, while Thailand resumed executions for the first time in a decade and Sri Lanka threatened to follow suit. "Despite regressive steps from some, the number of executions carried out by several of the worst perpetrators has fallen significantly," said Kumi Naidoo, Amnesty International's Secretary General.

He added the "dramatic" drop globally proved that "even the most unlikely countries are starting to change their ways and realise the death penalty is not the answer". "This is a hopeful indication that it's only a matter of time before this cruel punishment is consigned to history, where it belongs," Naidoo said. In total, death penalty figures fell around the world from at least 993 in 2017, to at least 690 last year.

Amnesty's count excludes China—the world's top executioner—where the numbers are classified as a state secret. The organization estimates thousands of people are sentenced to death and executed there every year. Iran (253), Saudi Arabia (149), Vietnam (at least 85) and Iraq (at least 52) were the other countries that resorted to the death penalty most in 2018. Vietnamese authorities' decision to release figures for last year was "unprecedented" for the southeast Asian nation, Amnesty noted.

Elsewhere Japan, Singapore and South Sudan reported their highest levels of executions in years. Naidoo said these three countries "now form a dwindling minority" and challenged them "to act boldly and put a stop to this abhorrent punishment". Amnesty also noted concern over a sharp spike in the number of death sentences imposed in some countries—particularly Iraq and Egypt—over the course of 2018. But its annual review found the global trend towards abolition of the death penalty had gathered steam.

Burkina Faso adopted a new penal code effectively banning executions, while Gambia and Malaysia both declared an official moratorium. Meanwhile, courts in the US state of Washington declared the death penalty unconstitutional there. Amnesty highlighted a December vote by the United Nations General Assembly that saw 121 countries support a global moratorium on the death penalty, with only 35 states opposed. "Slowly but steadily, global consensus is building towards ending the use of the death penalty," Naidoo said.—AFP

International

Sudan protesters rally for fifth day outside army HQ

Bashir loyalists call for support rally for president

KHARTOUM: Thousands of Sudanese protesters were camped outside army headquarters for a fifth day yesterday demanding President Omar al-Bashir step down, after the police ordered their forces not to intervene. In what has become the biggest challenge yet to Bashir's three decades of iron-fisted rule, crowds of demonstrators thronged the sprawling complex through the night, singing and dancing to the tunes of revolutionary songs, witnesses said.

Hundreds of mobile phones were held aloft, shining a sea of lights on the tide of people massed outside the buildings. "The night passed peacefully without any incident," said one protester who spent the entire night at the complex. "We believe that the support from the soldiers on the ground and now the police is definitely growing." However, Bashir loyalists have called for a support rally for the president today, and urged all members of the ruling party to take part.

"The National Congress Party's executive bureau supports the national dialogue partners' initiative to organize a gathering to be seen by all the people today," the acting chief of Bashir's ruling party, Ahmed Harun, said in a statement. "I call on all members of NCP across the state of Khartoum to participate in this rally." The anti-government demonstrators have braved regular volleys of tear gas from members of the powerful National Intelligence and Security Service since they began camping at the army headquarters on April 6, protest organizers say.

Police with us

But for the first time overnight Tuesday they did not face any "threat" from security agents during the night, said the protester who did not want to be named for security reasons. "The soldiers at the complex are also angry after the attacks of tear gas and are determined to prevent them," another demonstrator said. Witnesses said the troops had stationed several vehicles loaded with

machine-guns at the gates of the complex, which also houses Bashir's residence and the defense ministry.

On Tuesday, security agents had to abort bids to disperse the crowds when soldiers fired in the air to counter incoming volleys of tear gas from security agents. "It seems the police too are now with us," said the protester. "When we were coming to the army building last night we saw many policemen but they did not stop us." The police on Tuesday ordered its officers on Tuesday to avoid intervening against the demonstrators. "We call on God to preserve the security and calm of our country ... and to unite the Sudanese people... for an agreement which would support the peaceful transition of power," a police spokesman said in a statement.

Food, water for protesters

Yesterday, protesters were raising funds to ensure a regular supply of food and water for the crowd. "Many shop owners and businessmen have offered us free supplies," said another demonstrator. Protest organizers launched their latest campaign on Saturday as part of a months-long movement against Bashir's 30-year rule. Demonstrations first erupted on December 19 in response to a government decision to triple the price of bread.

But they quickly mushroomed into a nationwide campaign against Bashir's rule with rallies held across cities, towns and villages. Bashir has remained defiant, and imposed a slew of tough measures including a nationwide state of emergency, which has led to scores of arrests or journalists and activists. Officials say 38 people have died in protest-related violence so far. On Tuesday, the United States, Britain and Norway for the first time threw their weight behind the protesters, calling for a credible political transition plan in Sudan. "The time has come for the Sudanese authorities to respond to these popular demands in a serious" way, the so-called troika of Western diplomatic players said. "The Sudanese authorities must now



KHARTOUM: Sudanese demonstrators rally in front of the military headquarters in the capital Khartoum. — AFP

respond and deliver a credible plan for this political transition." Defense Minister General Awad Ibnouf has vowed the army would prevent any slide into chaos.

"Sudan's armed forces understand the reasons for the demonstrations and is not against the demands and aspira-

tions of the citizens, but it will not allow the country to fall into chaos," Ibnouf said on Monday, according to state media. The umbrella group spearheading the protests has meanwhile appealed to the army for talks on forming a transitional government. — AFP

Breaking the Internet: New regulations imperil global network

WASHINGTON: Is the dream of one global internet still alive? Increasingly, moves by governments to filter and restrict content are threatening to fragment the system created with the promise of connecting the world with a largely unified body of content. China for years has walled off some western services, and the fragmentation may be accelerating with regulations being imposed elsewhere, say analysts. This is leading to a "splinternet," a term circulated for a decade or more but gaining more traction in recent months.

"The internet is already fragmented in material ways, but each regulator around the world thinks they know how to fix the internet," said Eric Goldman, director of the High Tech Law Institute at Santa Clara University. "I think we will see a tsunami of regulations that will lead to a further splintering of the internet." The New Zealand Christchurch mosques massacre livestreamed online heightened the sense of urgency in some countries, with debates in the US and EU on curbing incitement to violence.

A new Australian law could jail social media executives for failing to take down violent extremist content quickly. And a proposal unveiled in Britain could make executives personally liable for harmful content posted on social platforms. Similar ideas have been discussed by lawmakers in Washington. These moves come as Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg has called for a "common global framework" of internet rules. But free-speech defenders warn it would be dangerous to allow governments to regulate online content, even if social media are struggling. The UK proposal "is a very bad look for a rights-respecting democracy," said R. David Edelman, a former White House technol-

ogy adviser who now heads the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's project on technology, the economy and national security. "It would place the UK toward the far end of the internet censorship spectrum."

Elsewhere, critics pounced on a bill in Singapore to ban "fake news," calling it a thinly veiled attempt at censorship. "It is not up to the government to arbitrarily determine what is and is not true," said Daniel Bastard of the media watchdog group Reporters Without Borders. "In its current form, this Orwellian law establishes nothing less than a 'ministry of truth' that would be free to silence independent voices and impose the ruling party's line."

According to human rights watchdog Freedom House, at least 17 countries approved or proposed laws to restrict online media in the name of fighting "fake news" and manipulation, and 13 countries prosecuted internet users for spreading "false" information.

Europe's response

Goldman argued that the European Union's General Protection Data Regulation, aimed at improving online privacy, "has been a major milestone in splintering the internet." It has led to numerous websites including news sites cut off from Europe, he said. The EU copyright directive approved last month, aimed at protecting creators, could also result in fragmentation of online information, said Danny O'Brien of the Electronic Frontier Foundation.

"Whatever internet companies and organizations do to comply with 27 or more national laws-from dropping links to European news sites entirely... will be challenged by one rights-holder faction or another," O'Brien said in a blog post. The multitude of proposed rules around the world raise the prospect of varying versions of the internet depending on location, with small services potentially blocking out some countries.

Data nationalism

In addition to online content measures, several countries including India and Brazil are enforcing "data localization" requirements which could limit the availability of

services such as e-commerce and banking. "More nation-states are trying to territorialize information flows and assert control of those services," said Milton Mueller, a Georgia Institute of Technology professor and co-founder of the Internet Governance Project of analysts. The fragmentation could have profound consequences both in terms of economics and human rights, according to Mueller.

"The bypassing of these national boundaries when the internet got started was what was revolutionary and led to the expansion of new services," he said. "There is now an assertion of national sovereignty and national control, going against globalization and the ability of people to freely interact with each other." The "data nationalization" movement gained momentum after the 2013 revelations on surveillance from national security contractor Edward Snowden. This gave some governments "an excuse to impose far greater state control" of their networks, said Edelman. Edelman maintained the Snowden revelations represented a turning point because they "ruptured some of the faith in a global consensus" about the internet. Australia's efforts to curb content and require access to encrypted devices could prompt some firms to think twice about doing business there, said Edelman.

"The potential is there for companies to simply exit the Australian market," he said. Amy Webb, a New York University professor and founder of the Future Today Institute, said the trend toward Balkanization is growing, posing challenges for online services.

"Compliance is going to become more and more difficult for companies who do business in more than one location, which could stifle growth and restrict the flow of meaningful, credible information," Webb said. Ira Magaziner, a former policy adviser to president Bill Clinton who helped negotiate deals to bring the internet around the world, said he is optimistic that countries will find ways to keep the internet from fragmenting. "We are going through a period where there are a lot of questions and a lot of forces for disintegration," Magaziner said, while noting that countries cutting off data will be hurting themselves. — AFP

'Flight shame' has Swedes rethinking air travel

STOCKHOLM: Saddled with long dark winters at home, Swedes have for decades been frequent flyers seeking out sunnier climes, but a growing number are changing their ways because of air travel's impact on the climate. "Flygskam", or flight shame, has become a buzz word referring to feeling guilt over the environmental effects of flying, contributing to a trend that has more and more Swedes, mainly young, opting to travel by train to ease their conscience.

Spearheading the movement for trains-over-planes is Sweden's own Greta Thunberg, the 16-year-old climate school striker who refuses to fly, travelling by rail to the World Economic Forum in Davos and the climate summit in Katowice, Poland. A growing number of public figures have vowed to #stayontheground, including Swedish television skiing commentator Bjorn Ferry who said last year he would only travel to competitions by train.

And 250 people working in the film industry signed a recent article in the country's biggest daily Dagens Nyheter calling for Swedish film producers to limit shoots abroad. An anonymous Swedish Instagram account created in December has been shaming social media profiles and influencers for promoting trips to far-flung destinations, racking up more than 60,000 followers.

"I'm certainly affected by my surroundings and (flight shame) has affected how I view flying," Viktoria Hellstrom, a 27-year-old political science student in Stockholm, told AFP. Last summer, she took the train to Italy, even though the friends she was

meeting there went by plane, as that would have been her second flight within a few weeks. "The only way I could justify going there was if I took the train," she said.

Train bookings up

The Scandinavian country's location far north—it is 4,000 kilometers from the northernmost town of Kiruna to France's Cote d'Azur—as well as its robust standard of living, the popularity of charter trips and the rise of low-cost airlines have all contributed to making Swedes big flyers. Researchers at Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg last year found that Swedes' per capita emissions from flying between 1990 and 2017 were five times the global average. Emissions from Swedes' international air travel have soared 61 percent since 1990, their study said.

Swedes' concerns rely on solid data: the Swedish Meteorological Institute said last week that the average annual temperature was rising twice as fast in the country as the global average. In March, the World Wildlife Foundation published a survey indicating that nearly one in five Swedes had chosen to travel by rail rather than by air in order to minimize their environmental impact. The trend was most noticeable among women and young people, it said.

Meanwhile, a survey published Tuesday in Sweden's leading travel magazine Vagabond said 64 percent of those who travelled abroad less last year did so because of climate reasons. National rail operator SJ reported a 21 percent boost in business travel this winter, and the government has announced plans to reintroduce night trains to major European cities before the end of its mandate in 2022.

The number of domestic flight passengers was projected to be down by 3.2 percent in 2018, the transport authority said in its latest figures from September, though the number of passengers on international flights rose four percent. So far the "flight



STOCKHOLM: In this file photo an airplane takes off as the sun sets in Stockholm airport in Sweden. — AFP

shame" trend hasn't had the same traction among Sweden's neighbors, although Finland has spawned its own version of the expression, calling it "lentohapea".

Is 'flight shame' real?

Other parts of the developed world may not have a word that's quite as catchy-making do with #flyingless or #stopflying—but average CO2 emissions of 285 grams per air kilometer, compared with 158 for cars and 14 for trains, have given many pause. Fausta Gabola, a French-Italian student in Paris, is no longer sure that she should take up an offer to study in Australia on a scholarship. "It's my dream to go there," she told AFP. "I applied without thinking too much about it and now I have a dilemma. I would feel like a hypocrite if I went."

French political scientist Mathilde Szuba said any no-fly decision effectively puts distant countries out of reach. "There is no

easy substitute for flying," she told AFP. "You can't go to faraway places without taking the plane." Back in Sweden, some experts say that changing travel patterns are not always a direct result of "flight shame". Frida Hylander, a Swedish psychologist, said shame, and the fear of being shamed, was a powerful motivator, but she also cautioned against overstating its importance.

Other factors were at play, Hylander said, citing as an example Sweden's unusually hot summer last year which caused massive wildfires and may have sparked wider concerns about climate change. "You should exercise caution when pointing to one single factor," Hylander said. A new flight tax introduced in April 2018 may also have played a role, she said, as well as the bankruptcy of regional airline NextJet, which led to the closure of a number of domestic flight routes for several months. — AFP

Nigerian troops repel Boko Haram attack on Damaturu

LAGOS: Nigerian troops thwarted a Boko Haram attack on the northeastern city of Damaturu, killing several jihadists and seizing weapons, the army said yesterday. Tuesday's attempted raid on the capital of Yobe state was the first time since late 2014 that the insurgents had attacked the city, residents told AFP. But army spokesman Njoka Irabor said in a statement that soldiers had "successfully laid an ambush which led to the extermination of many Boko Haram terrorists".

"The vigilant troops effectively ambushed the criminals few meters ahead of Maisandari community (on) the outskirts of the city of Damaturu," he added. Gun trucks and a cache of arms and ammunition were recovered, he said. The attack followed the evacuation of some 2,000 people from Jakana village, some 90 kilometers from Damaturu on the road to Maiduguri, in neighboring Borno state on Tuesday. The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) said troops escorted the residents to the Bakassi camp for internally displaced people (IDPs) in Maiduguri "for their own safety".

Boko Haram fighters loyal to the faction headed by Abubakar Shekau launched a dawn raid on Damaturu on December 1, 2014. More than 150 people, including 38 police, were killed. Tuesday's attack was suspected to have been carried out by a separate faction backed by the Islamist State group. The decade-long insurgency has killed more than 27,000 people in the northeast with 1.8 million still displaced from their homes. — AFP

SW Iran hit by flooding

LONDON: Iran evacuated residents from inundated areas of the southwestern city of Ahvaz yesterday as the nationwide death toll from the worst flooding in 70 years reached 77, state media reported. The state news agency IRNA said more than 200 villages were also evacuated in the oil-rich southwestern province of Khuzestan, and 46,000 people were housed in emergency shelters provided by the government.

Further districts of Ahvaz were put on flood alert, the provincial governor said, as more torrential rain was forecast in coming days. A hospital in the city was evacuated on Monday. Floods described by officials as the worst since the 1940s have hit some 1,900 cities and villages across Iran after exceptionally heavy rain since March 19. Western and southwestern areas of the country are suffering the worst.

The disaster has left aid agencies struggling to cope, and the armed forces were deployed to help flood-hit people. Early estimates put flood losses in agriculture sector at 47 trillion rials (\$350 million).

The government has told citizens, and especially flood-affected farmers, that all losses will be compensated. The Islamic Republic's state budget is already stretched under U.S. sanctions on energy and banking sectors that have halved Iranian oil exports and restricted access to some revenues abroad. Iranian officials have repeatedly said the massive floods have not affected production and development of oilfields, or the flow of crude through pipelines to recipient markets. — Reuters

International

Large parts of Venezuela hit by massive blackout

President Maduro blames US-backed sabotage for blackouts

CARACAS: A new blackout across large parts of crisis-hit Venezuela, including the capital Caracas, forced many to spend another night in the dark on Tuesday. The electricity shortage—the biggest in a week—hit a large section of the capital, with social media posts from residents across the country suggesting significant areas in at least 20 of the 23 states of Venezuela were also affected. An hour after the lights went out, some areas of the capital regained power.

No reason for the blackout was immediately given by the government or the state electricity company Corpoelec. The company set up to confront the crisis “is working to reestablish the service”, said state TV channel VTV. Opposition leader Juan Guaido—whose claim to be interim president is supported by around 50 nations—had previously called for protests against public service failures to be held yesterday.

Power cuts have occurred sporadically since the massive blackout of March 7 left the country in the dark for five days, with electricity being rationed outside of Caracas. Water supplies have also been interrupted, along with transport and communications, forcing many people to trim their work days to six hours. The government of President Nicolas Maduro has blamed US-backed sabotage for the massive blackouts that have deprived millions of power, blaming “electromagnetic, cyber and physical” attacks against the Guri

hydroelectric power plant, which produces 80 percent of the country’s energy.

The opposition blames a failure to maintain critical infrastructure and Guaido on Saturday launched what he promised will be a “definitive” escalation of pressure to force the country’s embattled leftist leader from office. He called for a huge nationwide turnout on yesterday, urging his followers to redouble their efforts to maintain pressure. “Everyone to the streets, let’s start the final phase of the end of the usurpation!” He said.

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. Facing intense pressure at home and abroad, the Maduro government has sought to weaken Guaido. It 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 last week he feared he could be abducted by government agents.

Washington and its allies view Maduro as illegitimate since he took office in January for a second term following elections widely seen as deeply flawed. Maduro is supported by the Venezuelan military, China and Russia, and said yesterday he was inclined to accept international aid, following a meeting with the International Committee of the Red Cross. — AFP



CARACAS: This file photo shows a general view of Francisco Fajardo highway partially illuminated during a power outage in Caracas, Venezuela. — AFP

French MPs move to trigger referendum on privatizations

PARIS: French opposition MPs and senators claimed a victory for democracy yesterday after using a little-known constitutional article to try to trigger a referendum on the government’s controversial plans to privatize Paris’ airports. In a rare display of non-partisanship, lawmakers straddling the spectrum from the far left to the right banded together Tuesday to propose a “referendum d’initiative populaire” (RIP) on the privatization of Aeroports de Paris, operator of Charles de Gaulle, Orly and Le Bourget airports.

This is the first time ever that opposition lawmakers have come together to try force a referendum on an issue, using a measure introduced by former president Nicolas Sarkozy in 2008 to boost participatory democracy. Socialist Party spokesman Boris Vallaud told France 2 broadcaster on Wednesday that MPs were determined to block a “major strategic error, because Aeroports de Paris is not just a regular company”.

Referendums are rare in France, with the last one dating to 2005 when voters rejected a new European constitution. Some of the “yellow vests” protesters behind five months of weekly rallies over social inequality and what they see as France’s failure to give ordinary citizens a say in law-making hailed the move. “It’s thanks to us. Great! At least maybe we

have a sort of lobby power,” Jerome Rodrigues, one of the movement’s leaders, told France Info radio.

Praising the lawmakers, he said: “For once they did what they are paid for, to listen to, and carry the voice of the people in French institutions.” A referendum can be triggered on proposed legislation with the support of a fifth of members of both houses of parliament — 185 out of 925 — and if one-tenth of the electorate — 4.5 million voters—sign an online petition in favor. The process is long, however, and contains several constitutional and parliamentary hurdles that have acted as a deterrent to lawmakers in the past.

RIP to privatizations?

President Emmanuel Macron, a former investment banker, wants to invest the proceeds of the sale in an innovation fund—a key campaign promise — and reduce the public debt, which stood at 99 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the second quarter. Other companies set for privatization include lottery and scratch-cards monopoly Francaise des Jeux.

Opposition lawmakers have been up in arms, accusing the government of selling off state jewels. The privatization of the airports was expected to be adopted by parliament, thanks to the large majority of Macron’s Republic on the Move party. But a referendum, the outcome of which would be binding, could throw a spanner in the works.

A total of 218 lawmakers from 11 parliamentary groups ranging from members of the Communist Party to the centre-right Republicans signed the referendum bill on Tuesday, well above the 185 required. The far-right National Rally voiced support for the move, without adding its signature. — AFP

announced the departure of the official in charge of fighting illegal immigration—Homeland Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen. According to US media reports, Trump’s reshuffle could herald even harsher measures on the southern border.

Confusion and rhetoric

But Trump’s latest comments reflect the confused nature of the White House’s messaging on the sensitive immigration issue. Trump claimed that he never wanted children to be taken away from their parents when they crossed the border illegally or sought asylum. Instead he blamed this on his Democratic predecessor Barack Obama. “Just so you understand, President Obama separated the children. Those cages that were shown—I think they were very inappropriate—were by President Obama’s administration, not by Trump. President Obama had child separation,” Trump said.

“You know it. We all know it. I’m the one who stopped it,” he said. Obama did crack down on illegal immigration, resulting in large numbers of deportations and children were detained along with their parents. However, Trump hugely accelerated the tough measures with a so-called zero-tolerance policy. This meant that anyone crossing illegally would face automatic prosecution, leading to jailing of adults and immediate separation of their children. Before, families with children were largely allowed to stay together, whether on bail, in custody or being deported. By the time Trump’s policy was halted, thousands of children had been removed and placed in temporary accommodation, leading to harrowing images and reports of administrative chaos in which parents were later unable to find their children. —AFP

Torrential rain in Rio de Janeiro leaves 10 dead

RIO DE JANEIRO: Torrential rain left at least 10 people dead in Rio de Janeiro, officials said Tuesday, as emergency workers rescued people trapped by the downpour and clean-up efforts gathered pace. The unusually heavy rain began Monday evening and continued into Tuesday, triggering widespread flash flooding that turned some streets into raging rivers, toppled trees and swept away cars as the state emergency agency declared a crisis.

The southern zone of the city, which includes the tourist hot-spots Copacabana and Ipanema as well as several impoverished favela areas, has been hardest hit. Heavy runoff from neighboring hills gushed through some apartment buildings and shops, leaving behind mud and debris. The bodies of three people were found in a car buried behind an upmarket shopping center on Tuesday afternoon, while two women died when a house in a favela collapsed, the Fire Department said in a statement.

The other victims included a man who died after he was electrocuted in a house and another who was caught in a torrent of water. The ferocity of the storm stunned some residents, who are long used to wild weather battering their city. “I’ve never seen or witnessed anything like this. I’ve seen it happen elsewhere but never here,” Guilherme de Oliveira, 59, told AFP. “I’m really amazed at all of this.”

Cars and public buses were crushed by fallen trees, and sections of streets were ripped up by the force of the water. Many people returning home Monday evening or trying to go to work on Tuesday were drenched as they waded through knee-deep water in the relentless downpour. Some people climbed fences to avoid flooded streets, while others tied plastic bags around



RIO DE JANEIRO: A firefighter of the underwater unit retrieves a license plate from a submerged car at a road tunnel during heavy rains in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP

their feet to protect themselves from the polluted water.

Beaches normally packed with people sunbathing or playing sports were empty as brown water flowed into the ocean. “Many houses in Rio are built in areas that are inappropriate, in places where water flows. It’s a tragedy and we have tried to warn these people,” Rio de Janeiro mayor Marcelo Crivella told local media. Schools throughout the city suspended classes and power was knocked out in some areas as heavy rain complicated rescue and clean-up efforts. Crivella said the downpour had been “totally atypical.”

Rio de Janeiro state governor Wilson Witel expressed sympathy for the “families of the victims” on Twitter. “The whole state is helping in what is necessary,” he said.

Incompetence

Heavy rain often causes flash flooding in

Rio de Janeiro as the volume of water overwhelms the city’s creaky infrastructure and brings traffic to a grinding halt. Favelas, which often lack proper streets and sanitation, are spread across hills throughout the city and are usually the hardest hit by heavy downpours. In a scathing editorial on Tuesday, the powerful O Globo media group skewered government authorities for doing “practically nothing” to prepare for what it described as a “predictable phenomenon.”

“Once again, what we saw was a show of incompetence, except for honorable exceptions like firefighters,” the editorial said. “After so many tragedies ... it was hoped that the city would have learned something.” City government spending on projects including drainage works fell more than 79 percent from 2016 to 2018, economic news site Valor reported. Torrential rain in February killed at least six people in Rio de Janeiro. — AFP

Trump won’t separate children from migrants, but praises tactic

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said Tuesday he won’t resume separating children of undocumented migrants, but insisted the policy does prevent people from treating illegal border crossings like a trip to “Disneyland.” “We’re not looking to do it,” he told reporters at the White House. However, Trump said the practice, which ended in June 2018 under heavy political and legal pressure, had in fact been useful in stemming the flow of illegal immigrants across the US-Mexican border.

“I’ll tell you something: once you don’t have it, that’s why you have many more people coming,” Trump said of migrants and asylum seekers. “They are coming like it’s a picnic, like ‘let’s go to Disneyland,’” Trump said. Just last week he referred to the asylum process as a “hoax.” Trump’s battle to prevent illegal immigration and soaring numbers of asylum seekers has turned into the biggest political fight in the country ahead of next year’s presidential election.

The Republican is pushing hard for construction of hundreds of miles of new border wall and layers of razor wire. He says that the United States is “full” and cannot take any more migrants or even people fleeing violence in Central America. On Sunday, Trump abruptly

On US-Mexico border, militia vow to patrol until ‘wall is up’

SUNLAND PARK: In the southeastern most pocket of the US state of New Mexico, with El Paso, Texas, to the east and Mexico a stone’s throw south, there is a small camp: a few tents and a weathered trailer. It is home to the half dozen or so members of the United Constitutional Patriots (UCP) — a small but well-armed militia dipping their toes into the US border vigilante movement. In recent months, thousands of migrants have arrived in Mexico, primarily Central Americans fleeing poverty and violence at home.

US President Donald Trump has described them as a threat to national security, demanding billions of dollars from Congress to build a wall on the southern border. The resignation of Trump’s Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen on Sunday, reportedly over the president’s push to restart family separations at the border, has underscored his failure to get to grips with the issue. And until the wall is built, the UCP insist they will be there.

“We’re here to assist the border patrol because they are so short handed,” the group’s leader, 70-year-old “Striker,” told AFP. “We have a good work rapport with them,” he said. “Our goal was to be here until we’re not needed. And when we’re not needed is when that wall is up.” Based out of Flora Vista, New Mexico, the group—made up mostly of older veterans—enjoys



SUNLAND PARK: A group of about 30 Brazilian migrants, who had just crossed the border, get into a US Border Patrol van, taking them off the property of Jeff Allen, who used to run a brick factory near Mt. Christo Rey on the US-Mexico border in Sunland Park, New Mexico. — AFP

an enthusiastic social media following. Striker can be heard fielding calls during lengthy radio broadcasts streamed online several times a week.

And if you want to sign up to “uphold and defend the constitution?” Just give pick up the phone. Out in the field—with tactical gear, rifles and even custom patches—the UCP say their duties include watching the border, standing guard over people who want to hand themselves in to border patrol and pursuing those who don’t.

Fantasy world

“It’s kind of no different than if you were to have citizen’s arrest powers, if you will,” Jim Benvie, a 43-year-old from Minnesota, told AFP. Benvie explains that they use the term “surrender” because border patrol rules only allow them

to “observe and report.” In a statement, the US Border Patrol said it “does not endorse private groups or organizations taking enforcement matters into their own hands.” And according to the Anti Defamation League’s Mark Pitcavage, an expert on right-wing extremism, the UCP’s bark is much bigger than its bite.

“These guys, even more than some other militia or vigilante groups, seem to be living in a fantasy world of their own,” he told AFP, adding that they have been active for around two and a half years. “They have this grandiose vision of themselves as protecting America from the drug cartels,” he said. However, he added: “It’s ironic that the areas where they seem to have chosen to focus ... is a very highly guarded stretch of border.” — AFP

International

N Korea convenes top-level meeting over 'tense situation'

Kim Jong Un orders officials to follow Party's new strategic line

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called a full meeting yesterday of a top committee of the ruling Workers' Party to address what he described as the "prevailing tense situation", state media reported. The gathering of the Central Committee comes after Kim's Hanoi summit with US President Donald Trump broke up without agreement in February, and as South Korean President Moon Jae-in flies to Washington for talks with the US leader.

But the North's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) appeared to indicate that Kim may be focusing on Pyongyang's continued push to develop its economy. In a meeting with senior officials Tuesday, Kim ordered them to display "an attitude befitting the masters of the revolution and construction under the prevailing tense situation and thus follow through on the new strategic line of the Party", KCNA reported.

Last April Kim declared that the ruling party's "new strategic line" would be "socialist economic construction" and its quest for nuclear development was complete. Kim made "a deep analysis of the matters pending urgent solution in the party and state", KCNA said, adding that at yesterday's meeting the central committee "decide the new orientation and ways of struggle in line with the need of the prevailing revolutionary situation". It comes ahead of the opening of the country's rubber stamp legislature today.

Cheong Seong-chang, an analyst at the Sejong Institute, said it would be difficult for Kim to lay out a new policy direction while Trump continues to express a willingness to maintain dialogue. Instead yesterday's

meeting could involve a reshuffle of party officials including Kim Yong Chol, the North's top envoy for talks with the US, who has been "blamed the most for the failure of the Hanoi summit", he said. "It would signal a green light if he is replaced with a more flexible and practical figure, but if he stays, denuclearization talks won't be easy," Cheong said.

Dark age

Trump and Kim held their first landmark summit in Singapore last June, where the North Korean leader signed a vaguely-worded deal on the "denuclearization of the Korean peninsula". But the failure by the pair to reach agreement at their second summit in Hanoi—which broke up without even a joint statement—has raised questions over the future of the wider process. At the time the North said it wanted only sanctions affecting livelihoods to be lifted, but the US said Pyongyang was effectively demanding the bulk of the measures were relaxed while not being precise about what it was offering in return.

Both sides expressed willingness to talk further and Trump has repeatedly said since that he maintains good relations with his North Korean counterpart, boasting he had blocked new sanctions planned for Pyongyang. North Korea has also been careful not to criticize Trump personally, while saying last month that sanctions against it were an "action against humanity to destroy modern civilization and turn the society back in a mediaeval dark age".

But shortly after the Hanoi summit, a series of satellite



This picture shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, center, attending a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) at the office building of the Central Committee of the WPK in Pyongyang. — AFP

images emerged suggesting increased activity at the North's Sohae rocket site, triggering international alarm that the nuclear-armed state might be preparing a long-range or space launch. A senior Pyongyang diplomat told reporters last month that the North was considering sus-

pending nuclear talks with the US. In a move that could upset the North, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo who flew four times last year as Trump's top envoy on the denuclearization process—agreed with Senate questioners on Tuesday that Kim is a "tyrant". — AFP

N Zealand lawmakers give final okay to tougher gun laws

SYDNEY: New Zealand lawmakers have almost unanimously passed sweeping gun reforms, paving the way for a ban on military-style semi-automatic weapons to enter into force as soon as Friday. Lawmakers passed the legislation on final reading, less than a month after a gunman entered two mosques in Christchurch killing 50 people. During the debate Wednesday Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern told parliamentarians she "vividly" recalled the moment after the massacre when she, without consulting widely, decided the government had to act.

Ardern, her voice filled with emotion, said it was during a briefing with the police commissioner when she was told about the "nature of the attack", the weapons used and how they were notified but had been obtained legally. "I could not fathom how weapons that could cause such destruction, and large-scale death could have been obtained legally in this country. I could not fathom that," she told lawmakers. She could not, she said, face the public or "the victims that had been left behind from this terror attack and tell them hand-on-heart that our system and our laws allow these guns to be available and that was okay. Because it was not."



CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand: Temel Atacocugu, center, a survivor of the March 15 twin mosque massacre, leaves the Christchurch District Court. — AFP

The new rules amend permissive 1983 gun laws that had the subject of multiple reform attempts. The sole holdout against the legislation was the ACT Party, which has a single seat in the 120 seat parliament. The new rules are aimed at removing semi-automatic firearms from circulation through a buy-back scheme, prohibition and harsh prison sentences. A hand-in amnesty will be in place until 30 September 2019, but perpetrators will face between two and ten years in jail for

breaking the laws.

The new laws also prohibit "semi-automatic firearms, magazines, and parts that can be used to assemble prohibited firearms." The law will now need royal approval, in practice a rubber stamp, which is expected to take place on Thursday, paving the way for the rules to enter into force the next day. The bill was first introduced on April 1. Its passage in barely ten days has surprised even the most ardent gun control advocates. — AFP

Ten die in India mudslide

NEW DELHI: Ten impoverished women working as daily wage laborers died after being buried alive yesterday in southern India by a mudslide, police said. The incident took place in the Narayanpet district of Telangana state, a senior police officer told AFP. "They were daily wage laborers and were working at a digging site. They went near a hill to have their lunch when the mudslide occurred," said G. Sridhar, the deputy police superintendent of Narayanpet.

Police and rescue officials used earth movers to clear the mud and retrieve the bodies. The Press Trust of India news agency quoted witnesses as saying the women were buried under a mound of mud some six to eight feet deep. State Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao asked officials to provide help to the families of the victims who he said "belonged to the poorest strata" of the socie-



NARAYANPET: Workers look on as family members mourn near the victims of a mudslide after a wall collapsed in Marikal village, Narayanpet district of Telangana state. — AFP

ty. Hundreds of people die in floods and landslides across India each year. The landslides

are more common during the monsoon season which runs from June to September. — AFP

Dalai Lama to leave hospital in few days

NEW DELHI: The Dalai Lama has been admitted to hospital in New Delhi for treatment but is "doing much better" and should be released soon, his close aide said yesterday. "His Holiness is doing much better, but he is still undergoing treatment at a hospital and we hope in few days he will be discharged," Tenzin Taklha, the Dalai Lama's personal spokesman, told AFP.

Another aide told AFP the 83-year-old Buddhist monk flew to the Indian capital early

Tuesday for a doctor's visit at Max hospital after he experienced a "light cough." "The doctor said there's nothing to worry about. It's not that serious," said Ngodup Tsering, the Dalai Lama's representative in the United States. "He's taking a few days' rest."

Kangra police superintendent Santosh Patil told The Indian Express that the Dalai Lama, who is based in Dharamshala and has been in permanent exile in India for some 60 years, took a regular morning flight Tuesday and was not airlifted. A spokeswoman for Max hospital in Delhi said they would not comment on the condition of the Dalai Lama's health due to patient confidentiality.

Although the exiled leader remains a hugely popular speaker, he has cut back on his global engagements and has not met a world leader since 2016 — while govern-

ments have been wary of extending invitations to him for fear of angering Beijing. The Dalai Lama has sought to pre-empt any attempt by Beijing, which has effectively wiped out any organized opposition to its rule in Tibet, to name his reincarnated successor, even announcing in 2011 that he may be the last in the lineage. The Tibetan spiritual leader enjoys wide support across the partisan divide in Washington, where a senator raised the issue of his succession at a hearing Tuesday. Senator Cory Gardner, the Republican who heads the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on Asia, said that the United States should follow the Dalai Lama's lead on how to choose his successor. "Let me be very clear—the United States Congress will never recognize a Dalai Lama that is selected by the Chinese," Gardner said. — AFP

Pakistan PM says anti-militant push vital for stability

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's push to curb armed militant groups in the wake of a standoff with India that brought the nuclear-armed neighbors close to war reflected an urgent need for stability to meet growing economic challenges, Prime Minister Imran Khan said. Facing a financial crisis and heavy pressure to take on militant groups to avoid sanctions from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a global money laundering and terror finance watchdog, Khan said Pakistan was acting in its own interests.

"Everyone now knows that what is happening in Pakistan has never happened (before)," Khan told a group of foreign journalists at his office in Islamabad on Tuesday, outlining a push to bring the more than 30,000 madrasas across Pakistan under government control and rehabilitate thousands of former militants. "We have decided, this country has decided, for the future of the country — forget outside pressure — we will not allow armed militias to operate," he said.

The comments underline a push by Pakistan to improve its image after years of accusations that its security services have exploited militant groups as proxies against neighbors, including India and Afghanistan. Islamabad has consistently denied the accusations and said Pakistan has suffered more from militant violence than any other country, with tens of thousands of deaths and billions of dollars in economic damage over recent decades.

But Khan, a former cricket star, implicitly accepted the role played by Pakistan in fostering and steering militant groups that grew out of the US-backed mujahideen fighting Soviet forces in neighboring Afghanistan in the 1980s. "We should never have allowed them to exist once jihad was over," he said, rejecting suggestions

that he could face opposition from the powerful military and the ISI, Pakistan's main intelligence agency.

"Today, we have the total support of the Pakistan army and intelligence services in dismantling them," Khan said. "What use has ISI of them anymore? These groups were created for the Afghan jihad."

Broken promises

Pakistan's critics, including India, have dismissed Khan's promises of a crack-down, saying similar pledges have been repeatedly made by previous governments only to be quietly dropped once attention shifted. They point to Pakistan's continued failure to arrest Masood Azhar, leader of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), the group which claimed responsibility for the Feb. 14 attack in Pulwama district of Indian-controlled Kashmir that killed 40 paramilitary police. Khan said Pakistan was constrained by the need to build a legal case that would stand up in court but said Azhar had been driven underground and was "ineffective" and unwell. "More important than him is the set-up and that is being dismantled," he said.

Although Khan insisted that the actions against militant groups were being undertaken for Pakistan's own benefits, his government, which came to power last August, faces severe economic headwinds that have made international support vital. In discussions with the International Monetary Fund over what would be its 13th bailout since the 1980s, Pakistan is struggling to stay off the FATF blacklist, which would bring heavy economic penalties. "We can't afford to be blacklisted, that would mean sanctions," Khan said.

With a currency that has lost more than a quarter of its value over the past year, a yawning current account deficit and galloping inflation running at over nine percent, Pakistan is in desperate need of a respite to get its economy on track. Elected on a platform of tackling the endemic corruption that has helped cripple Pakistan's economy, Khan said his top priority was to take 100 million people, or around half the population, out of poverty. "You can only do this if there is stability in Pakistan." — Reuters

Fresh clashes in Myanmar's Rakhine state temple town

YANGON: Fighting between the Myanmar army and ethnic Rakhine rebels has escalated in the western state's temple-studded town of Mrauk U, sources confirmed yesterday, with reports of military jets streaking across the sky. Riven by complex ethnic and religious divides, Rakhine state was the epicenter of a brutal military campaign in 2017 that forced some 740,000 Rohingya Muslims over the border into Bangladesh. But the army is now locked in deadly battles with the Arakan Army (AA), a group that claims to represent the state's ethnic Rakhine Buddhists and is vying for more autonomy.

The AA has killed at least 22 police officers since fighting ramped up in January. The government says dozens of rebels have been killed. Thousands of

troops have been deployed to try to quell the spreading unrest. Three weeks ago the fighting reached Mrauk U, the ancient capital of the Rakhine kingdom and a site popular with intrepid tourists for its array of temples and pagodas. Mrauk U resident Khin Than told AFP by phone the fighting started about 10pm Tuesday night and was worse than last time.

"It's getting serious. People are scared to leave their homes," she said, describing the ground shaking under the roar of jets. AA spokesman Khine Thukha told AFP they re-entered Mrauk U on Tuesday night to retaliate against artillery bombardments. "The Burmese military is dropping bombs from jet fighters and helicopters," he said. Military spokesman Colonel Win Zaw Oo confirmed clashes were taking place but did not release further details.

The military has vowed to crush the rebel group, which formed exactly 10 years ago and enjoys widespread support from many ethnic Rakhine. The AA posted on its website Wednesday a message of congratulations for its 10th anniversary from an allied rebel group based on the other side of the country. — AFP

Analysis

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian GulfTHE LEADING INDEPENDENT
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COMMERCIAL : 24835618P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net‘Trojan Horse’:
Brexiters plot
EU vote mischief

They call it the Trojan Horse strategy: Brexit supporters furious at their government's failure to leave the EU on time are aiming to undermine the European Parliament following elections next month. The Greek myth about the hollow wooden horse Odysseus used to sneak his men into Troy to capture it from within was invoked by Conservative MP Mark Francois ahead of the critical EU summit. "If we were to be held in the EU against our democratically expressed will because some in the EU hope against hope that we will change our mind, then they will live to regret it," Francois told a Brexiteer conference in the heart of London.

"We will become a Trojan Horse within the EU and utterly derail all their attempts to pursue a more federalist project," he said from a lectern bearing a portrait of Margaret Thatcher — a premier whose views on Europe grew darker with time. Francois warned EU leaders meeting in Brussels later to consider the UK government's request for another Brexit delay that "they will need to bear all these inconvenient truths in mind".

‘As difficult as possible’

These inconvenient truths were first raised in a tweet last Friday by Jacob Rees-Mogg — the leader of a right-wing insurgency tearing at Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservative Party. "If a long extension leaves us stuck in the EU we should be as difficult as possible," Rees-Mogg wrote moments after May asked Brussels to push back Britain's departure to keep it from crashing out. EU leaders' expected approval will put Britain in the paradoxical situation of having to take part in European Parliament elections on May 23 — nearly three years after voting to chart its own course.

Rees-Mogg said Britain should make best use of its predicament by vetoing "any increase in the (EU) budget, obstruct the putative EU army and block (French President Emmanuel) Macron's integrationist schemes". Francois pointed cheerfully to a response to Rees-Mogg's tweet from the European Parliament's Brexit coordinator Guy Verhofstadt that also went viral. "For those in the EU who may be tempted to further extend the Brexit saga, I can only say, be careful what you wish for," Verhofstadt wrote. "Who am I to put try and put it better than Guy Verhofstadt," Francois chortled.

‘Fireworks’

Rees-Mogg and Francois voted against the Brexit deal that May struck with the EU all three times it came up for a vote. They view it as too EU-friendly. Only 26 of the 314 Conservatives in parliament joined them the last time around — a shrinking group that May hopes will grow even smaller by the time she tries to get her pact through on the fourth attempt. Her ability to do this quickly could still keep Britain from having to actually fill its 73 seats when a new European Parliament opens its doors in July.

Some of the current places have in any case been reassigned. Yet the level of Conservatives' anger with May seems to be rising as the possibility grows of Brexit being pushed further out of reach. Ninety-seven Conservative MPs voted against a measure Tuesday aimed at averting a no-deal scenario. It prevailed by a 420-110 margin. Veteran EU foes such as Nigel Farage — a poster boy of the pro-Brexit campaign who once headed the nationalist UKIP group — hope the groundswell of discontent will carry his new Brexit Party to big gains in Europe.

"If we have to fight those European election on May 23, we'll fight them because it's time we taught them a lesson," Farage says in a video campaign message. And even those not running themselves sound tempted by the idea of Britain making a nuisance of itself in European halls of power. Asked whether he might consider running in the European elections, veteran Conservative MP William Cash told parliament this week: "I must admit that if I were to, there would be quite a lot of fireworks in the European Parliament". — AFP

All articles appearing on these pages are the personal opinion of the writers. Kuwait Times takes no responsibility for views expressed therein.



Image obtained from the Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar's self-proclaimed Libyan National Army (LNA) War Information Division's Facebook page shows a burning vehicle outside the 4th Brigade camp in Al-Aziziyah, located some 40 kilometers south of the Libyan capital Tripoli. — AFP

How Libya's Haftar blindsided world powers

Western diplomats sat for three hours with Libyan commander Khalifa Haftar in his eastern stronghold last month to try to dissuade him from launching an offensive against the internationally recognized government in Tripoli. They urged him not to plunge the country into a civil war and told him he could become a successful civilian leader if he committed himself to pursuing a political settlement, according to two sources with knowledge of the meeting outside Benghazi.

But Haftar, a military strongman who critics describe as the new Muammar Gaddafi, paid them little heed, said the sources who spoke on condition the ambassadors were not identified. He said he was prepared to negotiate with the prime minister, but if no power-sharing deal was reached, he could invade the capital.

Two weeks later, on April 4, he sent troops from his self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) streaming towards Tripoli — just at a time when UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was in the city to prepare for a national reconciliation conference this month which Guterres' aides thought Haftar supported. For world powers including France, Italy and Britain, the general's military campaign, the biggest in Libya since the 2011 uprising that deposed Gaddafi, represented a major setback.

They had tried for years to co-opt Haftar, 75, into a political settlement that would stabilise the major oil and gas producer after almost a decade of conflict that had acted as a breeding ground for Islamist militancy. Even the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, which have backed Haftar and see him as a bulwark against Islamists in north Africa, appear to have been surprised by his rapid advance. A French diplomatic source said Paris, which has also aided the general, had no prior warning of the offensive.

The diplomats' calls for military restraint in the meeting last month had echoed those from other Western and UN

envoys who had travelled to Haftar's base outside the city of Benghazi in the preceding weeks, four separate diplomatic sources said. In a sign of how far the situation in Libya — and Haftar — was beyond their control, UN and Western envoys in daily contact with his camp about the conference had no idea he was about to launch the offensive, the four diplomatic sources said.

Some even thought the general was bluffing. "These are just psycho games," one UN official texted Reuters when the first LNA troops were spotted south of Tripoli. Some diplomats who had met Haftar many times and lobbied their governments to overlook his hardline comments — such as that Libya was not ready for democracy — despaired when it became clear he was committed to taking the city by force. "I've wasted almost two years on Haftar," said one who met Haftar regularly. "If the national conference doesn't happen, it was for nothing."

Egypt, UAE, France

Haftar, for his part, has been consistent in speeches and statements about his commitment to military force in his declared mission to restore order to the north African country and also dropped hints about ultimately ruling the country. When he first announced his intentions in February 2014 he stood in front of a map of Libya, a somber-looking, grey-haired man wearing an immaculate army uniform, and vowed to stage a coup. Western countries left Libya after fighting in Tripoli in 2014, closing embassies and ending NATO training programs, before returning in 2016. Their period of absence opened the door for Arab countries such as Egypt and the UAE, which provided training and military assistance, according to reports from UN experts monitoring an arms embargo imposed on Libya in 2011, and diplomats. Haftar's forces received aircraft as well as military vehicles from the UAE,

which had also built up an air base at Al Khadim, allowing the LNA to gain air superiority by 2016, a U.N. report said in June 2017.

But on the ground Haftar was struggling to make progress in his initial campaign launched in May 2014 against Islamist militants in Benghazi, which he dubbed "Operation Dignity". His heavy guns and aircraft flattened residential buildings but could not dislodge the foreign jihadists holed up in booby-trapped houses. It was at this point that France, which has oil assets in eastern Libya and is politically close to the UAE and Egypt, offered assistance, according to Libyan and French sources.

In late 2015, Paris sent military advisers and special forces familiar in urban warfare who camped out at an air base near Benghazi, the sources said. The French assistance helped turn the tide and allowed him to declare victory in Benghazi in 2017, they added. Arab countries had recognized Haftar as Libya's official army commander for years but France helped him gain further international legitimacy as his campaign progressed. In 2017, French President Emmanuel Macron received Haftar and the UN-backed Libyan prime minister, Fayez al-Serraj, on the outskirts of Paris to try to persuade them to make a deal, which instantly upgraded the general's diplomatic status. Macron and Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian see Haftar, much like Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi, as a buffer against Islamist militants in north Africa, according to French officials. Le Drian has been to Libya three times in two years and on his last trip, on March 20, he saw Serraj in Tripoli and then travelled east to see Haftar to try to broker a detente. According to a French diplomatic source, when Haftar asked him why he hadn't come for such a long time, Le Drian responded: "We were waiting for your victories." He was referring to the general's campaign to take the south of the country earlier this year, the source said. — Reuters

Israel election:
The next step

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu looked set for a fifth term in office yesterday after nearly complete election results put him and fellow right-wingers on track to form a governing coalition.

What now?

With Netanyahu's Likud and other right-wing parties projected to take around 65 seats in the 120-seat parliament, he is almost certain to be asked by President Reuven Rivlin to form a government. After Rivlin canvases all parties he is expected to invite Netanyahu to hammer out formal coalition contracts. He will have up to 42 days in which to do it.

In addition to his natural allies, Netanyahu could invite his main challenger-centrist Blue and White-to add its 35 seats to his coalition, although that is seen as a less likely scenario. Netanyahu faces the prospect of becoming the first sitting prime minister to be indicted. The attorney general has announced he intends to indict him for bribery, fraud and breach of trust pending a hearing in the coming weeks. But Netanyahu would be entitled to remain in office until his trial and any subsequent appeal process are over.

What about Gantz?

With 97 percent of the vote counted Netanyahu's main rival, ex-military chief Benny Gantz's centrist Blue and White alliance, was projected to win the same number of seats as the Likud. But the electoral collapse of potential partners left it incapable of putting together more than 55 seats with them—not enough to take power. Labor, in particular, crashed in flames with only six seats in the incoming parliament compared to the 24 it held previously in alliance with the centrist Hatnuah party. Gantz is now set to become leader of the opposition in parliament, an official post. Final results were expected by Thursday afternoon, adding in the ballots of soldiers and other special categories of voters.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reacts as he shakes hands with someone after addressing supporters at his Likud Party headquarters in the Israeli coastal city of Tel Aviv on election night yesterday. — AFP

What is likely to change?

If the preliminary results are largely confirmed, there are unlikely to be any major policy shifts. Netanyahu's outgoing government is already seen as the most right-wing in Israeli history, and the make-up of the next one may be similar. The strengthening of the two ultra-Orthodox parties to a combined 16 seats from 13 in the outgoing parliament will increase their clout in government, particularly in matters of religion and state such as the fierce debate over whether ultra-Orthodox Jews should perform mandatory military service.

What about the Palestinians?

Netanyahu made a last-minute pledge ahead of the elections to annex settlements in the occupied West Bank, a move that could end remaining hopes for a two-state solution if done on a large scale. There is no sign he would back off from that approach after he forms a government. Israel's politics have moved firmly to the right, with many voters disillusioned by failed peace attempts with the Palestinians.

The landmark Oslo accords of the 1990s were followed by the bloody second Palestinian intifada, or uprising. Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas has said he hoped that Israel's elections could help bring peace but senior Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi said yesterday that the results showed otherwise. "They have chosen an overwhelmingly right-wing, xenophobic and anti-Palestinian parliament to represent them," Ashrawi said in a statement. — AFP

Brexit scenarios:
The paths ahead

As British Prime Minister Theresa May scrambles to secure a Brexit extension at yesterday's crucial EU summit, where is the whole process heading? Here is what could happen:

No-deal Brexit on April 12

May is seeking a Brexit delay until June 30. MPs this week forced through legislation to force the prime minister to always seek an extension rather than leave the EU without a deal. But the EU appears to be more keen on a longer "flexextension" of around a year. If no agreement is reached yesterday, the legal default is that Britain leaves the EU without a deal on Friday.

The EU has already granted one delay—the original deadline was March 29 — and EU leaders will ask May to explain what another postponement would achieve. Economists warn a no-deal Brexit could generate economic shockwaves on both sides of the Channel and cause severe delays at border points, despite preparations to mitigate these risks.

Leave with changes

After failing three times to get her deal through parliament, May is currently locked in talks with the opposition Labor Party—who favor keeping closer ties with the EU—to try and break the impasse.



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May arrives ahead of a European Council meeting on Brexit at The Europa Building at The European Parliament in Brussels yesterday. — AFP

Labor is demanding Britain remain in a customs union, angering the rank-and-file in May's Tory party. If they agree a deal, Brexit could still happen before Britain has to take part in European Union elections on May 23. The withdrawal agreement allows for a long transition period and time for trade ties to be negotiated. The EU has ruled out any changes to it but has said it could speedily rewrite the political declaration—an accompanying document on future trade ties. In a desperate gamble to get the deal over the line, May even told her MPs that she would resign before the start of full-blown trade negotiations with the EU if they backed it, but it still failed.

New plan, long Brexit delay

If no deal is agreed in the coming days, Britain will likely face a delay of up to a year, which would entail it holding European Parliament elections. The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, has advised EU leaders that this longer extension should be at least until the end of 2019 and possibly much longer to allow for a proper change in Brexit strategy. Under the "flexextension", Britain could leave the EU once it found a plan commanding domestic support, but a longer delay would open up options such as holding a general election, a leadership election to replace May or, perhaps, a second referendum.

A general election would reset parliament, and a clear outcome with a government majority could result in a much stronger administration. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2019

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KUWAIT: KIPCO's Vice Chairman (Executive), Faisal Al-Ayyar (center) speaks during the company's investors' forum. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KIPCO optimistic about 2019 growth

Our Q1 2019 performance suggests we have tailwind behind us: Vice Chairman

KUWAIT: At its Annual Shafaiyah "Transparency" Investors' Forum, KIPCO - the Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - said that it was guardedly optimistic that the growth trend achieved in 2018 would continue through to 2019. At the company's investors' forum, KIPCO presented a review of its activities in 2018 and its outlook for 2019 to an audience of shareholders, financial analysts and institutional investors.

The forum followed the company's General Assembly meeting where KIPCO's shareholders approved a cash dividend of 12 percent (12 fils per share).

KIPCO noted the improvement in the operating environment, with oil prices expected to stabilize this year, business confidence on the rise in the Middle East, and increased public spending on development projects in the region.

As part of its review of 2018, KIPCO highlighted the 13 percent growth in revenue in 2018, as well as the 20 percent increase in net profit compared to 2017. In

the past year, KIPCO continued to enjoy strong investor confidence, as reflected in its KD 100 million five-year bond issuance. The company maintained its investment grade rating, and made a new real estate investment together with partners worth KD 90 million in Khabari in southern Kuwait. As for KIPCO's landmark residential and commercial project, Hessah Al-Mubarak District, 80 percent of the plots are now being developed by Group companies or third parties.

KIPCO highlighted the performance of its main operating companies. Borgan Bank registered a 27 percent increase in net profit and completed a rights issue to raise KD 62.6 million in equity.

For Gulf Insurance Group, gross written premiums (GWP) increased 10 percent, while net profit was up 18 percent. The company continues to be among the top five insurance companies in the Middle East in terms of GWPs.

United Gulf Holding recorded its twenty-

eighth year of operational profitability, with net profit up 46 percent. Its subsidiary, KAMCO Investment, issued a KD 40 million five-year bond and completed the acquisition of a majority stake in Global Investment House.

KIPCO's real estate arm, United Real Estate, issued a KD 60 million five-year bond, and its gross profit recorded a 6 percent increase. Qurain Petrochemical Industries (QPIC), meanwhile, registered a 7 percent growth in revenue for the first nine months of the financial year, and its dividend yield on portfolio companies increased 11 percent. SADAFCO, a subsidiary of QPIC, acquired a 76 percent stake in the Polish dairy producer, Mlekoma.

As for OSN, KIPCO noted that it appointed Goldman Sachs to evaluate strategic options for its investment. It added that the past two years have been difficult for the pay-tv company due to increased competition and piracy. With several digital platforms underway, OSN will undergo digi-



tal transformation during 2019.

In its outlook, KIPCO said that it looked to continue to ride the upward profit trend witnessed in the first quarter of 2019. KIPCO's Vice Chairman (Executive), Faisal Al-Ayyar said: "Our performance in the first quarter of 2019 suggests that KIPCO Group has got tailwind behind it. We have already begun the year with a Board approval for a

fully underwritten rights issue of 452.7 million shares. In the coming months we will be focusing our efforts on mergers and acquisitions, as well as exits from some investments. With the improved operating environment and the positive performance of our companies, we are guardedly optimistic that the profit growth trend recorded for 2018 will continue through 2019."

Airbus flies into new era with change of CEO

PARIS: Frenchman Guillaume Faury takes over as CEO of European aerospace giant Airbus yesterday, looking to benefit from the current troubles of rival Boeing and limit potential disruption from Brexit and Donald Trump's trade threats. The 51-year-old will replace Tom Enders, who is stepping down after five years leading the France-based group whose 129,000 employees manufacture airliners, helicopters and satellites.

Enders oversaw further expansion of the group, but his rein was clouded by a recent decision to scrap the loss-making A380 super-jumbo range of Airbus planes as well as multiple probes into suspect payments. The German's retirement package-worth 37 million euros (\$41 million) including pension and stocks-has sparked controversy in France and a pledge from the government that it will legislate to limit huge corporate payoffs.

Faury will inherit a financially sound, highly profitable business with an order book of 7,350 passenger planes, which would be enough to keep factories running for a decade at current production rates. Analysts see Airbus as having an opportunity to profit from the booming airline market, particularly in Asia, and from the global grounding of Boeing's 737 MAX plane after two recent deadly crashes involving the popular new airliner.

"They simply need to use this window of Boeing weakness to Hoover up orders in Asia, if they can," said aerospace analyst Neil Wilson at Markets.com, an online financial trading platform. According to industry body IATA, Asia will account for most of growth in the industry over the next 20 years, with more than half of the new passenger traffic coming from the region.

'Harmful' Brexit?

But Faury will also have several tricky issues in his inbox, including handling the fall-out from Britain's decision to leave the European Union, which threatens to disrupt the company's long and complicated supply chains. "Brexit could well mean a complete rethink of long-term manufacturing strategy for Airbus and brave decisions may need to be made unless a satisfactory outcome can be agreed by UK and

Brussels," independent aviation analyst Howard Wheeldon told AFP.

Enders branded the British government's handling of Brexit a "disgrace" in January and warned that a "no deal" exit would lead to "very harmful decisions" affecting the production of airline wings in southwest England. The US is another source of worry for the group after US President Trump lashed out again at the EU this week, vowing to impose fresh tariffs over subsidies to Airbus.

For more than a decade, Washington and Brussels have accused each other of unfairly subsidising Boeing and Airbus respectively and have fought repeated battles at the World Trade Organization, which polices global trade rules.

Helicopter specialist

Faury will also be wary of multiple investigations in France, Britain and the United States into possible bribes paid to win contracts between 2008 and 2013 that could cause more embarrassment-and lead to costly fines or prosecutions. The inquiries stem from Airbus's own disclosure in early 2016 of undisclosed payments to middlemen in securing several contracts, in particular in Asia.

If convicted in the US, it would effectively be shut out of defense and civil aviation



BLAGNAC: In this file photo, the president of Airbus Commercial Aircraft Business Guillaume Faury speaks during a press conference in Blagnac. Guillaume Faury, 51, succeeded Tom Enders yesterday as the CEO of Airbus. — AFP

contracts for years-which would be a boon for Boeing. Faury, a married father of three, will take over after a board meeting in Amsterdam yesterday. He has spent most of his career in the aerospace industry, specializing in helicopters. He started his career in the French defense ministry before joining Airbus' helicopter division in 1998.

In 2009, he left for a four-year stint in research and development at French car group Peugeot before rejoining Airbus. In February 2018, he became head of the civil aviation division, the company's biggest and most high-profile, which is considered the launching pad for the groups' top job. — AFP

Business

Huawei hosts media roundtable, introduces new flagship products

The P30 officially arrives in Kuwait



KUWAIT: Jason Jiang, General Manager of the CBG, with media representatives

KUWAIT: Huawei Consumer Business Group Kuwait (CBG) was delighted to host media representatives at Al-Hamra Business Tower in a Media Roundtable briefing. The briefing hosted with Jason Jiang, General Manager of the CBG, in regard to Huawei's latest flagship products, providing further information on the newest release: The Huawei P30 Series.

The most recent flagship series of products, The P30 Series, is one that rewrites the rules of photography as its super sending Leica Quad Camera enables you to capture the dimmest moments in the brightest fashion. Furthermore, nothing will ever be too far for your smart-

phone as The P30 Series' SuperZoom will surely capture it in all its quality. There is more to the P30 Series, as its SuperCharge will take your phone battery from 0 to 70 percent in just 30 minutes, maintaining your device's battery for more than an entire day of high-intensity work. "The Media is quite the essential channel in today's innovatively globalized world, which truly makes it important to have the media informed on how we seek to establish the fully connected world we aim to build through our flagship devices." Enthused Jason Jiang, General Manager of Huawei Consumer Business Group, expressing his opinion on the Media Roundtable briefing.

"We take pride in our strong relationship with key media members in the State of Kuwait, and we, at Huawei Consumer Business Group (CBG) express our thanks to every single one for supporting us to carry out our messages to the consumers and achieve the optimum level of success," he added. Huawei's Media Roundtable discussion happened during the briefing will provide the public the chance to be meticulously informed by the media on Huawei's most recent flagship products. For more information on the new P30 Series, don't hesitate to visit Huawei's official website or Huawei Experience Store in the Avenues Mall.

VIVA launches flagship Huawei P30 Pro with postpaid plans

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, launched the new flagship Huawei P30 and Huawei P30 Pro devices, with postpaid plans starting from KD 20 that give customers 500 local minutes and 50 GB Internet.

Abdulrazzaq Bader Al-Essa, Corporate Communications Director at VIVA said: "the groundbreaking Huawei P30 Series will rewrite the rules of mobile photography and set the pace for the next generation of smartphones by empowering people to capture the true beauty of the world around them through a device that fits in the palm of their hands."

The HUAWEI P30 Pro is equipped with a new Leica Quad Camera System, including a 40MP main camera with the HUAWEI SuperSpectrum Sensor, a 20MP ultra-wide angle camera, lens with 10x hybrid zoom, an 8MP telephoto camera, a 32MP front camera that takes selfies to a new level. Both P30 and P30 Pro

are available in rosy dawn, mid-day sky and aurora colors, advanced in-screen fingerprint sensor, an 8MP telephoto camera and supercharge for 70 percent charge in 30 minutes.



Shell exits Russian LNG joint venture with Gazprom

MOSCOW: Energy giant Shell yesterday announced that it is leaving the joint project it was developing with Gazprom in Russia, following the Russian gas company's decision to alter its configuration.

"Following Gazprom's announcement on March 29 regarding the final development concept of Baltic LNG, we have decided to stop our involvement in this project," the British-Dutch group said in a statement. Baltic LNG project involved the construction of an LNG plant with the capacity of 10 million tonnes in the Ust-Luga port of Saint-Petersburg.

While it was initially a joint project, Gazprom published a press-release on March 29 that no longer mentioned Shell's involvement. In this statement, Gazprom said it "made a decision on the final configuration of the project" with a Russian group RusGazDobycha that will process ethane-containing gas and produce LNG.

Shell said this means "full integration between LNG and gas processing plant" which affects the partnership with Shell on the project for solely the LNG factory. "We have a number of other ongoing projects with Gazprom... which are not impacted by this decision," Shell said. — AFP

Venezuela reports collapse in oil supply, tightening global market

LONDON: Venezuela's oil output sank to a new long-term low last month due to US sanctions and blackouts, the country told OPEC, deepening the impact of a global production curb and further tightening supplies.

Supply cuts by OPEC and partners led by Russia, plus involuntary reductions in Venezuela and Iran, have helped drive a 32 percent rally in crude prices this year, prompting pressure from US President Donald Trump for the group to ease its market-supporting efforts.

In a monthly report released yesterday, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said Venezuela told the group that it pumped 960,000 barrels per day (bpd) in March, a drop of almost 500,000 bpd from February. The figures could add to a debate within the so-called OPEC+ group of producers on whether to maintain oil supply cuts beyond June. A Russian official indicated this week Moscow wanted to pump more, although OPEC has been saying the curbs must remain.

OPEC, Russia and other non-member producers are reducing output by 1.2 million bpd from Jan. 1 for six months. The producers are due to meet on June 25-26 to decide whether to extend the pact.

One of the key Russian officials to foster the pact with OPEC, Kirill Dmitriev, signalled on Monday that Russia wanted to raise output when it meets OPEC in June because of improving market conditions and falling stockpiles. OPEC+ returned to supply cuts in 2019 out of concern that slowing economic growth and demand would lead to a new supply glut. OPEC's report lowered its estimate of global growth in demand by 30,000 bpd to 1.21 million bpd, citing a slowdown in developed economies.

In a development that will ease OPEC concern about a new supply glut, the report also said oil inventories in developed economies fell in February, after rising in January.

Output slide

Venezuela's production figure brings its numbers closer to outside estimates, which have been saying the country's economic collapse has taken a bigger toll on its oil industry. Output in Venezuela, once a top-three OPEC producer, has been declining for years due to economic collapse. In March, supply dropped due to US sanctions on state oil company PDVSA designed to oust President Nicolas Maduro, and power blackouts.

Venezuela, plus Iran and Libya, were exempted from making voluntary curbs under the OPEC+ deal, on the basis that their output would probably fall anyway.

OPEC's share of the cut is 800,000 bpd from in most cases October 2018 levels, and other figures in the report showed producers were removing far more than agreed. The group uses two sets of figures to monitor its output - figures provided by each country and by secondary sources that include industry media. This is a legacy of old disputes over how much countries were really pumping.

Overall OPEC output fell by a further 534,000 bpd to 30.022 million bpd, according to the secondary-source figures. This was led not by Venezuela but by Saudi Arabia, which has been voluntarily cutting supply by more than it agreed to support the market. As a result, the 11 OPEC members required to cut output achieved 155 percent compliance in March with pledged curbs, according to a Reuters calculation, up from February. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

Euro	344.110
Sterling Pound	402.710
Canadian dollar	229.730
Turkish lira	54.990
Swiss Franc	307.200
US Dollar Buying	297.800

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.740
Indian Rupees	4.400
Pakistani Rupees	2.199
Srilankan Rupees	1.742
Nepali Rupees	2.742
Singapore Dollar	225.990
Hongkong Dollar	38.881
Bangladesh Taka	3.606
Philippine Peso	5.862
Thai Baht	9.592
Malaysian ringgit	78.056

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.441
Qatari Riyal	83.881
Omani Riyal	793.242
Bahraini Dinar	810.950
UAE Dirham	83.149

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	20.700
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.594

Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.226
Tunisian Dinar	105.240
Jordanian Dinar	431.200
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.204
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.434

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.840
Canadian Dollar	228.350
Sterling Pound	95.450
Euro	344.725
Swiss Franc	307.490
Bahrain Dinar	810.685
UAE Dirhams	83.400
Qatari Riyals	84.640
Saudi Riyals	82.185
Jordanian Dinar	431.245
Egyptian Pound	17.628
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.744
Indian Rupees	4.412
Pakistani Rupees	2.160
Bangladesh Taka	3.618
Philippines Peso	5.851
Cyprus pound	18.135
Japanese Yen	3.725
Syrian Pound	1.595
Nepalese Rupees	2.758
Malaysian Ringgit	75.435
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.805

Thai Bhat	10.550
Turkish Lira	54.575
Singapore dollars	225.511

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.391024	0.404924
Czech Korune	0.005362	0.014662
Danish Krone	0.041881	0.046881
Euro	0.335564	0.349264
Georgian Lari	0.112732	0.112732
Hungarian	0.000973	0.001163
Norwegian Krone	0.031515	0.036715
Romanian Leu	0.055112	0.071962
Russian ruble	0.004683	0.004683
Slovakia	0.009120	0.019120
Swedish Krona	0.028834	0.033834
Swiss Franc	0.298104	0.309104
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.209194	0.221194
New Zealand Dollar	0.199316	0.208816
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.23152	0.232152
US Dollars	0.300750	0.306050
US Dollars Mint	0.301250	0.306050
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003058	0.003859
Chinese Yuan	0.043896	0.047396

Hong Kong Dollar	0.036828	0.039576
Indian Rupee	0.003788	0.004560
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002656	0.002836
Korean Won	0.000257	0.000272
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070730	0.076730
Nepalese Rupee	0.002682	0.003022
Pakistan Rupee	0.001526	0.002296
Philippine Peso	0.005815	0.006115
Singapore Dollar	0.219714	0.229714
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001401	0.001981
Taiwan	0.009756	0.009936
Thai Baht	0.009242	0.009792
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.794050	0.810550
Egyptian Pound	0.017754	0.020354
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000210	0.000270
Jordanian Dinar	0.425068	0.434068
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000152	0.000252
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021423	0.045423
Omani Riyal	0.785500	0.791180
Qatar Riyal	0.079445	0.084385
Saudi Riyal	0.080207	0.081507
Syrian Pound	0.001293	0.001513
Tunisian Dinar	0.097407	0.105407
Turkish Lira	0.047313	0.058813
UAE Dirhams	0.081575	0.083275
Yemeni Riyal	0.000991	0.001071

Business



ST PETERSBURG: Feng Xingya, President of GAC Group (third from left), Aleksandr Kovrigin, Vice President of the Organizing Committee of St. PIMS (third from right), Luo Xin, Commercial Consul of Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in St. Petersburg (second from left), Lou Jiahong, Consul of Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in St. Petersburg (second from right), Chen Hanjun, Vice President of GAC Group (first from left), Yu Jun, President of GAC Motor (first from right) at a press conference.



GS8 SUV at the 2019 St Petersburg International Motor Show

GAC Motor makes debut at 2019 St Petersburg Int'l Motor Show

Leading Chinese automaker launches new Journey in Russian market: Mutawa Alkazi

KUWAIT: Leading Chinese automaker GAC Motor has made its debut at the 2019 St. Petersburg International Motor Show ("the Motor Show") with nine of the brand's star models including SUVs, MPVs, sedans and a new energy vehicle. The automaker also revealed an update to its plan to enter the Russian market in 2019 with its top-selling product.

"Russia's automobile market has maintained double-digit growth over the past two years. We believe the surging demand for cars needs to be satisfied with diversified products and services. That is why we are here; GAC Motor is committed to creating better products of higher quality that offer a pleasant mobile lifestyle for global consumers. We hope that Russian people enjoy the fine design and good quality of GAC Motor's products," noted Yu Jun, President of GAC Motor.

GAC Motor is steadily laying out its strategic plan for the Russian market. The automaker first announced that it would enter Russia during its debut at the Moscow International Automobile Salon (MIAS) in August 2018. Its overseas subsidiary in Russia, GAC Motor RUS, is now in operation to prepare for product releases and the opening of new stores.

Ever since its establishment, GAC Motor has been adopting a path that is "led by



President of GAC Motor Yu Jun



GAC Group President Feng Xingya

brand building, driven by high standards and defined by high quality", and has been ranked No 1 in J.D. Power Asia Pacific's China Initial Quality Study (IQS) for six years in a row. With a world-class car design and manufacturing system, GAC Motor's stand-out designs, convenient driving experience and cutting-edge technologies were highly praised by Russian dealers and consumers. During the Motor Show, GAC Motor signed cooperation intention agreements with several Russian dealers.

GAC Motor exhibited the brand's comprehensive vehicle product lineup at the

Motor Show, including the new energy SUV GE3 version 530, the GM8 and GM6 MPVs, GA4 and GA8 sedans, as well as four SUVs - the GS8, GS5, GS4 and GS3. The GM6 and GS5 were shown to the Russian audience for the first time.

GAC Motor will introduce the GS8 this year, and other star models in the near future, which are now being evaluated and certified by relevant Russian government departments:

- The GS8, the flagship luxury 7-seat SUV, and the first model to the Russian market, will have a special edition for



Russia that offers an all-terrain driving mode, smart safety configurations, a state-of-the-art all-wheel-drive system, fully-independent suspension system and high-performance chassis shock filters

- The GM8, GAC Motor's first MPV product that showcases GAC Motor's industry-leading technologies in its spectacular design, luxurious VIP seating, smart features and worry-free safety guarantees

- The GS5, a trendy SUV with an advanced engine and exclusive function which achieves the perfect balance between stability and comfort

After 4 days at the Motor Show, GAC Motor will also join the Russian Association of Auto Dealers (ROAD) annual meeting and host brand promotion events on April 10 to welcome and communicate with more interested dealers.

Turkey to inject \$4.9bn into state banks in economy reform package

ISTANBUL: Turkey pledged yesterday to boost the capital level of banks and relieve bad debts in a sector left reeling by last year's currency crisis, as the country moved to revive an economy plagued by inflation and recession. Relief for banks is the first step in the government's long-awaited reform package, which also included promises to boost valuable export sectors and adjust taxes.

The lira, which plunged nearly 30 percent last year and was volatile in recent weeks, softened as analysts weighed the benefits for banks against the risk of higher deficits and potential overreach by a government prone to stop-gap measures. Finance Minister Berat Albayrak said Turkey will deliver 28 billion lira (\$4.9 billion) to recapitalize state banks and that private banks could increase their capital if needed.

Dividend and bonus payments would be limited as the economy rebalances, and some problem loans would be transferred to off balance sheet funds of local banks and international investors, according to Albayrak's presentation,



ISTANBUL: Turkish Treasury and Finance Minister Berat Albayrak addresses a press conference to announce his new economic policy and reforms in Istanbul yesterday. — AFP

which added that two funds focusing on energy and real estate would be created. "This change and reform process will continue decisively for the next four years," Albayrak said.

Turkey's economy suffered its worst quarterly contraction in nearly a decade after the currency crisis, which sent inflation soaring as high as 25 percent and left its companies and banks saddled with foreign-currency debt.

At its nadir last year, the Turkish lira lost nearly half its value against the dollar. The crisis -

which shook global financial markets - was set off by strained US-Turkey ties and concerns over central bank independence. Jittery international investors have been waiting for the government to signal an unambiguous break from the credit-fueled growth strategy under President Tayyip Erdogan. They had called for more ambitious long-term commitments to shore up banks, relieve debt-laden companies, increase exports and free up the central bank.

Capital expenditure

Cristian Maggio, head of emerging markets strategy at TD Securities in London, said the message of government support and fiscal discipline was contradictory. "The market will be very sensitive to any deterioration of the budget, because that is one of the few anchors that Turkey still has," he said.

In October Turkey pledged to reduce capital expenditure by 20 percent in 2019. Initial results from local March 31 elections showed Erdogan's AK Party losing control of Ankara and Istanbul, stoking investor worries that Turkey would continue to lean on short-term stimulus measures that failed to tackle deeper weaknesses in the economy. But Albayrak, Erdogan's son in law, said in his Istanbul presentation: "We did not give up on fiscal discipline before the election and we will not give up on it after the election."

The government loans would prioritize strategic sectors, exports and local production, he said. — Reuters

Food more expensive

The Fed also noted that survey-based measures of longer-term inflation expectations were little changed. Minutes of the March 19-20 policy meeting are due to be published later on Wednesday and will be scrutinized for more details on policymakers' views on inflation. The February and March PCE price data will be released on April 29. The February data was delayed by a 35-day partial shutdown of the federal government that ended on Jan. 25.

Energy prices jumped 3.5 percent in March, accounting for about 60 percent of the increase in the CPI last month, after gaining 0.4 percent in February. Gasoline prices surged 6.5 percent, the biggest gain since September 2017, after rising 1.5 percent in February. Food prices gained 0.3 percent after accelerating 0.4 percent in February. Food consumed at home increased 0.4 percent. Consumers also paid more for rent. — Reuters

Lebanese textiles factory shuts its doors in dire economy

BEIRUT: The Mzannar family's 300-year-old textile business survived Lebanon's civil war by making uniforms for militiamen. But its business savvy was no match for years of economic malaise that followed and it has now shut its factory.

The head of Lebanon's chamber of commerce chief said last year nearly 2,200 businesses had closed, warning that more would collapse. And while there is dispute over those numbers, Lebanese mostly agree the economy is in dire shape.

For Najji Mzannar, who started working at the fabric factory in the 70s before running it, an array of challenges drove the decline of his business and its inability to compete with cheaper goods from abroad.

"It was a build-up. Everything became losses, losses," he said. "How long are you supposed to keep suffering?"

Built in 1946 and spread over three storeys, the factory made textiles for clothing and household use such as curtains or towels. Mzannar fought to keep it afloat until production came to a halt in 2018.

In interviews with Reuters, business owners such as Mzannar, employees, and experts blamed the slowdown on problems including regional turmoil, lousy infrastructure, government waste or corruption, and high interest rates.

Whether the new government tries to improve conditions, as it vows urgently to do, the effects of years of political sclerosis and stalled reforms are already inescapable: more companies going out of business and workers losing jobs.

The government publishes few reliable economic statistics, and gives no regular unemployment numbers, but last year Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri said it stood at about 30 percent.

With pillars such as tourism and real estate in the doldrums, economic growth has averaged 1-2

percent since the conflict erupted in neighboring Syria in 2011, after averaging 8-9 percent growth in the years before that.

"There is a deterioration. There is a rise in companies closing down and in unemployment. For sure, they come together," said former economy minister Raed Khoury.

"There are small and medium companies suffering a lot."

Daily state power and water cuts leave industrialists relying on private supplies that push up costs. Taxes have gone up, but neither infrastructure nor public services have improved.

For some firms, Syria's war blocked access to neighboring markets and added security measures congesting the roads. With a risky political climate and a currency pegged to the dollar, Lebanon has high interest rates that keep deposits flowing into its banks. But these rates also discourage borrowing - which producers such as Mzannar need to invest in new machinery.

The policies that have kept the Lebanese pound stable through turmoil at the same time failed to protect or boost local production, Mzannar and others said.

The number of his employees went from a peak of 75 to 40 in about 2010, and eventually only 10 people were left. They still work for him, but at a shop near the factory selling bales of cloth it had produced, as well as imported textiles from Europe.

While his shop fares much better than the factory, he, like many others, fears people have less to spend. "We felt this the most in 2018." Sales halved last year and traders he had worked with for many years went bankrupt.

The remaining, old machines, stopped spinning a few months ago. Mzannar remembers playing in the factory when he was a young boy, but his own three children have all gone to work abroad. — Reuters

Rising gasoline, rents boost US consumer prices in March

WASHINGTON: US consumer prices increased by the most in 14 months in March, but underlying inflation remained benign against the backdrop of slowing domestic and global economic growth.

The tame inflation environment and moderating economic activity support the Federal Reserve's decision last month to suspend its three-year campaign to raise interest rates. The US central bank dropped projections for any rate hikes this year after lifting borrowing costs four times in 2018.

The Labor Department said yesterday its Consumer Price Index rose 0.4 percent, boosted by increases in the costs of food, gasoline and rents. That was the biggest advance since January 2018 and followed a 0.2 percent gain in February.

In the 12 months through March, the CPI increased 1.9 percent. The CPI gained 1.5 percent in February, which was the smallest rise since September 2016. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the CPI climbing 0.3 percent in March and accelerating 1.8 percent year-on-year.

Excluding the volatile food and energy components, the CPI nudged up 0.1 percent, matching February's gain. In the 12 months through March, the core CPI increased 2.0 percent, the smallest advance since February 2018. The core CPI rose 2.1 percent year-on-year in February.

The Fed, which has a 2 percent inflation target, tracks a different measure, the core personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, for monetary policy.

The core PCE price index increased 1.8 percent on a year-on-year basis in January after a rising 2.0 percent in December. It hit the Fed's 2 percent inflation target in March last year for the first time since April 2012.

The dollar was little changed against a basket of currencies after the CPI data, while US Treasury prices rose slightly. US stock index futures were trading higher. Inflation has remained muted, with wage growth increasing moderately

Business

Zain launches the all-new Huawei P30/P30 Pro devices in Kuwait

Plans for postpaid customers start at KD 29 monthly

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the launch of the all-new Huawei P30/P30 Pro devices. Huawei's latest flagship smartphones. The new devices, featuring an iconic innovative design and offering breakthroughs in technology, are available with a number of unique postpaid plans on Zain's most advanced network.

Zain offers the new generation of Huawei's flagship devices knowing the passion its customer base - the biggest in Kuwait - has for the latest and most advanced products in the world of technology. The all-new Huawei P30/P30 Pro devices meet customers' needs and aspirations, whether on the personal or professional levels, and Zain trusts that the new devices will offer them an unmatched telecommunications experience on its largest network in Kuwait.

Zain's postpaid customers can now get the new Huawei P30 or Huawei P30 Pro with a variety of new plans starting at KD 29 monthly only, including 100 GBs of 4G LTE Internet and 2500 local minutes. The company is keen on offering the most flexible and competitive plans to suit customers' unique personal and professional needs.

The new Huawei P30 Pro features an unmatched super camera system with a Superzoom lens, a 40 MP super Sensing Camera, a 20 MP Ultra wide angle lens, and a Huawei TOF Camera, giving users the freedom to capture the most incredible moments. Huawei has rewritten the color sensing rules by using RYYB technology for more light in images. The Huawei P30 Pro also features an intelligent 32 MP front camera, and a double 3D curved glass design with a 6.47" Dewdrop display.

The Huawei P30 features a Super Camera system with a 40 MP super Sensing Camera, a 16 MP ultra wide angle lens, and an 8 MP telephoto lens, giving users the freedom to capture the treasures and beauty of the world. The device also features the RYYB technology for more light in images, as well as a 6.1" Dewdrop display designed to provide a broader and better viewing experience.

Zain always aspires to new levels of excellence in all services it offers to its customers. Through the launch of these new devices, Zain affirms its continuous efforts in meeting its customers' needs and aspirations, and deliver its promise to offering the best services and latest technologies.



The introduction of Huawei P30/P30 Pro highlights Zain's eagerness in keeping pace with the ongoing changes of needs and wants of its customers. With this latest

announcement, Zain strengthens its leading position in providing special services and offerings designed for technology enthusiasts.

Michelin rolls out two new high performance tires in Africa, Mideast

KUWAIT: Innovation has always been central to the Michelin Group when it comes to developing tyres and services to improve driving and mobility. This innovative spirit has helped create the new additions to the Pilot Sport range which Michelin has recently introduced in the Africa and Middle East region. The new MICHELIN Pilot Sport Cup2 R and MICHELIN Pilot Sport4 SUV are adapted to every driving condition with superior grip, which is designed to last longer.

From SUV's to high performance sedans, MICHELIN Pilot Sport tyres are used by some of the best competitive sports car makers in the world, on over 200 performance vehicles. This range also holds several circuit records and has been developed jointly with customers and partner car manufacturers to achieve the highest performance levels.

Marc Pasquet, President, Africa, India and Middle East region, Michelin, said: "In the region, we are again raising the bar for performance tyres with the introduction of the new tyres from the MICHELIN Pilot Sport family. This new range of tyres is meant for the auto enthusiast, who wants optimum driving pleasure, without compromising on performance, safety and longevity. We are delighted that the range is made available in the region immediately after its launch in Geneva Motor Show this year, signifying the importance that Michelin Group attaches to the region."



The Michelin Pilot Sport 4 SUV

The new MICHELIN Pilot Sport 4 SUV replaces the MICHELIN Latitude Sport 3 and can be used for the full range of SUV's - 4X4, compact, medium, premium and sports, the latter being a sector with strong growth in the Middle East region. This new tyre benefits from the powerful innovation capacities of the Michelin Group and the latest technologies of the MICHELIN Pilot Sport range, with an emphasis on control and stability at high speed while guaranteeing safety and a long tyre life. The safe and versatile high-performance tyre, delivers exceptional comfort and the pleasure of driving sporty SUV's, in safe conditions on dry and wet roads alike, while having a longer tyre life compared to its competitors.

With this new tyre, Michelin has managed to combine all these features by using motorsport tyre technologies in addition to innovations taken from the latest Formula E tyres.

The Michelin Pilot Sport Cup2 R

The MICHELIN Pilot Sport Cup2 R is a bespoke high performance tyre developed in conjunction with the most prestigious car manufacturers, such as Porsche and Ferrari. This model of tyres from the MICHELIN Pilot Sport range has been developed to meet the needs of experienced drivers in ultra-high performance cars looking for the ultimate performance during track days.

Specifically designed for use on the track, the MICHELIN Pilot Sport Cup2 R tyre maximises grip on dry circuits and delivers optimum and secure handling levels, making it possible for drivers to attack corners at high speeds. Tests carried out on a circuit by Michelin with different vehicle manufacturers highlighted an average increase of 0.5 sec/km using the MICHELIN Pilot Sport Cup2 R. The new MICHELIN Pilot Sport range tyres will be available from April 2019 at all Michelin authorised dealership, including the TYREPLUS network in the region.



Breaking the digital deadlock

By Wassim Seliman

Digital transformation may be called the buzzword of the hour, however, I believe it is now a necessity, in other words, a matter of existence. Every country and every sector in the Middle East now have digital transformation at the heart of their aspirations, with some already seeing great success in incorporating it into their operations.

According to International Data Corporation (IDC), it is expected that, by 2022, more than 60 percent of the global economy will be digitized. Global IT-related spending on digital transformation is also expected to reach \$7.5 trillion. As highlighted in IDC's CIO Survey 2018, 53 percent of large enterprises in the Gulf countries, excluding Saudi Arabia, are currently undergoing digital transformation, while 19 percent are about to commence, and another 25 percent are planning their digital transformation.

Regionally and locally, the public sector organizations are leading the way, driven by federal and state-level transformation strategies. The Kuwaiti government has taken major steps to position the country as a regional ICT hub, and as a result, Kuwait's private and public sectors have made positive strides and grown their technological capacities. IoT is at the center of the New Kuwait 2035 economic diversification vision, and the government has ambitious plans to drive the country's digital innovation market to nearly KWD 300 million. Technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), and cloud (Hybrid and Public) will prove to be crucial in reaching Kuwait's aspirations. Diverse industries in the country must embrace the wave of digital transformation globally in order to keep pace.

At GBM, we recently collaborated with IDC to release a study highlighting the need for organizations to overcome significant organizational and technological barriers as they strive to break out of the "digital deadlock" and accelerate their digital transformation. The whitepaper titled 'Breaking the Deadlock and Accelerating Digital Transformation' indicates that nearly 60 percent of organizations globally are trapped in a digital deadlock. Over the years, I have observed that, while many organizations are able to execute relatively smaller digital projects within departmental or functional silos, a large proportion of them are unable to move beyond these ad hoc digital projects and scale transformation across the organization. This requires the acceleration of the development of an agile, scalable and secure technology infrastructure, build a robust information architecture, and re-design and efficiently automate business processes.

However, I have come to realize that the hardest part for many of our clients is taking the first step in executing a digital transformation strategy. A digital transformation can seem overwhelming, both practically and monetarily, which is why many organizations postpone it. This highlights the need for an experienced technology partner that can help steer companies in the right direction while keeping in mind the business objectives.

I believe it is crucial for organizations to identify and work with technology partners that, not only possess suitable technology capabilities and skills, but also have sufficient understanding of their industry and business. The partner should also be able to engage with them over the longer-term through the digital transformation journey. At GBM, our goal as a digital transformation partner would be to enable organizations to achieve greater agility, improved efficiencies, transformed customer experiences and opportunities for new revenue generation. It is no secret that there is a strong value and necessity for companies to invest in accelerating processes and competencies as well as leveraging digital technologies in order to strategically prepare themselves for today's market demands and the future. And this is one of the main reasons I encourage organizations not just to develop a company-wide digital transformation strategy and set goals to achieve it, but also, to immediately start the execution of this strategy. Before embarking on the journey, with a solid approach and the right partner, I am confident organizations in Kuwait can overcome the digital deadlock and enjoy the journey of their own digital transformation.

— Wassim Seliman is General Manager of GBM Kuwait.



Faith Capital and 500 Startups join CaptainPanel \$1.2m seed round

KUWAIT: Faith Capital alongside 500 Startups announced yesterday their recent participation in the \$1.2m seed round of CaptainPanel, SaaS provider to operators of fishing charters, boat rentals, diving centers, and water sports activity organizers. The company also operates FishFishMe, an international marketplace for fishing charters and watersport activities. Both 500 Startups and Faith Capital will continue to aid MENA entrepreneurs in their international expansionist ambitions.

Abdullah Shalabi is the original Founder of FishFishMe, a watersports activity marketplace that operates around the world. Having listened to the needs of the business participants on the marketplace, FishFishMe created CaptainPanel, a SaaS product intended to help watersports business owners transition from pen and paper business and booking management, to a fully automated digital management tool. Captains no longer need to worry about unused capacity on their vessels, in their classrooms, or elsewhere in their business, as the combination of marketplace and SaaS tools allows for both complete utilization and total oversight.

"CaptainPanel is a growth partner for water sports

companies. We provide business with in-person support, guidance and a tailored-made software which engages customers and manages the complex transactions typical of this industry. Both our approach and our software is supportive, simple and growth-focused. We understand the needs of this industry and have built our business to help yours - regardless of size," says Abdullah Shalabi, the Co-Founder and CEO, of CaptainPanel.

"FishFishMe and CaptainPanel are quickly becoming indispensable software platforms for anyone operating a watersports business in the Western United States and Mexico. As the tourism and hospitality sector continue to adopt technical solutions to age-old problems, small business owners reliant on the vibrancy of this sector will no longer fear the loss of value and opportunity caused by a lack of innovation in this space," says Abdulaziz Al Loughani, Managing Partner at Faith Capital.

Commenting on the announcement Hasan Haider, Partner, 500 Startups said: "We aim to invest in great founders, that are passionate and strive to achieve great results, and so we're happy to be investing in CaptainPanel and supporting Abdullah on his path to success. CaptainPanel has been shown to be greatly needed globally, not just in the MENA region and is helping boat captains and owners to more efficiently manage their businesses."

"We are committed to back MENA founders as they endeavor to create lasting value in the technology space across the world and especially in the MENA region," said Mohammed Jaffar, Deputy Chairman and CEO of Faith Capital. "We look forward to continuously providing support to our founders via our expansive team of professionals".



Cybercriminals attack Cloud Server Honeypot within 52 seconds: Report

DUBAI: Sophos, a global leader in network and endpoint security, yesterday announced the findings of its report, Exposed: Cyberattacks on Cloud Honeypots, which reveals that cybercriminals attacked one of the cloud server honeypots in the study within 52 seconds of the honeypot going live in Sao Paulo, Brazil. On average, the cloud servers were hit by 13 attempted attacks per minute, per honeypot. The honeypots were set up in 10 of the most popular Amazon Web Services (AWS) data centers in the world, including California, Frankfurt, Ireland, London, Mumbai, Ohio, Paris, Sao Paulo, Singapore, and Sydney over a 30-day period. A honeypot is a system intended to mimic likely targets of cyberattackers, so that security researchers can monitor cybercriminal behaviors.

In the study, more than 5 million attacks were attempted on the global network of honeypots in the 30-day period, demonstrating how cybercriminals are automatically scanning for weak open cloud buckets. If attackers are successful at gaining entry, organizations could be vulnerable to data breaches. Cybercriminals also use breached cloud servers as pivot points to gain access onto other servers or networks.

"The Sophos report, Exposed: Cyberattacks on Cloud Honeypots, identifies the threats organizations migrating to hybrid and all-cloud platforms face. The aggressive speed and scale of attacks on the honeypots shows how relentlessly persistent cybercriminals are and indicates



Ross Mc Kerchar

they are using botnets to target an organization's cloud platforms. In some instances, it may be a human attacker, but regardless, companies need a security strategy to protect what they are putting into the cloud," said Matthew Boddy, security specialist, Sophos. "The issue of visibility and security in cloud platforms is a big business challenge, and with increased migration to the cloud, we see this continuing."

Visibility into weaknesses

Continuous visibility of public cloud infrastructure is vital for businesses to ensure compliance and to know what to protect. However, multiple development teams within an organization and an ever-changing, auto-scaling environment make this difficult for IT security.

Sophos is addressing security weaknesses in public clouds with the launch of Sophos Cloud Optix, which leverages artificial intelligence (AI) to highlight and mitigate threat exposure in cloud infrastructures. Sophos Cloud Optix is an agentless solution that provides intelligent cloud visibility, automatic compliance regulation detection and threat response across multiple cloud environments.

"Instead of inundating security teams with a massive number of undifferentiated alerts, Sophos Cloud Optix significantly minimizes alert fatigue by identifying what is truly meaningful and actionable," said Ross Mc Kerchar, CISO, Sophos. "In addition, with visibility into cloud assets and workloads, IT security can have a far more accurate picture of their security posture that allows them to prioritize and proactively remediate the issues flagged in Sophos Cloud Optix."

What's On

Sadeem joins forces with social media influencers to combat cyber bullying

The jury members of Sadeem, the digital competition and series offer tips to overcome cyber bullying and promote the value of positive messaging on social media. Some of the well-known and respected social media influencers in the MENA region are leading a campaign against cyber bullying, to shed light on this important issue and to encourage kindness on social media platforms. This campaign is being led by the jury members of Sadeem, the largest digital competition and series in the Arab world focused on digital content creators and influencers.



The most sought-after digital program - Sadeem - aims to find the best young content creators in the Arab world to drive change in the way people use digital media responsibly. Taking one step ahead, Sadeem has adopted the theme of cyber bullying as a content pillar for its second season with the aim to empower ordinary people to share their stories and to encourage content creators to take a stand against cyber bullying.

As part of Sadeem season 2, well-known influencers on the jury of the competition, including Ascia from Kuwait and DZ Joker Chemsou from Algeria, are taking a lead to try and help young audiences in particular overcome the challenges of cyber-bullying. Each of the jury members is supporting the campaign by speaking out about their deeply moving experiences of cyber bullying and offering advice on how to deal with such issues.

Ascia, who is a highly influential fashion blogger and designer with over 2 million followers on Instagram, said, she fell prey to a lot of bullying about her appearance while she was pregnant with her son Adam. She says: "The worst part is that I wasn't used to people's criticism on my appearance. I know that my work relies on style and the way I look, but my work does not include me changing myself for someone else. The most important thing in life, is to be at peace with yourself and not with people." On the rampant increase in cyber bullying, DZ Joker Chemsou, said:

"We all have been a witness to cyber bullying in our



careers and personal lives, which can be quite depressing. Having said that, we as an industry need to unite, stand against cyber bullying and control the scenario to provide a better future for the next generations. But as they say, change starts at home and first within yourself. You must

respect others feelings and reciprocate in a matter, which doesn't hurt them. Be kind to people and use digital media for a positive message rather than the other way around." The campaign against cyber bullying will continue in various formats during the show.

KFH participates in ACK Job Fair

Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the Australian College of Kuwait ACK's Job Fair in efforts to attract, train and qualify distinguished national recruits. A specialized team from the Human Resources department at KFH provided information about employment and the relevant conditions and terms, impor-



tance of human resources role in corporate. Also, KFH explored the need to determine the career path and the employer, as well the local job market requirements.

In line with the relevant parties, KFH pays attention to strengthen its role and efforts to attract and develop the local skills as per the international standards. Thanks to the growth opportunity and its large market share, KFH continues employing and developing the Kuwaiti youth to achieve the desired success in all areas.

KFH has recently participated as a platinum sponsor in the exhibition "Because You Deserve 2" which was hosted by the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program, with the aim of providing jobs for Kuwaiti youth in the private sector, specifically in banks and financial institutions. Also, the Bank participated in the 24th Kuwait University Job Fair, which was organized by the College of Business Administration.

KFH has also participated in various job exhibitions organized in Kuwait, either by official bodies or by public or private universities. Additionally, KFH is the only bank to launch the "Forsah" program for young outstanding Kuwaiti graduates to develop their skills and equip them with the highest standards to enter the job market. KFH has recently organized the largest Kuwaiti youth recruitment event (Mega Assessment Day) where it hired 80 young Kuwaitis out of a total of 150 job applications. This confirms its leadership in attracting and qualifying national youth cadres and reflects its localization efforts and the comprehensive strategy it follows to develop and provide talents with training.



CBK sponsors Tarsheed Campaign



Within its social responsibility activities and cooperation with various governorates, the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently sponsored Ministry of Electricity and Water's 3rd Tarsheed (Conservation) Campaign 2019 organized by Ahmadi governorate at Abdul Rahman Al-Duaji intermediate school in Subahiya. Speaking on the occasion, Ahmadi governor, Sheikh Fawwaz Al-Khaled hailed the role played by CBK in boosting public awareness concerning power and water conservation. On her part, CBK's deputy director for corporal communication, Amani Al-Wer'a stressed CBK's keenness on taking part in various activities.



In conclusion to its third Arab Youth Festival activities organized with Al-Shaheed Park, LOYAC's Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA) recently organized a concert for the Algerian singer, Soad Massi. Massi is an Algerian singer, guitarist and lyrics composer who was born in the Algerian capital in 1972. She started her career in the late 1980s. She also holds a BSc in engineering. She decided to settle down in France by the late 1990s where she made a number of her most successful albums.

TIES classes

You are cordially invited to another session of our series about some prophets and messengers of Allah (SWT) today, April 11th at 7:00 pm, in which we will continue to learn more about Prophets Musa (Moses) and Haroun (Aaron). In this class, we will learn more about the seven destructive major sins, focusing on the ones committed by Pharaoh, see why Pharaoh detained Musa and Haroun (AS) in his palace, and explore his advisors' suggestion on dealing with both Musa and Haroun (AS). We will also discuss the incentives Pharaoh gave his sorcerers to challenge the alleged magic of Musa, their response, and examine their private counsel before challenging the alleged magic of Musa (AS). Finally, we will examine what Musa (AS) did before demonstrating his miracles to the sorcerers and the masses, his admonition to Pharaoh's sorcerers, and their response.



Sampoornam: A complete guide to Indian classical dance 'adavus'

Srishti School of Classical Dance, Kuwait has initiated a new project beneficial for Bharatanatyam dancers - "Sampoornam- A complete guide to Bharatanatyam adavus" that aims to compile all the Bharatanatyam adavus in a sequential order with high quality audio and videography which will be made available "online" free of cost. Bharatanatyam is a form of Indian classical dance. Vinitha Pratih, Artistic Director, said, "This is to encourage the students, teachers and parents to realize the importance of knowing the basics and will serve as a reference guide of the adavus. One must essentially know the adavus in order to understand this dance form," she said.

Just like how alphabets are important to form words and phrases, adavus are very important and form the foundation of

any classical dance form. Several students learn dance for a few years and keep it aside as they get busy in studies and move into different walks of life. After several years, when they realize their inner calling to get back into art, they are lost and don't know where to start. This guide will be the best way they can start off even after a long gap. Knowing the adavus can help the students and teachers enter the world of choreography. Freedom must be used in art forms and the knowledge of the basics is essential in order for us to exploit the myriad aspects of classical dance, she explained.

"This compilation will consist of around 70 adavus and a few choreographed korvais that are traditionally used in Bharatanatyam dance numbers. This is not a tutorial or a learning tool as we believe that learning must be strictly done under the guidance of a teacher. This is strictly for reference only. The audio for practice will also be uploaded on the internet. This can be used by the dance teachers also thereby bringing a sense of compulsion of practicing the adavus," Vinitha told a press conference. Practicing the adavus keeps the mind focused and instills a balance between the mind and body. The students of Srishti School of Classical Dance who have been a part of this project are Kaavya Vaideyanathan, Dheera Ragesh, Anjali Nair and Anandika Dilip. The first episode is being released on Youtube on April 11th 2019 in the channel Vinitha Srishti, she added.

GUST Math Foundation Unit first to receive international accreditation

Gulf University for Science and Technology announced this week that it has received its sixth international accreditation, this time for its Math Foundation Unit (MFU) from the National Association for Developmental Education (NADE) accreditation, based in the United States. With that, GUST has become the first university outside the US to receive the NADE.

The accreditation process took over two years to complete and involved all faculty and staff members in the MFU. This intensive process examined personal teaching styles, pedagogy, theory, and best practices. The accreditation not only solidifies GUST's commitment to excellence, but also confirms the strength of the program, and distinguishes GUST as a respected, leading institution in the region and beyond. In addition, the accreditation process itself provides very constructive guidance on how units can improve for students, faculty, the university, and for higher education in Kuwait.

GUST President, Professor Walid Bouhamra, said, "Accreditation is an indication of the stringent standards at which any institution operates. As a university, our aim is to continue to improve and develop our programs for the

advancement our students, faculty, and community." NADE is a well renowned US-based institution that focuses on the academic success of students by providing professional development for faculty, supporting student learning, disseminating exemplary models of practice, coordinating efforts with other organizations, and facilitating communication among developmental education professionals.

At the conference where the accreditation was awarded, Foundation Program Unit Director Dr Ilene Winokur, along with instructors Heba Elhadary and Kelle Hutchinson, gave three presentations to attendees entitled: Data Driven Analysis as a Trajectory for Effective Program Review, Altered Mindsets and Program Review: How the Accreditation Process Changed a Developmental Math Program, and Improve Math Learning and Grades: Integrate Math Study Skills into Math and Student Success Courses. FPU Director, Dr Ilene Winokur, said: "With the awarding of the NADE accreditation for the Math Foundation program's faculty and staff has received NADE's acknowledgement of its excellence in all areas including program, curriculum, teaching and student achievement."



Health & Science

Siren sounds on nuclear fallout embedded in melting glaciers

Scientist warn of a potentially hazardous time-bomb

VIENNA: Radioactive fallout from nuclear meltdowns and weapons testing is nestled in glaciers across the world, scientists said yesterday, warning of a potentially hazardous time bomb as rising temperatures melt the icy residue. For the first time, an international team of scientists has studied the presence of nuclear fallout in ice surface sediments on glaciers across the Arctic, Iceland the Alps, Caucasus mountains, British Columbia and Antarctica.

It found manmade radioactive material at all 17 survey sites, often at concentrations at least 10 times higher than levels elsewhere. "They are some of the highest levels you see in the environment outside nuclear exclusion zones," said Caroline Clason, a lecturer in Physical Geography at the University of Plymouth.

When radioactive material is released into the atmosphere, it falls to earth as acid rain, some of which is absorbed by plants and soil. But when it falls as snow and settles in the ice, it forms heavier sediment which collects in glaciers, concentrating the levels of nuclear residue.

The Chernobyl disaster of 1986 — by far the most devastating nuclear accident to date—released vast clouds of radioactive material including Caesium into the atmosphere, causing widespread contamination and acid rain across northern Europe for weeks afterwards.

"Radioactive particles are very light so when they are taken up into the atmosphere they can be transported a very long way," she said. "When it falls as rain, like after Chernobyl, it washes away and it's sort of a one-off event. But as snow, it stays in the ice for decades and as it melts in response to the climate it's then washed downstream."

The environmental impact of this has been shown in recent years, as wild boar meat in Sweden was found to

contain more than 10 times the safe levels of Caesium.

'A mark we've left'

Clason said her team had detected some fallout from the Fukushima meltdown in 2011, but stressed that much of the particles from that particular disaster had yet to collect on the ice sediment. As well as disasters, radioactive material produced from weapons testing was also detected at several research sites.

"We're talking about weapons testing from the 1950s and 1960s onwards, going right back in the development of the bomb," she said. "If we take a sediment core you can see a clear spike where Chernobyl was, but you can also see quite a defined spike in around 1963 when there was a period of quite heavy weapons testing."

One of the most potentially hazardous residues of human nuclear activity is Americium, which is produced when Plutonium decays. Whereas Plutonium has a half-life of 14 years, Americium lasts 400.

"Americium is more soluble in the environment and it is a stronger alpha (radiation) emitter. Both of those things are bad in terms of uptake into the food chain," said Clason.

While there is little data available on how these materials can be passed down the food chain—even potentially to humans—Clason said there was no doubt that Americium is "particularly dangerous".

As geologists look for markers of the epoch when mankind directly impacted the health of the planet—known as the Anthropocene—Clason and her team believe that radioactive particles in ice, soil and sediment could be an important indicator. "These materials are a product of what we have put into the atmosphere. This is just showing



An international team of scientists has studied the presence of nuclear fallout in ice surface sediments on glaciers across the Arctic, Iceland the Alps, Caucasus mountains, British Columbia and Antarctica.

that our nuclear legacy hasn't disappeared yet, it's still there," Clason said. "And it's important to study that because ultimately it's a mark of what we have left in the environment." —AFP

NASA turns its focus to earth with aid partnership

LONDON: NASA is using its satellites to solve humanitarian challenges in some of the most fragile places on earth under a landmark partnership with aid agency Mercy Corps.

The US National Aeronautics and Space Administration will use its wealth of data to help communities at risk from climate change and natural disaster predict the dangers and build their resilience.

"There is nothing a NASA person likes better than answering a really good question," NASA's disasters program director David Green told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"That is the excitement of working with

Mercy Corps, because they are trying to bring solutions to bear anywhere in the world there is stress, and arguably we are looking at the entire world at any given time." NASA and Mercy Corps signed a three-year agreement on March 29 that will see them work closely to see how NASA's vast data and analysis resources could be applied to help vulnerable people around the world.

They say the data can help them predict future events, from changes in grazing land to the likely path of flooding, meaning Mercy Corps can plan ahead to protect communities at risk.

"In order to build resilience you have to understand the higher-level stresses on a system," said David Nicholson, senior director of environment, energy and climate at Mercy Corps.

"We so often work in information-scarce environments, trying to make decisions on how best to deploy resources without the benefit of information."

Much of the data that NASA holds is already publicly available, but may not be used because decision-makers are not aware of its existence or because it is not in a format that addresses

their questions. In a pilot project, the teams looked at groundwater levels in Niger, where most people live off subsistence farming and droughts can destroy livelihoods.

NASA was able to provide data on changes to underground water levels and find reserves using a satellite that senses them through tiny changes in gravity.

The information helped to show where could support more farming and where was at high drought risk. They are working to share NASA data with local decision-makers around the world, from national governments to local farmers.

"If you can empower people with the right information they can make the smart decision," said Nicholson. The two organizations could also collaborate during large-scale disasters such as the recent floods in Mozambique and Zimbabwe to help target immediate relief. "It's still very much in the experimental phase, there's just such a deep well of possibility," said Nicholson. "I think there is an endless opportunity here." — Reuters



COLORADO SPRINGS: A model of the SLS rocket on display during the 35th Space Symposium at The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, Colorado on April 9, 2019. NASA is preparing to use the SLS rocket to send US astronauts to the moon in 2024. — AFP

CLINIC

PAGE

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

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DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
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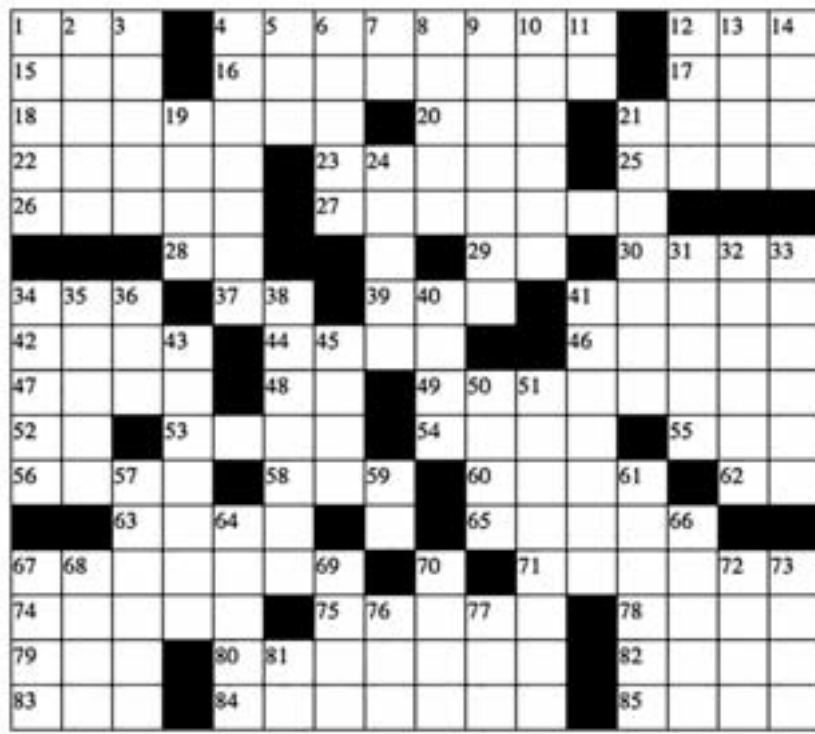
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2180



- ACROSS**
- 1. Not in operation or operational.
 - 4. Type genus of the Gavialidae.
 - 12. The residue that remains when something is burned.
 - 15. Electronic equipment that provides visual images of varying electrical quantities.
 - 16. A fan of racing who watches races from the outer rail of the track.
 - 17. Mature female of mammals of which the male is called 'buck'.
 - 18. German philosopher (1776-1841).
 - 20. The administration of a strong electric current that passes through the brain to induce convulsions and coma.
 - 22. An Oscean-speaking member of an ancient people of Campania.
 - 23. Of or relating to Iraq or its people or culture.
 - 25. Toward the mouth or oral region.
 - 26. Having the leading position or higher score in a contest.
 - 27. Japanese stringed instrument resembling a banjo with a long neck and a fretted fingerboard and a rectangular soundbox.
 - 28. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
 - 29. A state in New England.
 - 30. Little known Kamarupan languages.
 - 34. Select as an alternative.
 - 37. A person forced to flee from home or country.
 - 39. A label made of cardboard or plastic or metal.
 - 42. Providing sophisticated amusement by virtue of having artificially (and vulgarly) mannered or banal or sentimental qualities.
 - 44. A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.
 - 46. Cricket frogs.
 - 47. Perennial having hollow cylindrical leaves used for seasoning.
 - 48. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
 - 49. Not having or producing echoes.
 - 52. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
 - 53. Any of a class of alcohols having 2 hydroxyl groups in each molecule.
 - 54. German organist and contrapuntist (1685-1750).
 - 55. Inflammation of the urethra of unknown cause.
 - 56. (New Testament) The sages who visited Jesus and Mary and Joseph shortly after Jesus was born.
 - 58. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
 - 60. Marked by lack of intellectual depth.
 - 62. A state in New England.
 - 63. A hormone produced by the anterior pituitary gland that stimulates the adrenal cortex.
 - 65. Greek author of fables (circa 620-560 BC).
 - 67. (Arthurian legend) The most virtuous knight of the Round Table.
 - 71. A medium (art or business) that disseminates moving pictures.
 - 74. The clay from which adobe bricks are made.
 - 75. A characteristic language of a particular group (as among thieves).
 - 78. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
 - 79. A room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter.
 - 80. Aerobic rod-shaped spore-producing bacterium.
 - 82. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- DOWN**
- 1. United States biochemist (born in Spain) who studied the biological synthesis of nucleic acids (born in 1905).
 - 2. Not stale or old.
 - 3. A unit that is part of some military service.
 - 4. The father of your father or mother.
 - 5. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
 - 6. The type genus of the family Vitaceae.
 - 7. Being nine more than forty.
 - 8. At right angles to the length of a ship or airplane.
 - 9. An unsuccessful ending.
 - 10. An Asian river.
 - 11. A state in north central United States.
 - 12. The sixth month of the civil year.
 - 13. An upholstered seat for more than one person.
 - 14. (of persons) Highest in rank or authority or office.
 - 19. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
 - 21. A nation's ruler or head of state usually by hereditary right.
 - 24. Follower of Rastafarianism.
 - 31. A trivalent metalloid element.
 - 32. Belief in a kind of sorcery that originated in Africa and is practiced in the West Indies.
 - 33. Recovery or preservation from loss or danger.
 - 35. A fractional monetary unit in Bangladesh and India and Nepal and Pakistan.
 - 36. The widely studied plant virus that causes tobacco mosaic.
 - 38. Fudge made with brown sugar and butter and milk and nuts.
 - 40. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
 - 41. An ancient board game resembling backgammon.
 - 43. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
 - 45. The arch of bone beneath the eye that forms the prominence of the cheek.
 - 50. Kamarupan languages spoken in northeastern India and western Burma.
 - 51. Selecting what seems best of various styles or ideas n.
 - 57. In great numbers.
 - 59. A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
 - 61. Ruffed grouse.
 - 64. 100 thebe equal 1 pula.
 - 66. Type genus of the Percidae.
 - 68. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
 - 69. Small European freshwater fish with a slender bluish-green body.
 - 70. Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
 - 72. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
 - 73. A French abbot.
 - 76. Gear (including necessary machinery) for a particular enterprise.
 - 77. Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
 - 81. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, now is the time to list what you want in life whether material or in the love department. Analyze in a practical manner, just as you would on work or any other job, what you consider you need and how to get it. Once you have a list, write on a piece of paper your desires. Then list everything in a positive manner as to how to achieve your wish. Do the same for love but don't leave anything out there. Aries, from sex to everyday life, be thorough, something you may skim over otherwise. Then know you're going to get everything you ask for now. Celebrate your good fortune tonight with friends and family.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, today your usual don't-change self is back. You want to put down roots. You've kept the work environment open but you've had a little issue with love lately. Keeping it together may be what you want. If that's so, then go to your lover and discuss your feelings. Emotional insecurity will play havoc on other parts of your life. Make sure of what you want in life before you commit to your lover now. Know that any change you make causes a life's undertaking that could leave you having to deal with more than you please. Taurus. Think, make sure and then act.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, finally, your day is better. Quick answers and quick wit drive you towards completing something you want to create. This is a great time to communicate with originality and clarity. You look strong in your work place making high-erupts smile. Breakthroughs are easily made and make you feel better about yourself. You want someone to love, Gemini, and not really just someone to love. You want that love to last a life time where you and your lover can help and encourage each other. You dream big now but you feel great responsibility with that someone to make the security in your love life you need.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, you're learning it's okay to have needs. Family and home means so much more now. Being able to discuss your feelings and problems make room for a larger place in your heart for those who reciprocate. You want emotional roots along with family home roots to run deep but you're also thinking about changing homes now. At least you may decide to redecorate or fix something, like plumbing, that isn't quite right at this time. You're beginning to settle into the area of your soul you need for a healthy, happy life even if it means staying put. Cancer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, you want an intimate connection with your work and in your love life that will span the sands of time. You crave the opportunity to grow with your love and with your job. Nurturing your work like a baby will increase the results you're looking for and give you the outcome you desire. Be wary of someone who crosses you on the job now. Staying calm and showing an authoritative side gets you more in work related items than flying off the handle. You've got this and look good, Leo.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, this is a good day for decisions. You're also feeling that since you're in this place now, the only way is up for both at work and personally. You're right. Make sure that you take care of yourself first. You can't starve enough to feed others and make them strong. You first, Virgo. Being needed is what you woke up to this morning. That's a strong motivation to be better than you ever were before. Don't be surprised if you get told today that a certain person knew you'd be back on top soon. Listen for those compliments. Take them to heart, Virgo. You need to stand straighter and keep your values high.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, because you have needs you sense the needs of others and are Johnny-on-the-spot to help. Emotional security plays hard around the fringes of your mind. You work towards getting your desires, which seem to be many at this time. Having someone to understand what's happening with you is like being given a very good gift. Being able to make common sense of your situation and express it to others is the same kind of gift. You're thankful, Libra, that you're able to have those kinds of friends in your life now. That helps.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, you feel like you want different in your life and you're even seen by friends as "Being different," which you admire in yourself. That means you're trying new ideas and making them work. Plus, you must be doing something right. Novel approaches to anything in your life but especially work gives you instant insight into whether those methods work or not. Then you can adapt them to other parts of your life with surety of work, Scorpio. The only problem you have is finding someone who thinks like you to share your life with in peace. Keep looking.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 18)

Sagittarius, now is the time to work. Moreover, it's a time of making plans for yourself and your future with security in mind. If this isn't the job to make more money then you may want to consider thinking about what type job you can endure and enjoy that'll make you the money you need. It's also a time for finding love if you don't have it now. Make a list with only the pros of what you're looking for in love, Sagittarius. Allowing the cons can only confuse the situation and perhaps bring in something that you won't want for the long run.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, right now you need to know you're on the right track in business. You need someone smart enough to know what you need and how to guide you towards getting it. That person needs to be willing to give you the loving, maternal or paternal push you need with all the love connected to it. You don't push well but a person to whom you'll listen has the ability to give you that little shove without arousing your ire, Capricorn. You want roots and you need the people around you that helps you fertilize and grow those roots.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Aquarius, people in authority in your industry have been watching you. It's now paying off. You're seen as conservative in your planning and motivation at work. Can you believe that from one who relies on their gut a lot? You're seen as keeping to a safe, responsible path which makes money. These people are thinking about how to reward you with security. You go Aquarius. You feel good because this is exactly what you need at this time. You want to feel as if you're safe and have provided for your and your family's future. Don't rest on your laurels now. Keep up the good work.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, acting on instinct is where you're at now. Do be careful that you don't have to amend some of the actions you've taken by gut later. The stars are giving you the go ahead to tread in that direction since you'll probably win at anything which you set your mind to doing. The only problem with this is you could be a little tense, Pisces, and anyone that steps on that last nerve could be in for a rude awakening. Just saying. Patience isn't your virtue nor do you want to learn it. Knowing what you know, you're sure you don't want to ask for that useless quality.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Birthstones - Word Search



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GARNET	EMERALD	SAPPHIRE
FEBRUARY	JUNE	OCTOBER
AMETHYST	PEARL	NOVEMBER
MARCH	JULY	TOURMALINE
AQUAMARINE	RUBY	TOPAZ
APRIL	AUGUST	DECEMBER
DIAMOND	PERIDOT	TANZANITE

Yesterday's Solution

Baseball - Solution



BASE	FLYBALL	SHORTSTOP
BATBOY	GLOVE	SLIDE
BATTER	GROUND	STRIKE
BUNT	HOME	TRIPLE PLAY
COACH	INNING	UMPIRE
CURVEBALL	LINE DRIVE	
DUGOUT	MOUND	
FASTBALL	PITCHER	

Yesterday's Solution



Daily Sudoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2019



Visitors view "Brazilian Stone Scape", a composition of multiple levels of Botanique coffee tables by Brazilian architect Vivian Coser promoted exhibited at the Milan University (L'Universit degli Studi di Milano) during the Fuorisalone 2019 design week in Milan. — AFP

As Vegas eyes millennials, concert residency industry booms

Six months ago, Sahar Mohammadrabie up and moved to Las Vegas, the city synonymous with sin, but she couldn't care less about gambling or parties: the Midwesterner is here for the music. The 25-year-old is emblematic of a new generation uninspired by the lure of vice but seeking a wealth of entertainment—and giving the Vegas concert residency, once considered an artist pit stop before the pearly gates, a cultural relevancy it hasn't seen in decades.

The residency—a series of shows performed in a single location—has long been a staple of the Las Vegas Strip, pioneered by pianist Liberace in the forties, Frank Sinatra a decade later and Elvis in the seventies. But after taking the backseat to slot machines, strip clubs and production shows like Cirque du Soleil, the concept is back with a facelift—and

it's flourishing. "I don't gamble and I'm completely sober; I came for the entertainment," the Kansas City native Mohammadrabie told AFP as she eagerly sought a glimpse of superstar Cardi B at the opening weekend of Kaos, a club branding itself as the desert city's hot young thing.

Kaos manager Jon Gray said Mohammadrabie resembles the key demographic his team aims to reach: "A lot of Gen Y consumers coming to Las Vegas now are here for experiences, and gaming has not been a part of their culture." Gray, 35, noted that millennials came of age during the recession when "discretionary spending was pulled back." "They grew up in an era where the dollar was a little more valuable to the individual," he said. "I think gambling it or risking it was something that they hadn't thought of."

Gray estimates that gaming makes up only about 40 percent of revenue, a flip from some two decades ago when gambling raked in some 70 to 80 percent of earnings. But he hopes eventually club-goers—who pay anywhere from \$40 to \$2000 to enter—will wander to the gambling room adjacent to Kaos that's encircled by trendy restaurants and upscale cocktail lounges. "I think that'll lend itself to making people curious in trying out playing blackjack, or going to a craps game," the manager said.

Focus on performance

The Vegas powers—that-be credit French-Canadian megastar Celine Dion with reviving the residency form at the turn of the century, as theaters struggled to book top-tier talent. Dion, 51, found enormous success after launching her first residency in 2003, raking in a reported \$385 million in ticket sales. Her current residency, set to wrap later this year, has scored at least \$245.5 million. "You have to give her a ton of credit," Gray said of Dion, who performs at the regularly sold-out Colosseum of Caesars Palace, making an estimated \$500,000 per show.



In this file photo Celine Dion performs at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace as she resumes her residency in Las Vegas, Nevada.

"The staying power that she's had—I think that gave a lot of other people confidence as well that they could fill a showroom for x number of dates." Now the city has seen megastars like Elton John, Cher, Mariah Carey and Britney Spears set up shop, exchanging the touring grind for lucrative comfort. In the wake of their success the concept has seduced music's contemporary royalty, including Cardi B, Drake and Latin trap superstar Bad Bunny.

The new venue Kaos—part of the Palms Casino Resort renovation, touted as the most expensive in Vegas history, with managers saying the cost is nearing the billion dollar mark—prioritized showcasing musicians. "Sprinkling that live performance into the nightlife space has really kind of pioneered more of the younger and up-and-coming acts to want to focus on residencies in Las Vegas," Gray told AFP. Venue staff have kept the performance fees under wraps—but have said those costs aren't included in the restoration fees.

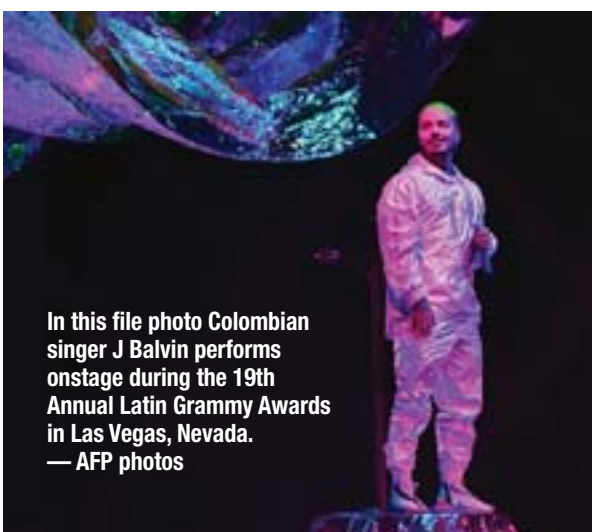
'Natural relationship'

But if the opening weekend is any indication, the investment is paying off: lines snaked around the block to get into the club as fans clamored to see high-octane performers including Cardi, Colombian reggaeton star J Balvin and rapper G-Eazy launch their residencies there. The stacked line-

up also featured hip hop star Travis Scott and DJ Skrillex, who performed one night prior at the luxury club, which can host up to 8,000 guests. Kaos boasts a sprawling 73,000 square foot outdoor space connected to 29,000 square feet indoors, complete with cabanas and pools that revolve around large-scale commissioned Damien Hirst sculptures.

"It brings a different type of audience into Vegas—there's different residencies every weekend," said Tony Suarez, who doesn't gamble but came hoping to catch a glimpse of Balvin. "We use concerts as an excuse to come over here," the 28-year-old from Los Angeles said. Gray called the Vegas residency a "natural relationship," saying entertainers love the vibe of Vegas while guests "come to let themselves go a little bit." He called the resulting energy "electric."

Rap queen Cardi B, sporting a wide-brimmed mint green hat paired with a matching feathered gown, had guests dancing well past dawn to close out the night. "Let's get it poppin'!" the Bronx rapper shouted to deafening cheers. "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." — AFP



In this file photo Colombian singer J Balvin performs onstage during the 19th Annual Latin Grammy Awards in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP photos

Tourist traffic from the GCC countries to Turkey continues to rise due to high demand

The number of Kuwaiti nationals visiting Turkey recorded 22.66 percent growth in the first two months of 2019, to 49,701 according to the latest data released by the Turkish Consulate General Cultural and Tourism Office in Dubai. Turkey is one of the largest outbound tourism markets for people living in the Gulf

countries. In February 2019, around 1,670 million international tourists visited Turkey, which is 9.38 percent more compared to the same period in 2018. Kuwaiti nationals remain the largest number visitors from the GCC countries to Turkey. In 2018 as many as 298,620 Kuwaiti nationals visited Turkey on holidays and business.

Tourist flow from GCC to Turkey continues to rise, due to a number of factors that include increased number of attractions and relaxation in the visa formalities. However, this is a fraction of the total number of visitors from Kuwait, when expatriate residents are included. Tourism revenues increased 12.3 percent reaching US\$29.5 billion in 2018, in comparison with US\$26.2 billion the revenues collected in 2017.

Official data revealed that 81.8 percent of the income came from foreign visitors and 18.2 percent from Turkish citizens living abroad. Salih Ozer, Attache of Culture and Information, Turkey to the UAE, said, "Tourist flow from

the GCC countries to Turkey continues to grow and I am happy to see the growth trend continues this year, despite headwinds in the global economy.

"Turkey remains an oasis of peace and tranquility and offers a large number of tourism attractions. It offers a greater value for money when compared to other popular tourism destinations across the world. "Turkey and the Gulf countries share centuries old social, cultural and economic ties. The repeated visits of the friendly visitors from the GCC countries help fuel the growth of our economy."

Turkey welcomed just over 46 million visitors in 2018, including 39.49 million foreigners and 6.62 million Turkish citizens from abroad. Nearly six million foreigners coming to Turkey in 2018 were from Russia—an increase of 26.49 percent compared with 2017 — and 4.5 million visitors were from Germany, up by 25.88 percent from the previous year, according to the ministry's statement.



"Kuwaiti nationals visiting Turkey recorded 22.66 percent growth in the first two months of 2019"

Camila Cabello to star in remake of 'Cinderella'



In this file photo US-Cuban singer Camila Cabello attends the 2019 Vanity Fair Oscar Party following the 91st Academy Awards at The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Beverly Hills. — AFP

Cuban-American singer Camila Cabello will try on the glass slipper when she takes on the lead role in a remake of "Cinderella," a source close to the project said Tuesday. The decision to cast a Hispanic woman is a significant break from a long tradition of white and usually blonde Cinderellas. Cabello, a multi-platinum selling and Grammy-nominated singer/songwriter, will also help write the film's songs. The project grew out of an original idea from late-night television host James Corden, the source told AFP. The remake was first reported by the entertainment magazine The Hollywood Reporter.

Corden—best known for "The Late Late Show" and his "Carpool Karaoke" series—will co-produce the film through the company Fulwell 73, of which he is a partner. At the helm will be director Kay Cannon, who is no stranger to breaking the Hollywood mold with female-driven narratives. Cannon wrote the box office hit "Pitch Perfect" franchise, which tells the story of female friendships through a humorous take on competitive college capella. She made her directorial debut in 2018 with the critically acclaimed comedy "Blockers," which flipped the typically male-oriented teen coming-of-age script and grossed over \$93 million worldwide.

The iconic princess role is the latest chapter in Cabello's own Cinderella story: she gained recognition at age 16 as part of the girl group Fifth Harmony. She left the group in 2016 to pursue a solo career and became a global household name in August the following year when her hit song "Havana" soared to the top of the pop radio chart. Cabello released her self-titled album in January 2018, which debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 chart.

Now 22, Cabello is the latest actress to take on the role of Cinderella. The film, which will be made by Sony affiliate Columbia, is on the fast track for production. The two best-known previous versions of the fairy tale are Disney's 1950 cartoon and the studio's 2015 live-action version starring Lily James. —AFP

Benin eyes video gaming in play for jobs and development

West Africa lags behind the northern hemisphere when it comes to software development but moves are afoot to tap into a growing interest in the region and across the continent. At a large hotel in Cotonou, Benin held its first "hackathon" where participants were given just 24 hours to try to create a fun and educational video game for mobile phones. "Socially, gaming is seen only as a distraction when it's a sector of the future," said organizer Tania Okanla, of the country's Digital Development Agency.

In 2018, the video games market was bigger than music and cinema, generating \$138 billion (123 billion euros) worldwide, according to Newzoo, which specializes in data on the sector. But Africa is estimated to represent just one percent of that market, making it an area ripe for development and job creation. Accountants PwC said in 2017 the value of Africa's video game industry would more than double to \$642 million by 2021.

'Beyond the clichés'

Sidick Bakayoko, president of the Benin Game Jam jury and organizer of the Electronic and Video Game Festival of Abidjan, wants to shine the spotlight on African talent. "A few years ago, we were happy when we had 10 enthusiasts at a video game conference," he said. This year, there were more than 70 at the hackathon, including three women. Those involved billed themselves as game designers, programmers and graphic artists.

Laurenda Agbo, 25, started playing on a console at a video club run by her father for just 25 CFA francs (4 US cents, 3 euro cents) a game. Now she develops websites and games for mobile phones. "When I found

out there was a hackathon, I said, 'Wow, I'm going to be able to show what I can do,'" she said. Patrice de Souza likened himself to a "compulsive teenage gamer". He has already created a game based on a Beninese folk tale, which has been downloaded some 10,000 times. "It's the chance to produce games about Africa, which go beyond the clichés and stereotypes we see in Western productions," he said. "We've got a lot of things to say!" added the 25 year old.

On the job

The hackathon jury seemed to have the Beninese identity in mind. Winners included a race across the country involving Dahomey Amazons, the female warriors of the ancient kingdom in modern-day Benin that lasted until the end of the 19th century. Others included a game with the ubiquitous "zémidjans"; motorbike-taxis that are found on every street corner. Games were awarded prizes for the quality of the story, creativity and possible future development.

Talent may have been unearthed but exploiting it is the next challenge. "It's with these young people that we're looking for the way to develop this sector," said the head of the Digital Development Agency, Serge Adjovi. His colleague, Okanla, said the gaming revolution in Benin will take place on mobile telephones. "Anyone can have one: 90 percent of Beninese have got a mobile and it doesn't need very advanced technology, unlike games on a console or a PC," she added.

For developers, it's the private sector that is the most promising source of funding. "At the moment, there's a lack of investment to fund digital content in West Africa," said Robert Aouadi, a hackathon partner and head of major internet service provider ISOCEL. "We're all learning on our own," said web developer Steve Dakpogan, 31. "Some of us run IT classes but we get our video gaming skills on the job."

A branch of a French IT school called Epitech opened in Cotonou in February and the Nantes School of Design also aims to set up in the city. All of which could help Benin prepare for entry into a very competitive sector. Bakayoko is optimistic. "There's jobs galore and huge opportunities in video gaming. Africa has a part to play," he said. — AFP

TV lets it all hang out in naked attack on bad body image

Reality television shows like "Big Brother" and "Love Island" have been blamed for helping create the Instagram aesthetic of perfect, bronzed hairless bodies. But a new show is trying to repair the damage unrealistic standards are doing to people's body image. "Naked Beach" is one of the hottest properties at MIPTV, the world's top television market taking place in Cannes on the French Riviera. The show takes three people who hate their bodies and flies them to a Greek beach where with the help of experts and therapists they learn to love themselves again.

Having embraced their lumps and bumps they strip off and go nude on the beach in a feelgood finale. The body-positive format has been snapped up by broadcasters across Europe even before it went out for the first time on Britain's Channel 4 on Thursday. Co-devised by University of London psychologist Dr Keon West, mental health campaigner Natasha Devon also oversees the show. She said that Britain—one of the global powerhouses of reality TV—also "has some of the lowest body image scores in the world".

Andrea Jackson, of distributors Magnify Media, said the genius of the show is that "it's a makeover format that doesn't seek to change the way we look but how we think about ourselves." She said it proved that "intelligent development can produce brilliant entertainment to address some of the biggest social issues of our time."

'Your Money or My Life'

"Naked Beach" is part of a new wave of shows about to hit the small screen that take their social responsibilities very seriously, analysts say. Virginia Mouselier of The Wit database said there is a "new appetite for shows that can make a difference to people's lives". She said the new French reality show "Hire Me If You Can" tries to give to a new start to people who "normally would not get as far as a job interview" because of their past or their age. Tears are shed as "they audition for a week so employers can see them for who they are before they hear about their backgrounds."

The emotional volume is cranked up to a new level in the heart-breaking "Your Money Or My Life", a show in which people with terminal conditions plead for cash to pay for treatment that might prolong their lives. Already a sensation in the Netherlands, money poured in to the crowd funding campaigns to save the contestants, Mouselier said. Another Dutch format, "Been There, Done That", has celebrities who have come through tough times mentoring young people to overcome similar challenges, from transitioning to anorexia to addiction and depression.

"Secret Teacher"—which will screen in the UK later this year—has successful business people going undercover in tough schools as teaching assistants to help bring out teenagers' talents. Each mentor will also make "a life-changing offer" to one lucky student to help launch their business career.

Non-PC questions

Mouselier said a plethora of therapy-based shows are popping up on schedules across the world, with the Belgian show "Therapy" breaking new ground by exploring the intimate relationship between a patient and their shrink. While patients' faces remain hidden, some of the country's top psychologists opened their consulting room to the cameras. A new Israeli show, "The Conflict", uses drama therapy to try to heal broken families and friendships, employing actors to re-enact clashes in the hope of "finding a way through" for both sides.

However, an Australian show called "You Can't Ask That" proves that taking the bull by the horns is often the best way to avoid misunderstandings. Billed as "the show that asks politically incorrect questions", it is one of the most successful factual formats in the world this year.

Each episode involves "awkward, inappropriate or uncomfortable questions you've always wanted to know but were too afraid to ask" being put to misunderstood, minority and marginalized groups including Muslims, transgender and people of short stature. If the embarrassment of asking cringe-worthy questions is too much to live with, there is always the new Belgium show "The Weekend". In it a group of people who have had to face some of life's toughest challenges find support from a diverse group of new friends "they would not normally meet in real life". They might include the contestants of a new big-budget French survival show called "District Z", fronted by film star Jean Reno, who have to fight off zombie attacks in order to win bars of gold. — AFP



"Pomme de New York" by the French sculptor Claude Lalanne. — AFP

Claude Lalanne, French sculptor with playful touch, dies at 93

The French artist Claude Lalanne, part of the Lalanne sculptor couple whose surreal but functional works are highly prized by collectors, died early Wednesday aged 93, her agent told AFP. For decades Lalanne formed an artistic duo with her fellow sculptor and husband Francois-Xavier Lalanne, creating works whose fans included fashion giant Yves Saint Laurent and the iconoclastic French singer Serge Gainsbourg. She had been taken to a hospital in Fontainebleau, south of Paris, after suffering a stroke.

"Claude Lalanne had the simplicity of artists who work with their hands to build their own poetic world, without worrying about anything else," the gallery owner Jean-Gabriel Mitterrand, a nephew of former French president Francois Mitterrand, said. The artist, who was still working in her studio in the village of Ury last week, studied architecture at Paris's renowned Beaux Arts school before turning to art.

"Les Lalanne," as the couple were known—she met her husband, who died in 2008, at a gallery in 1952—created baroque works large and small, with whimsical imagery often fused with intensely realistic renditions of leaves, vegetables and animals. They intended their work to be functional—last week she was working on a staircase for the American architect and designer Peter Marino. In an interview in 2013, Claude remembered how "the critics completely ignored us" when she and her husband first showed their work.

"For them, making sculptures which had a use was a complete nonsense," she was quoted by Christie's auction house as saying on its website. One of her best-known sculptures was "L'Homme a la Tete de Chou" (Man with the Cabbage Head), a 1968 work which Serge Gainsbourg chose for the cover of his 1976 concept album of the same name. She designed objects for the home as well, including intricate candlesticks or benches—one had two crawling crocodiles as the backrest.

Park Avenue 'Pomme'

In the late 1960s, Lalanne began several collaborations with Saint Laurent on jewelry as well as two robes, one with a sculpted copper waist, the other with a copper breastplate. At the massive sale of Saint Laurent's collected artwork in 2009, a set of 15 Lalanne mirrors went for 1.8 million euros (\$2 million at current rates), a record for the artist. That year she and her husband were the subject of an outdoor showing in New York of several works along Park Avenue, including a shiny golden "Pomme" (Apple).

"Claude Lalanne's personality functioned as a fortress against bad taste and pretentiousness," Mitterrand said. Despite their success, Claude Lalanne was unable to stop the city of Paris from razing a few years later their fantastical sculpted park for children in the Les Halles district in the heart of the city. Inaugurated in 1986, the "Lalanne Garden" was a mischievous oasis tucked a stone's throw away from the hulking Les Halles shopping centre and transport hub. Even after a spirited resistance by locals and fellow artists, many of whom urged the city to move the gardens if they could not be saved, the garden was destroyed as part of a huge renovation project. — AFP



Furniture made with recycled cardboard designed by Giorgio Caporaso stand on display at the Reborn ideas stand in the Fabricca del Vapore cultural and artistic area.



Furnitures by Tecno and Zanotta design are on display in XXV April square with the arch of porta garibaldi stand on display during the Fuorisalone 2019 design week yesterday in Milan.



An installation called "Crochet" in collaboration with Melissa and Brazilian designers, Campana brothers stand on display in the Brera design district.



People stand near an installation called "Urban Freedom" by designer Elena Ghisellini, part of the Land Rover "Live for the City" project, in the Brera design district.

The Fuorisalone 2019 design week



Furniture by Tecno and Zanotta design are on display in XXV April square with the arch of porta garibaldi stand on display during the Fuorisalone 2019 design week. — AFP photos



A worker removes a cashew nut's almond with a knife at the Fludor plant in Zogbodomey, some 110km north of Cotonou. — AFP photos

Cashew waste strikes gold: Benin looks to cashews for growth



A worker collects cashew oil, or cashew nut shell liquid (CNSL), extracted from the nuts' crushed shells at the Fludor plant.

The back and forth of lorries and pick-up trucks covered with tarpaulin never stops at the Fludor factory in Zogbodomey, two hours drive from Benin's commercial hub, Cotonou. Cashew season started in earnest in March and tons of the distinctive red-yellow apples containing the popular kidney-shaped nut arrive in hessian sacks. A competitive global cashew market is dominated by India (a quarter of the 2.2 million tons of world production), yet the tiny West African country of Benin is one of the main producers on the continent with 100,000 ton harvested over the past two seasons.

But like the rest of Africa's cashew producers (Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Guinea Bissau), Benin exports the vast majority of nuts in raw form to India, leading to considerable loss. When processed the value soars from \$5,300 per ton to about \$9,000, according to the agricultural statistics firm Planetoscope.

President Patrice Talon, elected in 2016, has made



A Fludor factory worker removes a cashew nut's almond with a knife at the Fludor plant.



Picture shows Cashew nuts at the drying area of the Fludor plant.

boosting the agricultural sector, and particularly cashew production, an economic priority. Growing local production is now seen as the path to allowing the country to profit even further.

The edible almond represents only 22 percent of the nut, with the rest typically thrown away. But things are now starting to change. A dozen local companies in northern and central Benin already use cashew apples, a fleshy peduncle just above the nuts, turning them into fruit juices.

Technology

What had long been an informal trade is now a formalized production, manufactured for the past two years by American NGO Technoserve, boosting manufacturing from 30,000 bottles in 2017 to 200,000 last year. The Fludor factory, a subsidiary of the Nigerian food giant TGI (Tropical General Investments Group), wants to go even further by manufacturing Cashew Nut Shell Liquid (CNSL) made from a by-product of the hard outer layer.

"It (the shell) contains an acidic liquid that we didn't

know how to get rid of," says Roland Riboux, who heads the Beninese subsidiary of the Nigerian group TGI. "Either you bury it, which isn't good for the soil or the water table, or you burn it." Yet now the product has commercial value. According to the Cashew Export Promotion Council of India, the oil-made by crushing the shell-can be used in industrial products including brake linings, paint and lacquer. As such it is seen as a more natural alternative to chemicals.

TGI's CNSL manufacturing unit takes up a small part of its 15,000-square-metre (161,500-square-foot) factory where rumbling machines turn at full speed. A pile of brown cashew shells are stacked high, waiting to be processed while about 600 locally recruited women shell, sort and remove the film around the almond. The complex machines imported from India are manned by staff supervised by Vinod Kumar, an Indian engineer specialized in CNSL, brought in to oversee the operations since it started last year.

Growth area

Kumar said the future looks bright. "At first, we started with three tons of oil a day. We're now at 10 tons from 30-40 tons of shells," he says. "Our aim is produce a maximum capacity if 15 tons." If CNSL seems like a niche product compared with the sale of cashew nuts, growing global demand is proving otherwise. The Benin oil is exported to India, Japan and China, which has developed industries using it as a raw material. "This is an additional way to keep the added value at home," says Roland Riboux.

The plant intends to generalize this multi-transformation of the agricultural product. But to do so, you have to change mentalities to the first level of the chain. Since this year, she has been sourcing directly from cooperatives in Atacora and Donga, two cashew producing departments in the north of the country, and not just through intermediaries who go around the small producers. "Producers are starting to realize that it's not just the nuts that people want," says Barbara Macon, head of the sustainability program at Fludor. "It's important to show them what it can be made into," Kumar adds. "With this unit, we will be able to transform all the shells of Benin." — AFP



Roland Riboux, Fludor Benin's General Director, checks the quality of the cashew nuts' almonds in the big processing hall at the Fludor plant.



Workers process the cashew nuts' almonds before bagging at the Fludor plant.



Nicaise Degla, cashew nut shell liquid (CNSL) supervisor, collects cashew balm in a plastic bucket in at the Fludor plant.



Workers prepare cashew nuts for shipment to other departments for almond and balm extraction at the Fludor plant.

Cinema vs streaming: The battle over when and where you can see movies

While superheroes, monsters and aliens battle on the big screen, a real-life fight is raging behind the scenes that will determine what moviegoers will see at their local cinemas. The off-screen skirmish centers around the theatrical "window," the time a movie plays exclusively in US theaters before it can be released on DVD or digital. That period averages 90 days, but upheaval across the media business is fueling debate on whether that should shrink. At stake is the future of movie theaters and small-screen entertainment as new technology giants upend decades of Hollywood tradition.

Netflix Inc has streamed original movies at the same time, or just a few weeks after, their debut in cinemas. Competitor Amazon Studios has said it would like some of its films to play for only two to eight weeks in theaters before hitting the Amazon Prime Video streaming service. Many theater owners object, citing potential damage to their business. The group that awards the Oscars is weighing whether to respond, and A-list celebrities are taking sides.

Adam Aron, chief executive of AMC Entertainment Holdings, the world's largest theater operator, said his company would "consider any and all alternatives" but any changes to the current industry standard "would have to be beneficial to us or neutral to us." Even the king of the multiplex - Walt Disney Co - is getting into streaming, and is set to unveil details on Thursday of its strategy. That has stoked concern that it, too, might want movies in living rooms sooner.

Disney executives insist they remain rock-solid behind existing windows for big event films. Disney's franchise fare such as "Black Panther" and "Avengers: Infinity War" generated a total \$7.3 billion at global box offices in 2018. At a recent CinemaCon convention for theater owners in Las Vegas, Disney and other studios stressed the special experience of watching a film in a darkened theater.

"A lot more people have had their first kiss in a movie theater than their parents' living room," said Toby Emmerich, a senior executive at Warner Bros., part of AT&T Inc's WarnerMedia, which also plans a streaming push. Oscar-winning actress Helen Mirren was more forthright. "I love Netflix, but fuck Netflix!" she said to cheers and applause. "There's nothing like sitting in the cinema and the lights go down."

Netflix is in talks to buy the Egyptian Theatre, a historic movie house in the heart of Hollywood, a source with knowledge of the matter said. Netflix would host premieres and other industry events at the theater, which opened in 1922, the source said. Amazon Studios boss Jennifer Salke, meanwhile, declared the company "committed to the theatrical experience." In June, it is slated to release comedy "Late Night" in theaters, with a traditional window.

Shorter windows would keep some customers at home, said Greg Marcus, chief executive of The Marcus Corporation, owner of the fourth-largest U.S. theater chain. "If you damage the business and take away 10 percent of our customers, we won't be able to reinvest in the theatrical experience," Marcus said. "That would ultimately hurt content providers."

Others said consumers are happy with the current system. Ticket sales in 2018 reached a record \$41 billion globally and \$12 billion in the United States and Canada, even as Netflix released about 90 movies for streaming. "We're not talking about something that's broken," Vue International cinemas CEO Tim Richards said in an interview.

Oscar showdown

"Windowing" is expected to be on the agenda this month at a meeting about rules governing the Academy Awards. Some members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, the group that awards the Oscars, have been debating whether films must play in theaters for a specific length of time to be eligible. Director Steven Spielberg told Britain's ITV News last year that movies seen primarily via streaming should compete for Emmys, not Oscars. A representative declined to comment on whether the director will urge the Academy to address the issue.

In February, Netflix won three Oscars for "Roma," which streamed three weeks after a limited theatrical debut. Netflix tweeted that it "loved cinema" but also supported access for people who cannot afford, or do not live close to, theaters. The Justice Department has waded in, warning the Academy that some eligibility limits could be anti-competitive.

An Academy spokesperson said any changes would be weighed at the April 23 meeting. The issue could flare up later this year when Netflix releases "The Irishman," a mob drama directed by Martin Scorsese and starring Robert De Niro and Al Pacino. Filmmakers hope "The Irishman" will play broadly in theaters, De Niro said in an interview, though they realize Netflix's chief audience is its streaming customers.

"They're not going to cut their noses to spite their face," De Niro said. "We get it. This kind of movie has to be presented that way." But he added: "We're working it out so we can have as much theatrical as possible." — Reuters



A beekeeper works at an apiary in Navajas, Matanzas province, Cuba. — AFP photos



Beekeepers collect honeycombs at an apiary in Navajas, Matanzas province, Cuba.



Beekeepers process honeycombs at an apiary in Navajas, Matanzas province, Cuba.

Cuba's worker bees boost thriving honey business



A beekeeper collects honeycombs from a frame at an apiary in Navajas.



Beekeepers work at an apiary.



Beekeepers load bee hives onto a truck at an apiary.



A beekeeper gets into his truck at an apiary.



Beekeepers put their protective gear on at an apiary.



Beekeepers collect honeycombs at an apiary.

In the floral valleys of Cuba's Matanzas province, old fashioned farming means bees can swarm without the threat of pesticides that have decimated populations across the world. Life is sweet for Cuba's winged wonders, and Europe's honey-lovers are catching on. "The bee is made neither for urban areas nor rural areas. It is made for the mountains," says Rogelio Marcelo Fundora, surveying a lush mountain valley east of Havana where his bees are thriving. Fundora, 51, is a mechanical engineer by trade. His 54-year-old brother Santiago Esteban is a teacher. But both have become Cuba's best-known beekeepers by passion, owning 600 hives in the valley.

In this idyllic valley a few hours drive from the capital, "last year we produced 80 tonnes of honey," said Santiago, his face covered by a black net to avoid stings while bees swarmed in agitation as he manipulated a hive. Shrinking bee populations around the world have caused scientists and conservationists to sound the alarm over the effects of intensive agriculture, disease and pesticides. But not in Cuba, a Communist-run island nation that has become a kind of apicultural paradise, thanks to the purity of its countryside.

That environmental integrity dates back to Cuba's crippling economic crisis of the 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, which once provided the island with thousands of tons of pesticides, fertilizers and herbicides. Deprived of that support, Cuba had no choice but to develop natural alternatives. In the process, it reduced to almost zero the use of chemicals, so harmful to bee populations and the quality of their honey. Average production is 51 kilograms (112 pounds) of honey per hive, a level considered high.

However, the Fundora brothers, considered the nation's beekeeper kings, show yields of up to 160 kilograms of honey per hive—triple the national average. "There's no miracle, just a lot of work," said Santiago. "It's endless work to change out the queen, select the bees," he said, his face tanned by many hours working under the sun. From their 21 apiaries on the flank of a hill near the village of Navajas, east of Havana, the two brothers extract a honey they say is absolutely "clean"—meaning chemical free.

Sweet export figures

The beekeepers' success means organic honey has joined rum and cigars as one of Cuba's quality exports. The island produced 8,834 tons of honey in 2018, 1,500 tons more than the target set by Apicuba, the Cuban Beekeeping Company. There's still some way to go to catch Argentina, however. Latin America's leading producer brought 76,000 tons to the market in 2017, according to UN Food and Agriculture Organization figures. Of the total, around 1,900 tons of Cuba's honey have been certified as organic honey, a "national record" said Dayron Alvarez, the director of technology and development at Apicuba.

Almost every drop is exported, with Germany, France, Spain, Britain and Switzerland the main markets worth \$18 million in 2017. And there's likely more to come: "We are working on entering the Chinese and Saudi markets," said Alvarez. Apicuba has a monopoly on exports—beekeepers with more than five hives must sell it their honey. In exchange, the organization provides them with dis-

counted fuel and equipment.

It pays up to \$1,000 per ton to beekeepers and sells honey at different prices depending on the country, which is not disclosed. Based on the most recent figures, from 2017, Cuba received an average of \$2,655 per ton for its honey abroad. And the quality is excellent, according to Adolfo Perez, head of the Apicultural Research Center. "Because of the tendency to use very little chemicals, we can say that the honey of Cuba is almost all organic honey," says Perez.



A beekeeper pours honey into a metal container at an apiary.

'Very good health'

In the Cuban countryside, bees are exposed to no great natural risk or human threat and enjoy year-long summer temperatures with enough humidity to ensure a permanent supply of flowers. "The bees are in very good health," said Santiago. "We don't use any chemicals when fumigating apiaries or weeding," and "no antibiotics"—products that are anyhow hard to come by because of the US trade embargo in place since 1962.

That's not to say they don't have to use a certain ingenuity to keep pests at bay, particularly the potentially devastating Varroa mite—a tiny red parasite that sucks the blood from the bees. The Fundoras use a "nest trap" technique that attracts the parasite and diverts it from the rest of the hive.

On harvest day, the two brothers head up the hill in an old truck they call Frankenstein, accompanied by eight young workers. They pay them 80 dollars a month, 50 dollars above the national average. Nearly all of them are in military uniform, because the material is resistant and the camouflage pattern doesn't excite the bees. Under a crushing sun, they will spend the day collecting honeycombs and put them in a mechanical centrifuge that separates the wax from the honey. Here, the downside of Cuba's years of isolation is apparent. Rogelio complains about the equipment, which he says is "a little archaic." "We need an efficient centrifuge to extract the honey, and the truck is very old." — AFP

Classifieds

Thursday, April 11, 2019

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 DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
 METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 12 - 38 km/h with a chance for scattered rain later on.

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate south easterly wind to wind, with speed of 08 - 35 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 10/04/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	29 °C	22 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	29 °C	18 °C			
ABDALY	31 °C	17 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	28 °C	19 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	28 °C	19 °C			
SALMIYAH	27 °C	22 °C			
AHMADI	28 °C	21 °C			
NUWAISIB	33 °C	19 °C			
WAFRA	30 °C	20 °C			
SALMY	30 °C	18 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	04/11	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	28 °C	19 °C	SE	12 - 45 km/h
Friday	04/12	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	28 °C	19 °C	VRB-NE	08 - 32 km/h
Saturday	04/13	Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	28 °C	18 °C	NW	10 - 42 km/h
Sunday	04/14	Relatively hot with a chance for rising dust	31 °C	18 °C	NW	12 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	04:07
Sunrise	05:28
Zuhr	11:49
Asr	15:23
Sunset	18:11
Isha	19:30

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	26 °C
MIN. Temp.	20 °C
MAX. RH	76 %
MIN. RH	36 %
MAX. Wind	S 53 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	.65 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

FOR SALE

Corrugated Carton Box Machine
 in good condition and Quality
 Model: 2014 Auto feeding
 3 colour printing slotting die
 cutting with ladger

email: kendakwt@hotmail.com

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Alexander S/O Christudoss Paul born on 30.07.1975 and permanent residential address - No.61, Hitchens Road 2nd Cross, St.Thomas Town, 2nd Cross, Bangalore - 560084, have changed my name to Alexander Christudoss Paul. (C 5513)

that, my given name is Abhishek Anil Kumar and Surname is Nair. (C 5514) 11-4-2019

FOR SALE

I, Abhishek Anil Kumar Nair, holder of Passport No. 52915570 issued at Cochin on 04/06/2018, hereby declare

Indian single owner, Jeep for sale, 2014 model Ford Explorer, black color, km run 74750, accident free, company maintained. Contact No. 60602919. (C 5512) 7-4-2019

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
Jet Airways	22087426
FlyDubai	22924455
Qatar Airways	22414400
KLM	22423888
Royal Jordanian	22425747
British Airways	22418064/5/6
Air France	22425635
Emirates	22430224
Air India	22921555
Air India EXPRESS	22456700
Sri Lanka Airlines	22438185/4
	22424444

Flight Schedule

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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 11/4/2019					Departure Flights on Thursday 11/4/2019				
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time		Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	KAC 774	Riyadh	13:35			
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	KAC 672	Dubai	14:00			
KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC 662	Abu Dhabi	14:00			
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	JZR 212	Jeddah	14:05			
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	KNE 231	Riyadh	14:10			
JZR	254	Amman	01:05	QTR 1078	Doha	14:10			
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:10	GFA 221	Bahrain	14:15			
RJA	642	Amman	01:20	SVA 500	Jeddah	14:15			
JZR	734	Cairo	01:35	FDB 059	Dubai	14:20			
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	KAC 792	Madinah	14:40			
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	KAC 304	Mumbai	14:45			
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	JZR 222	Riyadh	14:45			
PGT	828	Istanbul	02:00	KAC 618	Doha	14:50			
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC 562	Amman	14:50			
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	KAC 788	Jeddah	14:55			
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	KAC 118	New York	15:00			
KAC	156	Istanbul	02:35	KNE 529	Jeddah	15:05			
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	KAC 412	Bangkok	15:10			
JZR	406	Kochi	03:05	ETD 303	Abu Dhabi	15:15			
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	OMA 645	Muscat	15:20			
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	ABY 127	Sharjah	15:35			
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	UAE 857	Dubai	15:45			
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	KAC 546	Cairo	15:50			
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	KNE 531	Jeddah	16:05			
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	FDB 051	Dubai	16:10			
PIA	205	Lahore	04:00	JZR 732	Cairo	16:10			
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	QTR 1072	Doha	16:15			
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC 502	Beirut	16:15			
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	FEF 241	Alexandria	16:45			
MSR	0516	Cairo	04:25	SAW 705	Damascus	17:00			
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:30	JZR 116	Doha	17:05			
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	SVA 510	Riyadh	17:15			
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	GFA 215	Bahrain	17:30			
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	JZR 214	Jeddah	17:35			
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	QTR 1080	Doha	18:10			
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:45	JZR 302	Istanbul	18:20			
KAC	362	Colombo	06:05	MSR 620	Cairo	18:30			
JZR	112	Doha	06:05	JZR 612	Tbilisi	18:30			
BAW	157	London	06:10	UAE 875	Dubai	19:05			
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	RJA 640	Amman	19:05			
KAC	106	London	06:40	GFA 217	Bahrain	19:05			
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	JZR 124	Dubai	19:05			
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	FDB 063	Dubai	19:10			
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	ABY 123	Sharjah	19:20			
IGO	1755	CNN	07:10	KAC 744	Dammam	19:25			
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	NIA 161	Cairo	19:30			
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:00	KAC 616	Bahrain	19:40			
KAC	352	Kochi	08:05	KAC 674	Dubai	19:45			
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	KAC 776	Riyadh	19:45			
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	08:05	FDB 057	Dubai	19:50			
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	JZR 104	Bahrain	19:55			
IRA	601	Tehran	08:10	KNE 381	Taif	20:00			
JZR	402	Mumbai	08:15	OMA 647	Muscat	20:05			
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	DLH 624	Frankfurt	20:10			
JZR	714	Sohag	08:35	MEA 402	Beirut	20:15			
QTR	8511	Doha	08:45	JZR 126	Dubai	20:20			
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	RBG 213	Sohag	20:30			
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	KAC 174	Munich	20:30			
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC 620	Doha	20:30			
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	QTR 1088	Doha	20:40			
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KLM 445	Amsterdam	21:00			
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	ETD 307	Abu Dhabi	21:10			
IRA	675	Lar	09:55	UAE 859	Dubai	21:15			
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	ALK 229	Colombo	21:15			
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	10:00	KAC 168	Paris	21:20			
JZR	702	Asyut	10:15	THY 764	Istanbul	21:30			
GFA	410	Delhi	10:40	KAC 676	Dubai	21:40			
MEA	404	Bahrain	10:40	KAC 164	MXP	21:40			
QTR	1074	Beirut	10:55	GFA 219	Bahrain	21:50			
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	KAC 564	Amman	21:55			
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	QTR 1082	Doha	22:05			
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	ETD 309	Abu Dhabi	22:05			
JZR	252	Amman	12:20	KAC 786	Jeddah	22:20			
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:30	AIC 981	Chennai/Ahmedabad	22:25			
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	RBG 555	Alexandria	22:30			
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	GEC 8456	Frankfurt	22:55			
IRA	667	Esfahan	13:00	BBC 043	Dhaka	23:00			
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	ETH 3717	LGa	23:00			
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:10	MSC 501	Alexandria	23:10			
				MSC 415	Sohag	23:15			
				MSR 614	Cairo	23:30			
				JZR 128	Dubai	23:50			

Mapping Armaggedon: The looming tsunamis and mega-earthquakes

VIENNA: As villagers along the Sunda Strait were finishing their meals on the evening of 22 December last year, they had no idea of the cataclysmic event that awaited them. After bubbling on and off for months, the active volcano of Anak Krakatoa erupted, triggering a 0.3-kilometre-cubed sized chunk of rock to plunge into the unusually deep waters off the coast of Indonesia's west Java and South Sumatra regions.

The resulting tsunami, which hit the coast just minutes after the landslide, killed 437 people and injured 30,000 more. The killer wave was the most recent of a geological phenomenon that has led to around a quarter of a million deaths in the last two decades alone. And it won't be the last. According to David Tappin, a marine geologist at the British Geological Society who has spent years examining the causes of tsunamis, there are at least 40 active volcanoes next to oceans around the world that "could be potential Anak Krakatoas".

"One of the aspects of events such as Anak Krakatoa is that we are now aware of a hazard hovering in the background and there are millions of people who live adjacent to volcanoes," he told AFP on the sidelines of the European Geosciences Union in Vienna this week. "But I don't think anyone has actually looked at the particular hazard those people have except from eruptions. Suddenly, we are aware of this (threat of tsunamis) and hopefully we will do something about it."

Volcanoes still little understood

Tappin and his team have for the first time modeled in minute detail what happens when a volcanic landslide triggers a tsunami. When the rock slipped from Anak Krakatoa, it fell into a submarine trough of unusual depth, around 220 meters. This triggered multiple, large waves that hit coastlines quickly, with the

second or third waves the highest.

Tappin said that there was currently no system to warn civilians of events like the Anak Krakatoa landslide. "Warning systems in all the world's oceans are predicated on large earthquakes," he said. "Volcanoes are still little understood. Anak Krakatoa is really important because suddenly we have an event we can study."

The website of the United State Geological Survey states confidently that mega-quakes, those of magnitude 10 or more "cannot happen". Indeed, the strongest quake on record measured 9.6 on the richter scale and there have only been five quakes stronger than 9 in the last 100 years. It was long assumed that the tectonic make-up of Earth made magnitude 10 earthquakes planetarily impossible: the plates upon which lands and ocean lie aren't big enough to provoke such a mega-quake.

But a new analysis based on cutting-edge data suggests otherwise. Alvaro Gonzalez, a researcher of the Center for Mathematical Research in Barcelona, Spain, found that so-called subduction zones-parts of the Earth where one tectonic plate gets pushed deeper towards the mantle by another-could trigger a 10.4 magnitude quake. And they happen on average every 2,000 years. "Such events would produce especially large tsunamis and long lasting shaking which would effect distant locations," Gonzalez said.

There is another way to cause a mega-quake on Earth, of course. Sixty-six million years ago, a space rock up to 80 kilometers across slammed into what is modern-day Mexico, triggering tsunamis, planetary shaking and volcanic eruptions that killed off the dinosaurs and rendered three quarters of all species on Earth extinct. Gonzalez said that several more recent-albeit much smaller-asteroid impacts had provoked



PALU, Indonesia: Photo shows the floating mosque which was hit by the earthquake and tsunami in Palu. — AFP

"impact shaking events".

By analyzing existing asteroid telemetry data, he calculated that shaking events larger than 10.5 magnitude from an impact happen once every 10 million years on average. "There are only very few people who have tried to simulate something like that," he said. "For really, really large earthquakes — 10.5 or larger-those are global events. The (Mexico) impact simulations show that there were several metres of amplitude of ground motion worldwide and especially near the

impact and on the antipodes—the corresponding point on the other side of the globe.

Both Tappin and Gonzalez said existing tsunami warning systems didn't offer sufficient protection for waves triggered by potential eruptions and mega-quakes. Referring to the Anak Krakatoa event, Tappin said "it demonstrates yet again the lack of preparedness of countries threatened by tsunamis and highlights the urgent need for better mitigation and warning." — AFP

Thousands flee Tripoli homes...

Continued from Page 1

A Reuters reporter in downtown Tripoli could hear the gunfire. The United Nations said at least 4,500 Tripoli residents had been displaced, most moving away from homes in conflict areas to safer districts. Many more were trapped, it said.

The LNA forces moved out of their stronghold in east Libya to take the sparsely-populated but oil-rich south earlier this year, before heading a week ago towards Tripoli, where the internationally-recognized government sits. Libya has been divided and anarchic since the 2011 toppling of then-strongman Muammar Gaddafi. He ruled for more than four decades before falling in a Western-backed revolt.

Since then, political and armed factions have vied for power and control of Libya's oil wealth, and the country split into rival eastern and western administrations linked to shifting military alliances after a battle for Tripoli in 2014. The United Nations wants to bring both sides together to plan an election and way out of the chaos.

On its Facebook page, Haftar's forces published a video purporting to show their seizure of a government base in the Aziziya district of southern Tripoli. The images, which could not be verified, showed a vehicle on fire and soldiers firing in the air, shouting "Allahu Akbar" (God is greatest). UN humanitarian agency OCHA said it was extremely concerned about the "disproportionate and indiscriminate use" of explosive weapons in densely populated areas.

Half a million children were at risk, it added. As well as the humanitarian consequences, renewed conflict in Libya threatens to disrupt oil supplies, increase migration across the Mediterranean to Europe, scupper the

UN peace plan, and encourage Islamist militants to exploit the chaos.

Islamic State killed three people in a remote desert town under LNA control two days ago. In Tripoli, nearly 50 people have died, mainly combatants but also some civilians including two doctors, according to latest UN casualty estimates. The toll is expected to rise. Several thousand migrants, detained after trying to use Libya as a staging point for crossing the Mediterranean to Europe, have also been caught up in the crisis.

UN refugee agency UNHCR said on Tuesday it had relocated more than 150 of them - among several thousand in total - from one detention centre in south Tripoli to a facility of its own in a safe zone. One official at that detention centre said he flung open the doors yesterday and released another 150 migrants for their own safety due to the proximity of clashes. The United Nations, United States, European Union and G7 bloc have appealed for a ceasefire, a return to the UN peace plan, and a halt to Haftar's push.

But instead of that, he was moving men and equipment from southern and eastern Libya to a forward base at Gharyan, a town south of Tripoli, according to a foreign diplomatic source observing the deployments. Opponents cast Haftar as a would-be dictator in the mould of Gaddafi, though he projects himself as a champion against extremism striving to restore order to Libya. Haftar was among the officers who helped Gaddafi rise to power in 1969 but fell out with him during a war with Chad in the 1980s.

He was taken prisoner by the Chadians, rescued by the CIA, and lived for about 20 years in Virginia before returning in 2011 to join other rebels in the uprising against Gaddafi. Despite the flare-up in conflict, normal life was just about continuing in Tripoli, a city of roughly 1.2 million people, though prices were rising and businesses closing earlier than usual, residents said. "I don't care who wins or loses, I just want to survive with my family," said a teacher in Tripoli who hoped to get out. — Reuters

Fadhl said that the Assembly is expected to debate a draft law for regulating the charity work in the country, adding that he objects to a provision in the law that stipulates a prison term for those who distort the image of charity. The Assembly will also debate a draft law on commercial cheating.

In another development, the Constitutional Court yesterday rejected a case disputing the constitutionality of a special law for the trial of ministers or former ministers. The court also called for continuing the trial of former Health Minister Ali Al-Obeidi and a number of former Health Ministry Assistant undersecretaries.

Election Commission order that political parties should not use the armed forces for propaganda.

A biopic of the prime minister has also caused controversy, with the opposition Congress party waging a legal battle to prevent the showing of what it has called unfair propaganda. The film however was given a censors' certificate earlier in the week after the Supreme Court dismissed an appeal, and will be released yesterday. "We are very happy that we got the 'U' (universal) certificate from the Censor Board," producer Sandeep Ssingh said in a statement.

Congress, led by Rahul Gandhi, said the flattering portrayal of Modi would give an unfair advantage to his Hindu nationalist BJP. The producers of two TV series were given warning notices by the Election Commission for promoting Modi's pet schemes through their shows, PTI reported. Under Indian election law, during the 48 hours before a state votes, the publication of any content deemed as campaigning-including adverts, films and even social media-requires Election Commission approval.

Gandhi, scion of India's Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, filed his nomination papers yesterday following a roadshow in his home constituency of Amethi in Uttar Pradesh. Amethi goes to the polls on May 6. The last vote is on May 19 and the results will be announced on May 23. Various opinion polls have indicated an alliance led by Modi's BJP will win up to 273 of the 543 parliament seats at stake, just one more than the required majority. — AFP

Netanyahu wins re-election...

Continued from Page 1

the candidate 28 days to do so, with a two-week extension if needed. The close and often vitriolic contest was widely seen in Israel as a referendum on Netanyahu's character and record in the face of corruption allegations. He faces possible indictment in three graft cases, and has denied wrongdoing in all of them. Despite that, Netanyahu gained four seats compared to his outgoing coalition government, according to a spreadsheet published by the Central Elections Committee of parties that garnered enough votes to enter the next parliament.

"It is a night of colossal victory," the 69-year-old Netanyahu told cheering supporters in a late-night speech at Likud headquarters in Tel Aviv after Tuesday's vote. "He's a magician!" the crowd chanted as fireworks flared and Netanyahu kissed his wife Sara. Tel Aviv Stock Exchange main indexes were up nearly 1 percent in late trading yesterday, displaying confidence in a veteran prime minister who has overseen a humming economy and blunted various security threats, including from Syria.

His challenger, the new Blue and White party of ex-army chief Benny Gantz, claimed a more modest victory after winning a 35-seat tie with Likud. Unless he reverses on campaign pledges to shun Netanyahu, and joins him in a broad coalition, Gantz looked destined to lead a centre-left parliamentary opposition.

"The skies may look overcast...but they cannot conceal the sun of hope that we have brought to the Israeli people and society," Gantz, 59, wrote in an open letter to supporters. Should Netanyahu retain the helm, he will become the longest-serving Israeli prime minister in

July, overtaking the country's founding father, David Ben-Gurion. That could be scuppered if criminal charges are filed and force his removal.

An indictment decision would follow a review hearing where Netanyahu can be expected to argue he should be spared in the national interest. Some analysts predict he may try to pass a law granting himself immunity, as a sitting leader, from trial. During the campaign, the rival parties accused each other of corruption, fostering bigotry and being soft on security.

Netanyahu highlighted his close relationship with US President Donald Trump, who delighted Israelis and angered Palestinians by recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017 and moving the US Embassy to the holy city last May. Two weeks before the election, Trump signed a proclamation, with Netanyahu at his side at the White House, recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights captured from Syria in the 1967 Middle East war.

In a rare turn during the race towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Netanyahu further alarmed Palestinians by pledging to annex Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank if re-elected. Palestinians seek a state there and in the Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital. This pre-election promise from Netanyahu was widely seen as an attempt to draw right-wing votes rather than a change of policy. But with Trump's moves on Jerusalem and the Golan, the prime minister may feel emboldened to advocate annexation.

Commenting on the election, Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat said: "Israelis have voted to preserve the status quo. They have said no to peace and yes to the occupation". The last round of US-brokered peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians collapsed in 2014. Trump is expected to release his administration's long-awaited Middle East peace plan after the election. If it includes Israeli concessions to the Palestinians, Netanyahu's probable far-right coalition allies will likely object. — Reuters

MP: Labor law needs balance...

Continued from Page 1

who will benefit from any amendments to the labor law. The trade unions have insisted that the amendments should go through and should become a key part of the labor law.

India on high alert ahead of poll...

Continued from Page 1

Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday reinforced fears of trouble during voting. Parts of Kashmir will also vote today. Gunmen burst into a Jammu hospital and shot dead the regional leader of the right wing Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, which is closely linked to Modi's party. Tensions also simmered in the eastern state of Odisha where two landmines were recovered by patrols, and in nearby Bihar where two roadside bombs were detonated. Kashmir hit the headlines ahead of the election after 40 paramilitaries were killed in a suicide attack in February.

India blamed the attack on a Pakistan-based group and launched a cross-border air raid, which sparked a retaliatory strike by Pakistan that briefly brought the rivals close to a new war. Modi has used India's action against Pakistan to bolster his strongman image and divert attention from criticism over a lack of jobs across the country and a farmers' debt crisis. At a rally on Tuesday, Modi urged first-time voters to dedicate their ballot to the military who staged the air strike inside Pakistan. Congress said the speech breached an

matter and radiation circling at tremendous speed at the edge of the event horizon - around a region of darkness representing the actual black hole. This is known as the black hole's shadow or silhouette. The scientists said Einstein's theory correctly predicted that the shape of the shadow would be almost a perfect circle. With M87, it deviated from perfect circularity by less than 10 percent.

"We found literally the proverbial hole in the middle of this galaxy, and to me that is just stunning," said astrophysicist Dimitrios Psaltis of the University of Arizona, the EHT project scientist. Einstein's theory also was validated by another major astrophysics achievement announced in 2016, the detection of gravitational waves, or ripples in spacetime, arising from two black holes that smashed together. "Science fiction has become science fact." University of Arizona astronomy professor Daniel Marrone said.

"The image has this exquisite beauty in its simplicity," said CfA astrophysicist Michael Johnson, the project's imaging coordinator. "It is just a fundamental statement about nature. It's a really moving demonstration of just what humanity is capable of." The project has also targeted another black hole - Sagittarius A* - situated at the center of our own Milky Way galaxy. Scientists expressed optimism about getting a picture of that one, perhaps within a year. Sagittarius A* possesses 4 million times the mass of our sun and is located 26,000 light-years from Earth.

Streaming away from M87 at nearly the speed of light is a humongous jet of subatomic particles, though that was not captured in the photo. The researchers estimated that the observed shadow of M87 is roughly 2-1/2 times larger than the actual size of the black hole's boundary - the event horizon - due to light bending because of the extreme gravitational forces.

They think the event horizon measures just under 25 billion miles (40 billion km) across, about three times the size of Pluto's orbit around the sun. The project's researchers obtained the data using radio telescopes in the US states of Arizona and Hawaii as well as in Mexico, Chile, Spain and Antarctica. Since then, telescopes in France and Greenland have been added to the global network. — Reuters

'Seeing the unseeable'...

Continued from Page 1

project, an international collaboration involving about 200 scientists begun in 2012 to try to directly observe the immediate environment of a black hole. The announcement was made in simultaneous news conferences in Washington, Brussels, Santiago, Shanghai, Taipei and Tokyo.

The image was obtained using data collected in April 2017 from eight radio telescopes in six locations that essentially create a planet-sized observational dish. The team's observations strongly validated the theory of general relativity proposed in 1915 by Einstein, the famed theoretical physicist, to explain the laws of gravity and their relation to other natural forces.

"We have achieved something presumed to be impossible just a generation ago," said astrophysicist Sheperd Doeleman, director of the Event Horizon Telescope at the Center for Astrophysics (CfA), Harvard & Smithsonian. Black holes, phenomenally dense and coming in various sizes, are extraordinarily difficult to observe by their very nature. A black hole's event horizon is the point of no return beyond which anything - stars, planets, gas, dust and all forms of electromagnetic radiation - gets swallowed into oblivion.

The M87 black hole observed by the scientific team resides about 54 million light-years from Earth and boasts an almost-unimaginable mass of 6.5 billion times that of the sun. A light year is the distance light travels in a year, 5.9 trillion miles (9.5 trillion km). "This is a huge day in astrophysics," said US National Science Foundation Director France Cordova. "We're seeing the unseeable." "It did bring tears to my eyes," Cordova added. The existence of black holes was first predicted in 1916. Most galaxies are thought to have a supermassive black hole at their center.

The fact that black holes do not allow light to escape makes viewing them difficult. The scientists looked for a ring of light - super-heated disrupted

Sports

Japan's minister of Tokyo 2020 Olympic steps down after gaffes

Sakurada resigns after hurting the feelings of victims of 2011 earthquake and tsunami

TOKYO: Japan's minister in charge of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics stepped down yesterday after comments seen as hurtful to survivors of the 2011 tsunami, the latest in a series of gaffes. Yoshitaka Sakurada's resignation comes less than 500 days before Tokyo hosts the Summer Games, and follows a decision by the head of Japan's Olympic Committee to step down as French authorities investigate him.

Sakurada "requested to resign after he hurt the feelings of victims" of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters. "And I accepted it." "I deeply apologise for his remark to the people in the disaster-hit areas," the prime minister added, saying he accepted responsibility for having appointed Sakurada as minister. The resignation comes after Sakurada made comments at a political gathering to the effect that a lawmaker from the disaster-hit region was more important than the recovery of the area, according to the public broadcaster NHK.

The March 2011 tsunami, triggered by a massive undersea quake, killed around 18,000 people and swamped the Fukushima nuclear plant, sending its reactors into melt-

down and leading to the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl.

More than 50,000 people have not returned to their home towns and Japan has dubbed the 2020 Games the "Reconstruction Olympics" in a bid to showcase recovery in affected regions.

NHK reported that Abe had decided to reappoint a previous Olympics minister, Shunichi Suzuki, to replace Sakurada.

The resignation comes after a string of gaffes that had already raised questions about Sakurada's suitability for the post of Olympics minister, which he held in addition to a portfolio for cybersecurity. In February, he was forced to apologise after suggesting that the leukaemia diagnosis of star Japanese swimmer Rikako Ikee could dampen enthusiasm for the 2020 Games.

The shock announcement of 18-year-old Ikee's diagnosis had prompted an outpouring of support in Japan, but Sakurada came under fire after responding to the news by saying: "She is a potential gold medalist... I'm really disappointed."

"When one person leads, she can boost the whole team. I am slightly worried that this type of excitement could wane," he said.

After a backlash, he sought to clarify his stance and admitted his comments had "lacked consideration." But they were hardly the first time he had become a lightning rod.

Despite serving as minister for cybersecurity, he has admitted that he "does not use computers," sparking widespread ridicule.

And in 2016, he sparked anger when he described the women forced to work in military brothels for Japan's wartime troops as "professional prostitutes."

Sakurada's resignation comes only a month after the head of Japan's Olympic Committee Tsunekazu Takeda announced he would step down from his position in June.

That decision came after it was revealed that Takeda was the subject of French investigations involving payments made before Tokyo was awarded the 2020 Summer Games. Takeda also stepped down from the International Olympic Committee, after French authorities said they believed they had evidence of corruption in the awarding of the 2020 Games.

Takeda has denied any wrongdoing and said his decision to step down was related to a desire to pass the role on to a younger generation. — AFP



TOKYO: In this file photo taken on October 2, 2018 Japanese minister in charge of Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic games Yoshitaka Sakurada speaks during a press conference at the premier's official residence in Tokyo. Japan's minister in charge of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics stepped down yesterday after the latest in a series of gaffes. — AFP

ABK hosts exciting 8th Annual Golf Challenge event

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) yesterday announced the results of its 8th Annual ABK Golf Challenge event held at the Sahara Golf Resort and Spa on 30th March. 80 golfers participated on a warm, sunny day perfect for golf. During the event, participants competed in teams of four for the sought after ABK Golf Challenge trophy.

Amar Ali Al Naqi, Mishary Al Zamanan, Meshari Al Mulla and Hamad Abdul Razzak won the challenge with a score of 53.8 points. Abhay Kumar Kashyap won "Beat the Pro" and received a business class return ticket to Dubai from Emirates Airline presented by Ahmad Al Nahas, while "Nearest-the-pin" went to Brett King who received a 1 year unlimited meet and greet at Kuwait International airport from Pearl Assist. The "Straightest-Drive" was won by Abdulrazzak Abdullah who received a KD 100 ABK Visa prepaid card from Visa International.

During the closing ceremony ABK thanked their partners: Emirates Airline, Visa, Sahara Golf Club, and Pearl Assist for their ongoing support.



Johnson frustrated by only one major win

AUGUSTA: Second-ranked Dustin Johnson admits he's frustrated and disappointed to only have one major golf victory, but sees plenty of time to boost his career total, starting at this week's Masters.

The 34-year-old American, dethroned from world number one this week by England's Justin Rose, captured his only major crown at the 2016 US Open. His six other top-five major finishes include runner-up showings at the 2011 British Open and 2015 US Open plus a share of fifth at the 2010 PGA Championship after a penalty for grounding his club in a bunker on the 72nd hole cost him a chance at a win.

"I would have definitely liked to have won a cou-

ple more. I've had some very good opportunities that I didn't capitalize on," Johnson said Tuesday.

"Disappointed or frustrated, one of those would be OK to describe that. But I mean, it's golf. This game's very frustrating and disappointing at times."

"But I think I'm happy with my career so far. I definitely think it could have been better. But I've still got hopefully still got a lot of time left in my career."

Johnson, one of the game's longest drivers, was the clear player to beat at the 2017 Masters, arriving at Augusta National after wins at Riviera and the WGC Match-Play and Mexico Championships.

But he fell down a staircase at his rental home in Augusta and hurt his back, forcing him to withdraw.

It's a missed chance Johnson often recalls as he tries to reclaim the form that he enjoyed before the setback.

"I definitely look back at it a lot," Johnson said. "I've got videos of my swing from when I was here in 2017, and so I watch those a lot to try to just get some of those same feels."

"I feel like the game, it's close. It's not as good

as it was then, but I feel like it's going in the right direction." Johnson won the WGC Mexico title in February, giving him a US PGA title in each of his first 12 tour seasons, joining Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods as the only players to accomplish the feat.

And he likes his chances this week if he can putt well over the undulating, lightning-fast greens of Augusta National. "I feel like the game is in very good form right now," Johnson said. For me, it's all going to be up to my putting. I think if I can roll it well, I'll be right there come Sunday."

Johnson, however, sees himself as more wanting than needing another major win. "It's more want. If you're telling yourself you need to win, I think you're putting a lot of pressure on yourself," Johnson said.

"Everyone that's out here wants to win. I want to win every week but I don't need to win. You put more pressure on yourself if you're saying you need to win. I've definitely done that, almost trying too hard. I think I do that quite a bit sometimes." — AFP

Leclerc.

"It's the 1,000th race in the history of Formula One and I hope the car will be as good as it was in Bahrain (until late on) so that I can continue to go for the results we deserve."

Shanghai has one of the longest straights in the 21-race championship and should be perfect for Ferrari's searing pace, with reliability the main concern for the Italian marque.

While there has been fulsome praise of Leclerc, particularly the mature way he handled the Bahrain disappointment, his Ferrari team-mate Vettel is facing criticism. It seems absurd for a four-time world champion to have to defend his ability and temperament, but the German is having to do just that after a series of unforced errors stretching back to last season.

Former F1 driver Jolyon Palmer, who left Renault during the 2017 season, called Vettel's spin in Bahrain—where he was duelling with Hamilton—"amateur". Vettel finished fifth and was comfortably eclipsed by Leclerc, who is a decade younger.

"If a backmarker rookie had spun in the manner Vettel did, they would have been a laughing stock after the race," Palmer told the BBC. "For a four-time world champion to do so should be unthinkable."

With all the talk about Ferrari, it is easy to forget that Mercedes won the opening two races.

Valtteri Bottas claimed a dominant victory in the season-opening Australian Grand Prix with world champion Hamilton second.

It was the other way round in Bahrain, leaving the Finn a point ahead of the Briton in the early drivers' standings after picking up the fastest-lap bonus point in Melbourne. However, Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff is under no illusions about the challenge posed by Ferrari.

"The truth is that we weren't as quick as our direct competitors throughout qualifying and the race in Bahrain," he said. "The Ferrari was considerably faster on the straights and this added up to several tenths around one lap."

"Nevertheless, the saying goes that 'in order to finish first, first you have to finish'... "The challenge we are facing doesn't daunt us, it's uplifting," he added. Being able to say they triumphed in the 1,000th race is added incentive for all drivers and teams.

F1's first championship race was at Silverstone, England, in 1950 and it says much about how the sport has grown that its milestone grand prix is in China.

The country, which has a swelling number of motor sport enthusiasts, is a key market for F1's US-based owners Liberty Media. Liberty Media say they are interested in holding a second grand prix in the world's most populous country. — AFP

McIlroy powers into Masters with Tiger among many poised to pounce

AUGUSTA: Rory McIlroy is in fearsome form as he arrives at Augusta National chasing a rare career Grand Slam, but a renewed Tiger Woods could have something to say about the Northern Ireland star's bid for a breakthrough Masters win.

"I don't think I've ever started a season this well in terms of finishes, and even stats wise, looking at all my stats, they are right up there with some of the best years that I've had," said McIlroy, whose seven top-10 finishes in seven starts this year include a victory at the US PGA Tour's prestigious Players Championship in March.

He owns top-10 Masters finishes the past four years, including a tie for fifth behind American Patrick Reed last year, and with more than a decade of experience on a course where local know-how is key, says there's no reason he can't become the sixth man to win all four of golf's major professional titles.

"I've shot enough good scores around here over the years that if I can put my best effort forward, I'm going to have a good chance to do well here," McIlroy said.

Plenty of his peers agree. "Rory is playing unbelievable golf," said Spain's Jon Rahm. "I mean, he's playing the best golf he has played in a long time ... Really good golf and it seems like his putting has been lot better. If Rory is hitting the ball the way he is, and he putts good, he's tough to beat."

Soaking rain on Monday and Tuesday could heighten long-hitting McIlroy's chances, making the course play longer. The diminished practice time could also play in favor of experienced Masters campaigners.

Rahm noted the difficulty of handicapping the first major championship of the year. Each of the last four winners—and seven of the last eight—have been first-time major winners, a trend Rahm certainly hopes to continue.

But with experience at a premium, multiple winners including Woods, Phil Mickelson and Bubba Watson must always be judged a threat. World number one Justin Rose and second-ranked Dustin Johnson will be aiming to bulk up resumes highlighted by one US Open win apiece and fourth-ranked Brooks Koepka, the reigning US Open and PGA Champion, has a chance to become the third golfer of the modern era to capture three of four consecutive majors.

"There's so many different ways to do it and there's so many different things that you can do right," Rahm said. "It's one of those weeks where anybody can win at any given point."

And this year, that emphatically includes Woods, who carries not just the hope he had last year—in his first Masters since spinal fusion surgery—but real belief that he can claim a fifth green jacket.

"I just feel like I've improved a lot over the past 12, 14 months," said Woods, whose injury return was in its embryonic stages when he teed it up last year. From a tie for 32nd, he would go on to contend in two majors and win the US PGA Tour championship and says he's "proven to myself that I can play at this level again".

Woods, 43, admits he would never have foreseen the major drought that has followed his 14th major victory at the 2008 US Open. "After I won my 14th, I felt like I still had plenty more major championships that I could win, but unfortunately I just didn't do it," he said. "I put myself there with chances on the back nine on various Sundays and just haven't done it. "Hopefully this year, I put myself there again and, hopefully, I'll get it done." — AFP

Young star Leclerc eyes victory in F1's 1,000th race

SHANGHAI: Ferrari's Charles Leclerc is gunning for his first win this week in China after cruelly missing out in Bahrain as Formula One's 1,000th race coincides with the emergence of a bright new star.

The supremely talented 21-year-old upstaged five-time world champion Lewis Hamilton in Bahrain but ultimately limped home third when his Ferrari lost power with 10 laps left.

The Chinese Grand Prix is replete with subplots: can Hamilton win the race for a sixth time? Can Sebastian Vettel silence the doubters? How much faster are Ferrari? But the focus in Shanghai will be on Leclerc, the Ferrari rookie from Monaco who fully deserved victory two weeks ago but had to settle for the first podium of his career.

In just his second season in F1, it is widely assumed that it is just a matter of time until Leclerc tastes victory. "Usually the Chinese race is good fun because the weather can be unpredictable and rain can arrive when you least expect it," said

Sports

Soto smash in 10th lifts Nationals, Castillo helps Reds blank Marlins

Astros beat Yanks with another late-inning rally

PHILADELPHIA: Juan Soto hit a three-run home run off Jose Alvarez in the top of the 10th inning to rally the visiting Washington Nationals to a 10-6 victory over the Philadelphia Phillies on Tuesday. Victor Robles, who had three hits, tied the score with a solo homer in the ninth, and Yan Gomes and Howie Kendrick also homered for the Nationals. Anthony Rendon had two hits and two RBIs, and Gomes added two hits. Nationals starter Stephen Strasburg lasted only four innings and gave up six hits and six runs while walking four and striking out three. Sean Doolittle (3-0) picked up the win in relief. Bryce Harper and Maikel Franco homered while J.T. Realmuto added three hits for the Phillies, who couldn't hold a 6-1 lead.

REDS 14, MARLINS 0

Starter Luis Castillo fired seven scoreless innings, the heart of the order hit three consecutive homers in a seven-run sixth inning, and host Cincinnati won for the first time since Opening Day by clobbering Miami. The result snapped the Reds' eight-game losing streak. Up 4-0, Cincinnati blew open the first meeting between the two teams in the home half of the sixth as Jesse Winker had an RBI single off reliever Wei-Yin Chen, and a fielding error plated another run. Matt Kemp later clubbed an opposite-field three-run homer, Eugenio Suarez golfed a solo shot, and Scott Schebler homered in the next at-bat for an 11-0 lead.

MARINERS 6, ROYALS 3

Dee Gordon had three hits and two RBIs as Seattle claimed a victory at Kansas City. The Mariners extended baseball's best record to 11-2 with their fourth straight win. Whit Merrifield continues to be the lone bright spot for the Royals, who lost their eighth game in a row. He led off the bottom of the first with a triple to extend his hitting streak to 30 games, dating back to last season. The streak is tied for the longest in Royals history with Hall of Famer George Brett's run from in 1980, the year he hit .390. Merrifield finished 2-for-5.

ANGELS 11, BREWERS 8

Tommy La Stella hit two home runs, but it was a bases-loaded walk by Jonathan Lucroy that drove in the winning run in Los Angeles' victory over Milwaukee Brewers. The Angels earned their fifth win in a row, though it wasn't easy. Los Angeles blew a 6-0 first-inning lead and then lost Mike Trout for the game after the third inning because of a strained right groin. The two-time American League MVP is day-to-day. The Brewers, thanks in large part to two homers by Yasmani Grandal, rallied to take an 8-7 lead in the fifth before the Angels' bullpen got stingy and the offense rallied to put Los Angeles in position to sweep the series Wednesday.

DIAMONDBACKS 5, RANGERS 4

Pinch hitter Jarrod Dyson hit a two-run homer in the bottom of the ninth inning as Arizona walked off with a victory over Texas in Phoenix. With one out, Dyson

pulled a 2-2 off-speed pitch from closer Jose Leclerc (1-1) over the fence in right field. Arizona's Christian Walker singled to left to lead off the ninth against Leclerc and scored to make it 4-3 when Eduardo Escobar followed with a double to the wall in right-center field. Leclerc struck out Nick Ahmed before Dyson pinch-hit for John Ryan Murphy.

RAYS 10, WHITE SOX 5

Austin Meadows had a career-high four hits, including a two-run home run, and drove in four runs, and visiting Tampa Bay continued to match its best start in team history with a win against Chicago. Avisail Garcia had three hits and Brandon Lowe had two, each hitting solo home runs for the Rays, who improved to 9-3 while clinching their fourth consecutive series to start the season. Rays starter Charlie Morton (2-0) went five innings, allowing two runs, three hits, striking out seven and walking three.

GIANTS 7, PADRES 2

Kevin Pillar cleared the bases with a three-run double to highlight a six-run second inning that sent San Francisco on its way to a victory over visiting San Diego. Derek Holland (1-1) allowed just one run in seven innings, helping the Giants beat the Padres for just the second time in six meetings this season. Hunter Renfroe hit his fourth homer for the Padres.

BRAVES 7, ROCKIES 1

Ronald Acuna homered for the second straight game, Dansby Swanson also went deep, and Atlanta beat Colorado in Denver. Max Fried (2-0) gave up five hits and one unearned run over six innings to lead the Braves to their second straight win in the series. German Marquez (1-1) was rocked for five runs in five innings, and Ian Desmond had an RBI single for Colorado, which has lost its first five home games this season.

TWINS 14, METS 8

Mitch Garver hit two home runs and tied a career high with four hits, and Jorge Polanco finished a double shy of his second cycle of the season as visiting Minnesota took advantage of a rare hiccup by Jacob deGrom in a win over New York. The Twins have alternated wins with losses in their last five games. The Mets have dropped two straight and three of four. Polanco and Garver helped the Twins end two historic streaks by deGrom (2-1), who gave up six runs on eight hits and one walk while striking out three over four innings. DeGrom entered Tuesday having given up three runs or fewer in each of his previous 31 starts, the longest such streak in major league history, and having produced a quality start 26 straight times, tying the record set by Bob Gibson in 1967-68.

ATHLETICS 13, ORIOLES 2

Jurickson Profar homered on a four-hit, five-RBI night, and Marcus Semien homered and knocked in



PHILADELPHIA: Juan Soto #22 of the Washington Nationals hits a three-run home run in the top of the tenth inning against the Philadelphia Phillies at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Nationals defeated the Phillies 10-6. — AFP

four as visiting Oakland defeated Baltimore.

Profar ended the night 4-for-5 with a solo homer, three singles and three runs. He drove in four runs in the final three innings as Oakland snapped a four-game losing streak. Semien finished 1-for-4 and added a sacrifice fly in addition to an early three-run homer.

ASTROS 6, YANKEES 3

George Springer roped a two-run double to left field in the eighth inning, and host Houston rallied against the New York bullpen for a second consecutive night. Springer drilled a 1-1 fastball from Yankees right-hander Chad Green (0-2) into the left field corner, scoring Yuli Gurriel and Robinson Chirinos to snap a 3-3 tie. The eighth-inning rally did come at a cost, however, as Bregman left the game with a tweaked right hamstring. After the game, Bregman said he hopes to miss only the Wednesday game.

CARDINALS 4, DODGERS 0

Paul Goldschmidt hit a home run, and Yadier Molina added a pair of run-scoring doubles as St Louis moved over .500 for the first time this season with a victory over visiting Los Angeles. Cardinals starter Dakota Hudson only lasted 4 2/3 innings after throwing 100 pitches, but the bullpen took it from there as John Brebbia (1-0), John Gant, Mike Mayers, Andrew Miller and Dominic Leone finished off the shutout. Enrique Hernandez and Cody Bellinger had two hits each for the Dodgers, who were held without a home run for the

second consecutive game after going deep in their first 10 games this season and 14 consecutive going back to last season. The Dodgers lost consecutive games for the first time.

BLUE JAYS 7, RED SOX 5

Matt Shoemaker pitched into the sixth inning to earn his third straight win. Lourdes Gurriel Jr. hit an RBI single and stole home, and visiting Toronto defeated Boston on the day the Red Sox unfurled their 2018 world championship banner at Fenway Park. Boston left-hander Chris Sale (0-3) continued to struggle, allowing seven hits and five runs while striking out three in four innings. Shoemaker (3-0) gave up five hits, two walks and four runs (two earned) and added four strikeouts as the Blue Jays ended a four-game losing streak.

INDIANS 8, TIGERS 2

Brad Miller smacked one of four Cleveland home runs, scored three runs and knocked in two as the Indians stretched their winning streak to five games by cooling off host Detroit. Ex-Tiger Leonys Martin, Jake Bauers and Roberto Perez added solo homers for Cleveland. Corey Kluber (1-2) gave up two runs (one earned) on seven hits in six innings while striking out eight. Miguel Cabrera had two hits and an RBI for the Tigers, who had their five-game winning streak snapped. Jordan Zimmermann (0-1) surrendered up five runs (four earned) and four hits in 4 1/3 innings while serving up three of the homers. — Reuters

Wisden lashes out at new 100-ball cricket competition

LONDON: English cricket's controversial new 100-ball competition has been compared unfavourably with Brexit in the latest edition of Wisden, which says the innovation has "hung over the game like the Sword of Damocles".

The 156th edition of the Wisden Cricketers' Almanack, published on Thursday, offers a highly sceptical take on The Hundred, the new format due to debut on the domestic circuit next year. Editor Lawrence Booth addresses the subject and has harsh words for advocates at the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).

"All the while The Hundred hung over the English game like the Sword of Damocles, suspended only by the conviction of a suited few. 'Some preferred a modern analogy: this was cricket's Brexit, an unnecessary gamble that had overshadowed all else, gone over budget and would end in tears."

"But the analogy was imperfect: where Brexit had plenty of advocates, it was difficult to find anyone beyond a small group within the ECB's offices who believed that cricket, its fixture list already unfathomable, needed a fourth format."

The editorial criticises the "shambolic launch" of the competition, arguing that early soundbites made the sport's existing fanbase "feel like outcasts" while attempting to attract a new core. Critics have bemoaned the 'dumbing down' of the game, given plans to ditch traditional overs, and questioned the need for a new format given the global popularity of Twenty20, which has just 20 more deliveries per innings than the Hundred concept. There are also concerns over the potential impact of the new competition on England's existing domestic cricket structure, which is built upon 18 first-class counties. —AFP

Kohli named among Wisden's Cricketers of the Year

LONDON: Virat Kohli was yesterday named as one of Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year and also became the first player to win the award for leading cricketer in the world in three successive years.

The India captain put to bed questions over his ability to thrive in English conditions last year, topping the Test run charts with 593 runs and two centuries even though his side lost the series 4-1.

Kohli, who is top of the Test and one-day international rankings, scored 2,735 runs in all formats in 2018, outstripping nearest rival, England's Joe Root, by more than 700 runs. "His struggles in English conditions were consigned to history, and Kohli banished any doubt about being regarded as the outstanding player of the era," Wisden said in a statement announcing its awards.

The other cricketers of the year were England's Sam Curran, Jos Buttler and Rory Burns, plus prolific England women's player Tammy Beaumont. Players can only receive Wisden's cricketer of the year award, given primarily for feats achieved during the preceding English domestic season, once in their career.

Kohli was also named as the leading men's player in the world for a third straight year. "In making hundreds in South Africa, England and Australia, as well as at home, he showed a mastery of all conditions and bowling attacks," Wisden said. "The pressure

Warner's ego must be managed: Graeme Smith

SYDNEY: Former South African captain Graeme Smith has some advice for Australia coach Justin Langer-make sure David Warner's ego is managed if he starts to "get bigger than everybody else".

The polarising opener, on the comeback trail after a one-year ban for ball-tampering, has been in red-hot form in the Indian Premier League ahead of his expected recall to the national side for the World Cup in England and Wales.

But some commentators believe Warner's return could be disruptive to the team, which is now resurgent



SYDNEY: In this file photo taken on January 7, 2019 India's captain Virat Kohli kisses the Border-Gavaskar trophy as the Indian team celebrates their series win on the fifth day of the fourth and final cricket Test against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground in Sydney. —AFP

never cowed him."

India's Smriti Mandhana scooped the women's award, with Afghanistan leg-spinner Rashid Khan retaining his

title as leading Twenty20 cricketer in the world. The latest edition of Wisden Cricketers' Almanack, considered the "Bible" of the game, is published on April 11. — AFP

after a run of poor results, and that he needs to managed carefully.

Smith, who skipped his country for more than a decade, said that while he admired Warner's batting, he had "pissed a lot of people off" throughout his career.

"I don't know," he told Fox Sports on Tuesday evening when asked if he would have any issue in welcoming Warner back to the Australian team. "It's difficult to know what it's like behind the scenes, but he's always been an incredible cricketer," added Smith, who played 117 Tests before retiring in 2014.

"Especially when he bats, he bats with that driven nature, that intensity, ego to perform. And he's an excellent cricketer. I think where David has been throughout his career is that he's pissed a lot of people off. He's just that type of guy. I think at the moment he needs Australian cricket more than they need him."

Warner is suspected of instigating a plot to use sandpaper to alter the ball in the now infamous Cape Town Test last year. He has long been a divisive figure. And

Smith believes his behaviour needs to be monitored closely. "I think he's very driven, I think he wants to do well, he wants to prove his worth again. And I think David Warner in that position is probably a good guy to have in your environment," he said.

"It's when he starts to get bigger than everybody else then probably management needs to be ready for that. 'Guys like Langer and whoever is captaining the side going forward need to ensure they stay on top of that and manage that space and that ego well going forward."

The reintegration of Warner and co-conspirator Steve Smith has already begun with the pair meeting the one-day team after their bans expired late last month. Australian cricket chief Kevin Roberts recently said teammates don't always need to be "best mates".

"In any workplace, you don't need to be best mates with everyone, but there needs to be a foundation of respect and I think there is growing respect there," he said. — AFP

Sports

Liverpool ease past Porto to close in on Champions League semis

'It was a good game, a controlled game'

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool closed in on a Champions League semi-final meeting with Barcelona or Manchester United after sweeping aside Porto 2-0 in the first leg of their quarter-final tie at Anfield. Far from the late drama that has accompanied the Red's Premier League title bid of late, Naby Keita and Roberto Firmino struck inside the first 26 minutes to put the hosts in command. "2-0 is a really good result, I would have taken it before the game and I take it now," said Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp. "It was a good game, a controlled game."

We deserved the win 100 percent and scored two wonderful goals." Liverpool's only regret may be not building a more emphatic lead to take to Portugal for next week's second leg. However, a fourth clean sheet in five home Champions League games this season means an away goal at the Estadio do Dragao on April 17th will leave Porto needing four to progress.

"We have to go there, we have to fight, Porto will do everything to strike back but that's how it should be in the Champions League quarter-finals," added Klopp. Liverpool thrashed the Portuguese giants 5-0 in the first leg of their last-16 tie last season and the scoreline could have been just as embarrassing for Sergio Conceicao's men had the hosts been more accurate in front of goal. It took the hosts just five minutes to open the scoring as Keita got his second goal in as many games having waited nine months to open his Liverpool account. The Guinean got the benefit of a big deflection off Oliver Torres as his strike from the edge of the area left veteran goalkeeper Iker Casillas helpless.

Mohamed Salah ended his eight-game goal drought

as Liverpool returned to the top of the Premier League table with a 3-1 win at Southampton on Friday, but the Egyptian got his angles wrong when he failed to double the hosts' lead with just Casillas to beat moments later.

Conceicao was visibly furious with his side's slack defending, but Porto could easily have got back into the tie when Alisson Becker saved well with his feet from Moussa Marega. Liverpool then had to survive a VAR review for a potential handball against Trent Alexander-Arnold as Alisson palmed the ball into his full-back.

Soon, though, Alexander-Arnold was helping twist the knife into Porto at the other end with his eighth assist of the season. Jordan Henderson, playing in a more advanced midfield position than normal, cut the visitors' defence open for the England international to square for Firmino to tap into an empty net.

"Hendo is a brilliant player and I'm really happy he can show that again," said Klopp. "He likes that position so it is my fault he played for one-and-a-half years as the holding player, but we needed him there."

Only a matter of centimetres denied Liverpool a third early in the second half when another excellent Henderson allowed Sadio Mane to volley home, but the Senegalese was flagged offside. The fine balance Liverpool must strike in maintaining their quest for European glory while also trying to end a 29-year wait for a league title was in evidence as Klopp withdrew Mane and Firmino in the final quarter with one eye on Sunday's Premier League visit of Chelsea.

However, that proved a luxury that Liverpool could afford to take as they look set for a second Champions League semi-final in as many years. — AFP



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Brazilian goalkeeper Alisson Becker (R) catches the ball after Porto's Malian striker Moussa Marega (rear R) shoots it while vying with Liverpool's Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk (C) and Liverpool's Croatian defender Dejan Lovren (front R) during the UEFA Champions League quarter-final, first leg football match between Liverpool and FC Porto at Anfield stadium in Liverpool. — AFP

AC Milan risk Euro ban as UEFA order another Financial Fair Play probe

LAUSANNE: AC Milan risk being excluded from European competition next season after UEFA on Thursday ordered another probe be carried out on the Italian club for breaches of Financial Fair Play (FFP) regulations.

European football's governing body said in a statement that UEFA's Club Financial Control Body (CFCB) investigatory chamber had decided "to refer the case of AC Milan to the CFCB adjudicatory chamber as the club has failed to comply with the break-even requirement." The period relates to the 2018/19 season and covering 2016, 2017 and 2018, the statement continued. "This referral is not related to the decision that was made by the CFCB adjudicatory in December 2018 and was covering the 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 seasons," it added.

The Serie A giants are one of several clubs to have been investigated for breaching UEFA's rules, whereby clubs cannot spend more than they generate by their own means. AC Milan have fallen foul of UEFA's financial rules since they spent 200 million euros (\$225 million) on transfers in the summer of 2017.

The 18-time Italian champions won an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) last year, following a UEFA ban from the Europa League. The club persuaded sport's highest court that their finances would improve under American hedge fund Elliott Management Corporation, who took control last summer when former Chinese owner Li Yonghong forfeited on the loan he had taken to buy the club in 2017 from former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi.

AC Milan were assessed by UEFA in December, when they were told to break even by 2021 or have their European ban restored. The club are currently on target to qualify for next season's Champions League as they sit fourth in Serie A, with seven games to play.

They failed to progress to the Europa League's knockout rounds but have managed to reach the semi-finals of the Italian Cup. — AFP

Pochettino urges Spurs to finish off City, but fears worst over Kane

LONDON: Mauricio Pochettino challenged "spirited" Tottenham to finish the job after their 1-0 win over Manchester City in the Champions League quarter-finals was marred by Harry Kane's potentially season-ending injury. Pochettino's side earned a slender first-leg advantage thanks to a clinical strike from South Korea forward Son Heung-min late in the second half at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on Tuesday.

Much-maligned Tottenham keeper Hugo Lloris also enjoyed a sweet moment of redemption in a troubled campaign when he saved Sergio Aguero's first-half spot-kick.

Pochettino was delighted with Tottenham's display against the Premier League champions, but he insisted the tie was still delicately poised. "We showed great quality. We were all excited and motivated to play this type of game," he said.

"The energy was good, fantastic, and the penalty save gave us a big lift. "There are still 90 minutes to play and it's Manchester City. But with the spirit we play, anything is possible." Tottenham's victory was an unexpected twist after Kane injured his left ankle in a tackle on Fabian Delph early in the second half.

Kane will have tests on the injury on Wednesday, but Tottenham boss Pochettino fears his star striker could miss the rest of the campaign. "It is very sad and very disappointing. We are going to miss him - maybe for the rest of the season," he said.

"It is a worry for us. We hope it is not a big issue. But there is not too much time to recover. He twisted his ankle." City had only themselves to blame for failing to earn an advantage for the second leg in Manchester on April 17.

Having won the League Cup, reached the FA Cup final and kept the destiny of the Premier League title in their own hands, this was City's next hurdle in the race for an unprecedented quadruple.

But City boss Pep Guardiola is adamant it is "almost impossible" to achieve a clean-sweep of all four major trophies. He might be right on the evidence of a City display that lacked the cutting edge and intensity required to keep Tottenham at bay. City's first defeat since a January 29 setback at Newcastle is not fatal to their European ambitions, but they will have to improve on this tired effort to stop Tottenham reaching their first European semi-final since 1984. "Nobody said it would be easy. We have to show what we can do in the next game," Guardiola said. "We were more in control, the second half we didn't really concede anything."

"It was a good performance but that's the Champions League. We lost, we have the second game and we will see what happens."

If Guardiola was concerned about subduing Tottenham and the boisterous crowd in their new stadium, his side were handed a golden opportunity in the 12th minute. Raheem Sterling cut in from the left and left three Tottenham defenders in his wake before unleashing a shot that struck Danny Rose's raised arm as the Tottenham left-



LONDON: Manchester City's Argentinian striker Sergio Aguero shoots from the penalty spot but fails to score as the ball is saved by Tottenham Hotspur's French goalkeeper Hugo Lloris during the UEFA Champions League quarter-final first leg football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester City at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in north London. — AFP

back slid in to block.

There were no penalty appeals from City, but after consulting VAR, Dutch referee Bjorn Kuipers awarded the spot-kick. However, Lloris plunged to his left to keep out Aguero's penalty with a superb save.

Kane was embroiled in a physical battle with City defence's but his attempt to fight fire with fire proved his downfall in the 55th minute. Crunching into a late challenge on Delph on the touchline, Kane appeared to twist his ankle before immediately signalling he would have to come off. The sight of the England captain, who has scored 24 times this season, limping badly down the tunnel could

have been fatal for Tottenham. Yet they thrived in Kane's absence for seven matches with left ankle ligament damage earlier this season.

And once again they rose to the challenge to snatch the lead in the 78th minute. When Son beat the City offside trap, it appeared his touch was too heavy to take advantage. But he alertly kept the ball in play, taking advantage of Delph's pause to protest the decision by slamming a low drive under Ederson from close range.

Guardiola once infuriated Pochettino by calling Tottenham "the Harry Kane team"-now Son has provided the perfect riposte to that jibe. — AFP

Choupo-Moting apologises for PSG goal howler

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain striker Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting apologised yesterday for his botched goal miss that effectively prevented the club winning the French league title in record-equalling time.

Choupo-Moting gave PSG an early lead with his third Ligue 1 goal against Strasbourg on Sunday, but later in the first half somehow succeeded in turning a net-bound Christopher Nkunku shot onto the post while standing on the line.

The match ended a 2-2 draw, and the striker was widely pilloried for his miss, with footage soon going viral. "Ups & downs, that's life! I can't change what happened but for sure I will try to do better!" the Cameroonian ex-Stoke player said on Instagram, along with a photo of him celebrating in front of the PSG fans and a video of his goal against Strasbourg.

"I am sorry for those I disappointed, but mistakes are

#human, especially in sports! It's sad to see how negative things are pushed, especially by the media and brainwashing people's minds."

Choupo-Moting, who has become something of a cult hero at the Parc des Princes and has 439,000 Instagram followers, added: "I really like our club @psg and it was a wonderful feeling to score in front of you supporters #collectifultparis."

"Unfortunately after that I made the big mistake and all was forgotten! I hope that those #haters which are insulting me feel better now and find their #peace and #happiness in their own life! "For those who are always supporting me or just understanding that mistakes can happen, I want to say thank you and big respect. I will continue to give everything." PSG could win their sixth Ligue 1 title in seven years with a win or a draw away to Lille on Sunday. — AFP



Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE	
Arsenal FC v SSC Napoli	22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 1	
Villarreal CF v 22:00	
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
SL Benfica v Eintracht Frankfurt	22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4	
SK Slavia Prague v Chelsea FC	22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2	

Arsenal's Emery demands consistency as Napoli Europa test looms

LONDON: Unai Emery has urged erratic Arsenal to show more consistency as they prepare to face Napoli in the Europa League quarter-finals today. Emery's side suffered a major blow in their bid to make next season's Champions League when they slumped to a lacklustre 1-0 defeat at Everton on Sunday.

The Gunners slipped to fifth in the table as a result of their latest dismal away performance, putting their hopes of finishing in the top four in jeopardy. But Arsenal can also book a place in the competition if they win the Europa League, and Emery is determined to ensure his players do not slip up again when Napoli visit the Emirates Stadium for the first leg of the last-eight tie.

"We need to be consistent in the next matches and if we do that we can win," Emery said after the Everton defeat. "There's some frustration collectively with the result, but we won't change our idea and our work."

While Arsenal have struggled on their travels, they have been formidable back home in north London. Emery's men have won their past seven games at the Emirates in all competitions, including second-leg comeback victories against BATE Borisov and Rennes in the Europa League.

The Spaniard hopes Laurent Koscielny and Granit Xhaka shake off injuries in time to feature, while Aaron Ramsey and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang could return after starting on the bench at Everton.

"When you lose one match, maybe you can look at the players who didn't play, but I think it's rarely the consequence," Emery added. "We've won matches with other players, other systems, and we need to be efficient in each moment."

Like Arsenal, Napoli go into the tie in an agitated state after a worrying run. The Serie A side have not kept a clean sheet in any competition since beating Red Bull Salzburg in the Europa League on March 7 and lost to struggling Empoli before a disappointing draw with Genoa on Sunday.

Ancelotti warned his players they must improve to avoid more misery at the Emirates. "We're defending badly at the moment. It's an alarm bell, certainly, because if we play like this in London, then we're in trouble," he said.

"It is unusual to see Napoli doing that, so we have four days to focus back on the basics, because these are basics we're getting wrong." Napoli will be boosted by the availability of forward Lorenzo Insigne, who has scored 13 goals this season, after he played 23 minutes against Genoa.

Chelsea head to Slavia Prague for their quarter-final first leg in good spirits after Eden Hazard inspired a vital Premier League win over West Ham on Monday. Hazard scored a sublime solo effort and produced a clinical late strike to clinch a 2-0 success that lifted the Blues into third place, above London rivals Arsenal and Tottenham. After a turbulent debut season for Chelsea manager Maurizio Sarri, Hazard's fine form has come at the ideal moment as they battle to qualify for the Champions League. — AFP

25 Japan's minister of Tokyo 2020 Olympic steps down after gaffes

26 Kohli named among Wisden's Cricketers of the Year

27 Liverpool ease past Porto to close on Champions League semis



Nowitzki scores 30 in home finale

Raptors finish with NBA's 2nd-best record after win over Wolves



DALLAS: Dirk Nowitzki #41 of the Dallas Mavericks posts up on Elie Okobo #2 of the Phoenix Suns at American Airlines Center in Dallas. — AFP

DALLAS: In the final home game of a legendary career, Dirk Nowitzki gave an exuberant sellout crowd one final show with a season-high 30 points in the Dallas Mavericks' 120-109 win against the visiting Phoenix Suns on Tuesday. Nowitzki, 40, announced after the game that he would retire following the Mavericks' season finale today at San Antonio. The 7-footer, who entered the league in the lockout-shortened 1999 season and revolutionized the power forward position, scored 10 points in the opening seven minutes and had 19 points on a season-high 18 shot attempts in the first half to power Dallas to a 68-38 halftime lead. Suns veteran Jamal Crawford wasn't going to let Nowitzki totally steal the stage. He put in seven 3-pointers in posting a season-high 51 points. At age 39, he became the oldest player ever to reach 50 in an NBA game.

HEAT 122, 76ERS 99

Dwyane Wade, playing the final home game of his NBA career, scored 30 points to lead Miami over Philadelphia. Wade made 10 of 23 shots, including 4 of 10 on attempts from beyond the arc. It was his second-highest scoring game of the season. But it was a bittersweet night for the Heat, who were eliminated from playoff contention earlier in the evening when the Detroit Pistons rallied from a 22-point deficit to defeat the Memphis Grizzlies. Philadelphia, which has already clinched the third seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs, rested two of its stars: Joel Embiid, who was listed as having a knee injury, and JJ Redick (back).

WARRIORS 112, PELICANS 103

DeMarcus Cousins had 21 points and 12 rebounds against his former team as visiting Golden State defeated New Orleans. After clinching home-court advantage throughout the Western Conference playoffs on Sunday, the Warriors had Kevin Durant, Klay Thompson, Andre Iguodala and Andrew Bogut among their inactive players. Stephen Curry left for game after scoring five points in nine minutes in what the Warriors called "a precaution" after he sustained a mild foot sprain. Jahlil Okafor scored 30 points to lead the short-handed Pelicans, who dressed just eight players and finished the season 33-49.

RAPTORS 120, TIMBERWOLVES 100

Kawhi Leonard scored 20 points as visiting Toronto completed its regular-season schedule with a victory over Minnesota. The Raptors (58-24) secured the second-best record in the Eastern Conference with the win, behind only the Milwaukee Bucks (60-21), who play their final game today. Fred VanVleet added 16 points for the Raptors, Chris Boucher added career bests with 15 points and 13 rebounds, and Pascal Siakam and Norman Powell each scored 10 points. Gorgui Dieng and Andrew Wiggins each scored 16 points for the Timberwolves.

JAZZ 118, NUGGETS 108

Donovan Mitchell matched his career best of 46 points, and Utah posted a victory over Denver in Salt Lake City. Rudy Gobert added 20 points and 10 rebounds as Utah notched its ninth straight home win against Denver. Utah

locked up the No. 5 seed for the Western Conference playoffs. Malik Beasley scored 25 points on 9-of-13 shooting for the Nuggets, who have lost four of their past six games and are a half-game ahead of Houston after the Rockets fell to the Oklahoma City Thunder on Tuesday.

TRAIL BLAZERS 104, LAKERS 101

Instead of quietly sneaking into the offseason after losing its season finale to playoff-bound Portland, Los Angeles made some noise when Magic Johnson announced his resignation as president of basketball operations for the team. The game still meant something for Portland, though, and the Trail Blazers clinched home-court advantage in the first round of the Western Conference playoffs when Maurice Harkless made a 3-pointer at the buzzer for a win. The Trail Blazers can overtake the Rockets on a tiebreaker to finish third in the West with a win against the visiting Sacramento Kings today. Harkless, who left the previous game with left hip tightness, finished with 26 points. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope had 32 points and eight assists for the Lakers, who finished with 37 wins—two more than last season.

THUNDER 112, ROCKETS 111

Russell Westbrook scored 29 points, but it was Paul George's corner 3-pointer with 1.8 seconds left that sent Oklahoma City to a home win over Houston. Oklahoma City trailed by 14 early in the fourth quarter and by four in the final minute before Westbrook's and George's heroics. James Harden made his first 12 free throws in the game but with less than 10 seconds left and Houston on top 111-109, he missed one, giving the Thunder a chance to tie or take the lead. Westbrook barreled up the court, briefly handing the ball off to Steven Adams near midcourt before getting the ball and firing it to George in the corner for what proved to be the game-winner.

CELTICS 116, WIZARDS 100

Terry Rozier led seven Boston players in double figures with 21 points as his team closed out the regular season with a win over host Washington. The Celtics rallied from a 13-point, third-quarter deficit for their sixth win in eight games. Boston, which played without Marcus Smart, Jayson Tatum, Kyrie Irving, Al Horford, Marcus Morris, Aron Baynes and Gordon Hayward, will be the fourth seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs. Semi Ojeleye, Brad Wanamaker and RJ Hunter had 17 points apiece for Boston, which outscored Washington 27-15 in the fourth quarter. Tomas Satoransky led the Wizards with 19 points, and Bradley Beal scored 16 points in 16 minutes. Beal became the first person in franchise history to finish a season averaging at least 25 points, five rebounds and five assists per game.

PISTONS 100, GRIZZLIES 93

Andre Drummond scored 20 points and grabbed 17 rebounds, and Detroit came back from a 22-point deficit to defeat visiting Memphis. Despite winning, the Pistons were unable to clinch the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. The Charlotte Hornets beat the

Cleveland Cavaliers and remain one game behind Detroit heading into tonight's final regular-season games. The Pistons finish against the Knicks at New York while the Hornets host the Orlando Magic. The Pistons, who trailed by 22 in the second quarter, climbed all the way back and took an 85-83 lead on Ish Smith's jumper just moments after his 3-pointer tied the score at 83-all. Smith finished with 22 points off the bench, and Luke Kennard added 15 for Detroit.

HORNETS 124, CAVALIERS 97

Kemba Walker and Jeremy Lamb scored 23 points apiece, and Charlotte kept its playoff hopes alive with a victory over host Cleveland. The Hornets led by 12 points in the first half and then pushed the lead all the way to 27 in the fourth quarter, winning their fourth straight and eighth in their past 11 games. They hit a season-high 22 3-pointers on 44 attempts and shot 57.7 percent from the

field. Miles Bridges and Dwayne Bacon added 18 points apiece for the Hornets. Frank Kaminsky scored 14 and Devonte Graham had 10. Collin Sexton led the Cavs with 18 points.

KNICKS 96, BULLS 86

Dennis Smith Jr. scored 25 points and Kevin Knox and Luke Kornet each notched double-doubles to lead New York past host Chicago. Knox had 17 points and 10 rebounds, Kornet chipped in 12 points and 13 rebounds and Damyean Dotson added 12 points for the Knicks (17-64), who are already assured of the NBA's worst record this season. They can do no worse than tie the franchise record for fewest wins in a regular season, set in 2014-15. The Bulls closed the home portion of their schedule with a 9-32 record, setting a franchise record for home futility. The 2000-01 team held the previous club standard for fewest home victories with 10. — Reuters

Magic Johnson steps down as LA Lakers chief

LOS ANGELES: Magic Johnson stunned the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday after resigning from his role as president of basketball operations at the struggling NBA franchise. "Today, I'm gonna step down as the president," Johnson told reporters at an impromptu press conference.

Johnson's resignation comes after a disappointing season which saw the once-mighty Lakers fail to reach the playoffs for a sixth straight season. The Lakers legend was appointed to his front office position in 2017, charged with reversing a slide in fortunes for the 16-time NBA champions.

The 59-year-old had played a key role in persuading LeBron James to join the Lakers last year in a blockbuster move. However, the Lakers revival under Johnson stalled this season when James was injured, triggering a slump which saw the team fall from playoff contention.

Johnson also attracted criticism for an unsuccessful pursuit of New Orleans Pelicans star Anthony Davis, a move which was widely reported to have destabilized the Lakers locker room. An emotional Johnson told reporters on Tuesday he was stepping down in order to preserve his friendship with Lakers owner Jeanie Buss, describing her as like a sister.

The former Lakers star also revealed he had been wearied by the responsibilities of his position, saying he had not enjoyed the process of hiring and firing personnel. "Jeanie Buss and I have such an amazing relationship," Johnson said. "She gave me full power to do what I wanted to do, but I think that with her and I, I want to always preserve our relationship."

"I had more fun when I was able to be the big brother and the ambassador to everybody. I had more fun on the other side than on this side." Johnson was widely expected to swing the axe on Lakers coach Luke Walton yesterday following their final game of the season at the Staples Center against Portland.



Magic Johnson

However, he hinted that Walton may now stay. "Tomorrow I would have to affect someone's livelihood and their life," Johnson said, without referring to Walton directly. "And I thought about that. And that's not fun for me. That's not who I am. I don't want to put (Buss) in the middle of us. "Even though she said "You do what you want to do." I want to go back to having fun. I want to go back to who I was before taking on this job." Johnson, however, said he believed the Lakers were on the right track following the arrival of James.

"We're halfway there with LeBron coming," he said. "I think this summer we've got other stars coming in. This team is going to be in position to contend for championships." Johnson revealed that he had not even informed Buss of his resignation before announcing it to reporters at the Staples Center.

"She doesn't know I'm standing here because I know I would be crying like a baby in front of her, even though I'm about to cry now," Johnson said. "But it's the right thing to do, the right move to make," Johnson said, hinting that Walton may now remain as coach.—AFP